



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

ML 2022 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/07/2021

Proposal Title: Enhanced Public Land - Open Landscapes - Phase II

Funds Requested: \$4,353,400

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sabin Adams

Title: MN Project Manager

Organization: Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society/Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Location Information

County Location(s): Lake of the Woods.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

This proposal enhances 5,000 acres of open landscape habitat in the Northern Forest and Forest/Prairie Transition Regions for Sharp-tailed Grouse and other species. Enhancement work will take place on protected lands open to public hunting including Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs), state forest lands, Scientific Natural Areas (SNAs), and county lands. In addition, this proposal seeks to acquire and restore 1,297 acres of sharp-tail habitat in Lake of the Woods County to be transferred to the MNDNR. This property adjoins the Carp Swamp WMA, which supports two active Sharp-tailed Grouse leks.

Design and Scope of Work

This proposal seeks to protect, enhance, and restore early successional, open landscapes that are critical to the success of sharptails in Minnesota. This will be accomplished by (1) the purchase of the adjacent 1,297 acres of the Carp Swamp WMA in Lake of the Woods County to be transferred to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), and (2) contracting enhancement activities on permanently protected lands open to hunting in sharptail priority areas.

The protection of the 1,297-acre property adjacent to the Carp Swamp WMA has been identified by local MN DNR Wildlife staff, Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society (SGS), and Pheasants Forever (PF) as a priority. This property has two leks: one that hosts 5-10 birds, and the other hosting 15-20 birds. By protecting this property in fee and enhancing the current grass-brushland habitats, this area will be able to support the current local sharptail population and increase the overall landscape's ability to support population growth. The seller wishes to have the property be held and managed in perpetuity by the MNDNR for the benefit of sharptails and the enjoyment of the public. If the acquisition is unsuccessful, we will request an amendment to move the acquisition funds over to enhancement.

We will utilize a Request for Proposal and ranking process, developed during the previous phase, to identify, rank, and deliver projects that will be most beneficial to sharptails and other open landscape species. Upon project selection, we will submit a parcel list amendment for approval. In addition, we're working with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in priority areas that are adjacent to Tribal lands managed for the same purpose. Activities to enhance these habitats include brush mowing/shearing, tree removal, diversity seeding, conservation grazing, and prescribed fire. These activities will be used in combination where appropriate to create the heterogeneous landscape that sharptails require. Prescribed fire is the primary tool used to create early successional habitat. In areas where this fire is not appropriate or logistically infeasible, brush mowing or shearing of small-diameter brush and trees will be performed. Trees too large to mow or unaffected by fire will be removed. Any tree removal will be done in areas where timber is unmarketable and most of the species being harvested are of no value. Grasslands will be restored by preparing the site using a combination of prescribed fire, cultivation, or herbicide application. We will work with local land managers to develop and plant high-diversity native seed mixes that provide ideal foraging, nesting, and brood-rearing cover for sharptails. Maintenance mowing will be used to suppress annual weeds and ensure the establishment of desirable species. Conservation grazing allows land managers to maintain grasslands in the absence of prescribed fire and target undesirable species by altering the timing and intensity. In these areas, we will install infrastructure with a lifespan of 30+ years to facilitate these conservation grazing plans in areas where local livestock producers are present.

How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

This proposal directly protects and enhances habitats that are imperative to the success of species of greatest conservation need, threatened, or endangered. The Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025 identifies sharptails as a species of greatest conservation need. The work performed on open landscapes that support sharptails also

benefits a number of species including Henslow's sparrows, Nelson's sparrows, Bobolinks, Golden-winged warblers, Short-eared owls, Northern Harriers, Yellow rails, Loggerheaded Shrikes, and American woodcock. All of these species are identified as species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered.

What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible?

According to MNDNR surveys, the east-central population of sharptails has steadily declined over the last 15-20 years primarily due to habitat loss and degradation. The loss has been enough that the MNDNR adjusted the season length in this area to alleviate pressure on this population. Unfortunately, the population continues to struggle; therefore, it is imperative that work to increase the landscape's carrying capacity be funded before the loss of habitat becomes too great to overcome, thus losing this historic population. The northwest population is the stronghold in Minnesota. Protection and enhancement in this area are vital to maintaining and bolstering this population. A robust northwest population may serve as a source for relocation efforts in other parts of the historic sharptail range where quality habitat is present, but the individual birds are not.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

Research shows that large, heterogeneous landscapes of grasslands and short brushlands within three miles of leks are suitable for supporting local sharptail populations. Active cropland, mature trees, and brush add to habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. This proposal will use criteria based on biological data to select projects that (1) are identified to be within critical areas, and (2) need enhancement to create or improve desirable habitat heterogeneity for sharptails. The type, timing, and duration of restoration and enhancement activities will be based on the best available science that results in creating and maintaining a landscape mosaic most beneficial for open landscape species. The proposed acquisition falls within the priority area and supports breeding and wintering sharptails and adds to the adjacent 13,962-acre Carp Swamp WMA complex. The impact of this work will be evaluated during annual surveys performed by agency partners.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Which two other plans are addressed in this proposal?

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

The indicators in these plans will be advanced by creating and/or increasing the quantity and quality of existing public lands and protecting priority lands in fee. Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation will be reversed while wildlife populations and biodiversity increase. This program will improve public lands that are not functioning at their full potential yet are imperative to the success of declining open and brushland wildlife species. These habitats are used by a wide variety of species of greatest conservation need and will be prioritized to be located in the MNDNR priority open landscapes, and important birding areas. MNDNR goals of natural resource conservation will be addressed, outdoor recreation opportunity will be improved, and the natural resource economy will be stimulated (e.g. local contractors hired, ecotourism boost, etc.), and will require less resources for future management.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

Northern Forest

- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers in the forest region of Minnesota depend on open landscapes and early successional habitat. If these habitats are not created and maintained, we will lose Sharp-tailed Grouse in the region. The legacy of the proposal will be as part of the success story of keeping Sharp-tailed Grouse in the forest and forest/prairie transition region of Minnesota.

This proposal will increase the quantity and quality of open landscapes and early successional habitat. That enhanced habitat will benefit not only Sharp-tailed Grouse but other early successional habitat-dependent species. Many of these species have been in decline within the northern forest and forest/prairie transition region of Minnesota. If immediate action is not taken many of them may disappear from the region as well.

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

This proposal will bring \$206,000 of leverage funds to increase accomplishments of acquisition and enhancement activities. This leverage will come from the Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, Pheasants Forever, Federal funds, as well as private sources.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This proposal supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the enhancement of strategic parcels.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2002-2010	Heritage Enhancement Grants	\$145,000 HE / \$14,500 PF
2015-2017	NAWCA	\$150,000 HE

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

The portions of enhancement work that will be completed by this proposal will generally allow the unit to be managed more effectively by the resource manager, whether that be on a WMA, county property or State Forest. While it's difficult for a third party like Pheasants Forever to provide an analysis of future costs on existing public

land, work done under this proposal will facilitate future management activities by establishing grazing infrastructure, establishing fire breaks, or setting back natural succession.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Project Completion - WMA	MN DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Monitoring	Maintenance	-

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

Golden-winged Warblers

Suggested by the USFWS as a species representative of shrubland systems in the Upper Midwest, Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) are also recognized as a Minnesota Species in Greatest Conservation Need (stewardship species) due to the relatively large percentage of the global population that breeds within the state. Often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers (a matrix of shrubby wetlands and uplands, regenerating forests, and mature forests). The range map for the Golden-winged Warbler in Minnesota covers a good portion of the LSOHC Northern Forest planning section. While territories vary in size, an average of 4 pairs for every 10 hectares, may be translated to roughly 6 pairs for every 40 acres.

White-tailed deer

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) use a wide variety of forested habitats, are found throughout Minnesota, and are an important game species in the state. Deer have also been suggested as potential ecological indicators for forest systems. In the 33 forested deer permit areas for which deer densities are estimated, covering most of the LSOHC Northern Forest section, the six-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per square mile of land (excluding water). This translates to 0.02 deer (pre-fawning) per acre of forest land habitat or roughly 1 deer (pre-fawning) for every 50 acres of land.

How will the program directly involve, engage, and benefit BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and diverse communities:

The goals of this program are specifically designed to improve wildlife habitat and public spaces for the benefit of all people regardless of race. Additionally, Pheasants Forever is undertaking an organization wide initiative to design, develop and implement a foundational plan to increase the inclusion of BIPOC communities inside and outside of our organization, and to ensure there's a sense of belonging among all people within Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

At a minimum PF and/or MN DNR will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the state and follow up with questions prior to acquisition. In cases where there is interest,

we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

This proposal is only pursuing one acquisition tract. This tract does not have any other form of permanent protection.

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- County/Municipal
- State Forests
- SNA
- WPA
- Refuge Lands

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. There are no immediate plans to use farming for winter food on any of the parcels in this proposal.

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

Lands that are being enhanced through the RFP process are open to public hunting. The acquisition tract is not currently open to the public.

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

No variation from State of Minnesota regulations.

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

A snowmobile trail runs though the road ditch along 800ft of the western edge of the Carp Swamp WMA Addition.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

This trail is in the road ditch for a very small portion of the acquired property, and will not require or affect future maintenance or monitoring of the acquired tract.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this proposal's funding and availability?

Yes

Other OHF Appropriation Awards**Have you received OHF dollars in the past through LSOHC?**

Yes

Approp Year	Approp Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Leverage Reported in AP	Leverage Realized to Date	Acres Affected in AP	Acres Affected to Date	Complete/Final Report Approved?
2019	\$955,000	\$297,337	\$12,100	-	2,910	1,317	No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Distribute Project Request for Proposals to Area Land Managers. Order Appraisal for acquisition tract.	Summer/Fall 2022
Review Project RFPs with project selection committee. Sign Purchase agreement for acquisition tract.	Fall/Winter 2022-23
Select Projects for completion and hire contractors. Start enhancement/restoration work	Winter 2023
Enhancement / Restoration work continues. Close on acquisition tract.	Spring, Summer Fall 2023
Re-evaluate project status/budget and solicit additional projects as needed	Winter 2023
Enhancement work completed for RPF projects as well as acquisition tract.	Summer 2025

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$140,000	-	-	\$140,000
Contracts	\$2,175,000	\$50,000	MSGS, Federal, Private, PF	\$2,225,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,800,000	\$100,000	MSGS, Federal, Private, PF	\$1,900,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000
Professional Services	\$97,500	-	-	\$97,500
Direct Support Services	\$60,900	\$56,000	Pheasants Forever	\$116,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$36,000	-	-	\$36,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$24,000	-	-	\$24,000
Grand Total	\$4,353,400	\$206,000	-	\$4,559,400

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Field Staff	0.22	3.0	60000	-	-	\$60,000
State Coordinator - MN	0.06	3.0	20000	-	-	\$20,000
PF Grants Staff	0.22	3.0	60000	-	-	\$60,000

Amount of Request: \$4,353,400

Amount of Leverage: \$206,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 4.73%

DSS + Personnel: \$200,900

As a % of the total request: 4.61%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, contractor donations, MSGS, and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF and MSGS have an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

If this project is reduced by 30% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

If this project is reduced by 50% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

In general PF staffing is existing and only partially funded by OHF and specifically this request. Billing to any appropriation would only be for time spent on direct and necessary costs incurred as outlined in an Accomplishment Plan.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for enhancement activities on the acquisition tract as well as the existing public lands.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

We anticipate one acquisition with this proposal.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

n/a

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

Yes

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.84%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 2.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

7/1/2022

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,297	0	1,297
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	500	4,500	0	5,000
Total	0	500	5,797	0	6,297

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$2,357,600	-	\$2,357,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$199,600	\$1,796,200	-	\$1,995,800
Total	-	\$199,600	\$4,153,800	-	\$4,353,400

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	1,297	1,297
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	500	0	0	4,500	5,000
Total	0	500	0	0	5,797	6,297

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$2,357,600	\$2,357,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$199,600	-	-	\$1,796,200	\$1,995,800
Total	-	\$199,600	-	-	\$4,153,800	\$4,353,400

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,817	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$399	\$399	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$1,817
Protect in Fee w/o State	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability					
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$399	-	-	\$399

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Sharp tail Leks are monitored annually in the northern forest region by the MN DNR. The number of leks identified is a good measure of quality open landscape habitat.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *Sharp tail Leks are monitored annually in the northern forest region by the MN DNR. The number of leks identified is a good measure of quality open landscape habitat.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

A request for proposals will be sent to all land managers within the forest region. Submitted projects will be reviewed for eligibility, and ranked by a selection committee that will consist of staff from MSGS, MN DNR, and PF.

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Carp Swamp WMA Addition	Lake of the Woods	15931212	1,297	\$1,800,000	No



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- + Other

Parcel Map

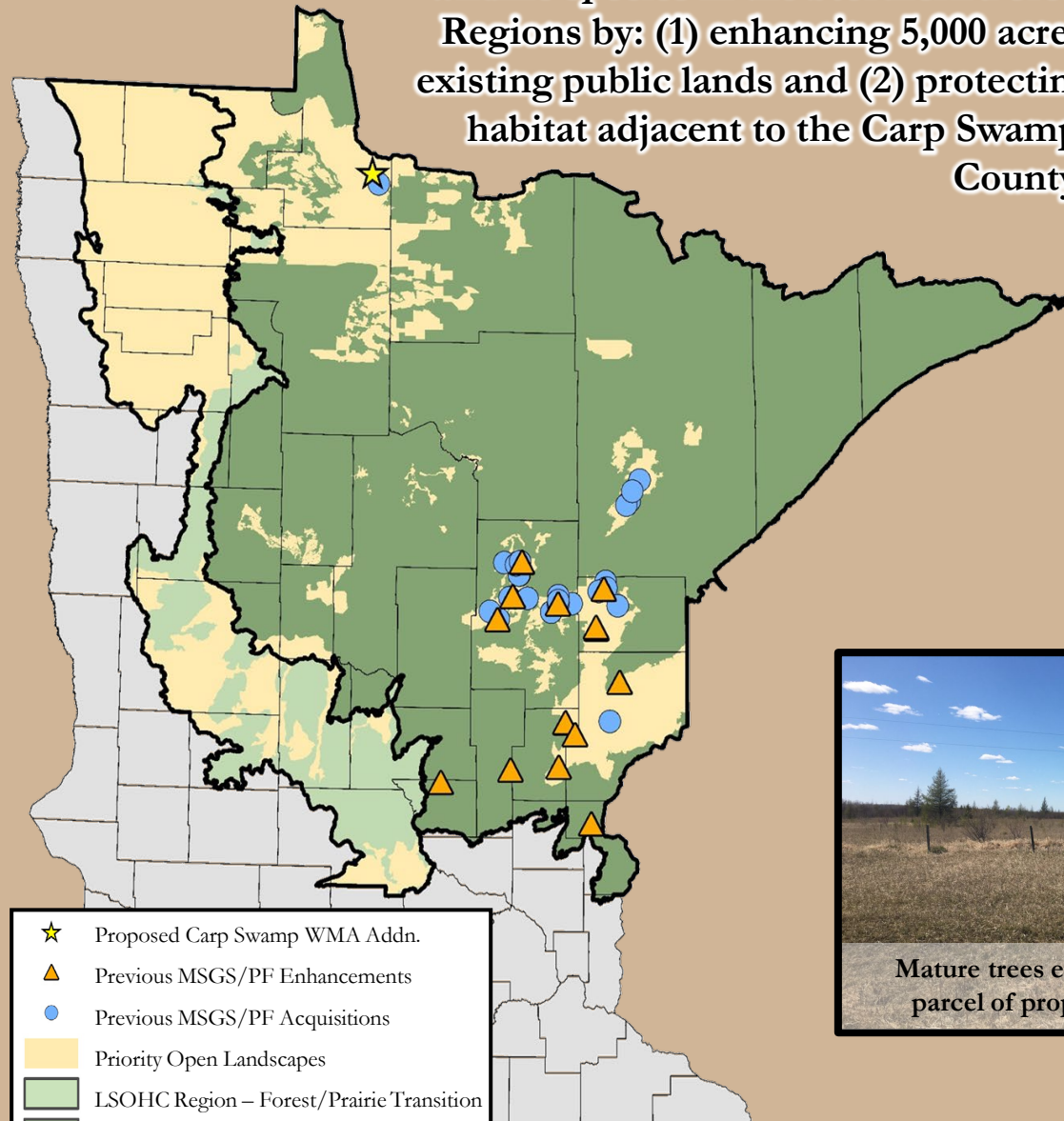
Enhanced Public Land - Open Landscapes - Phase II
(Data Generated From Parcel List)



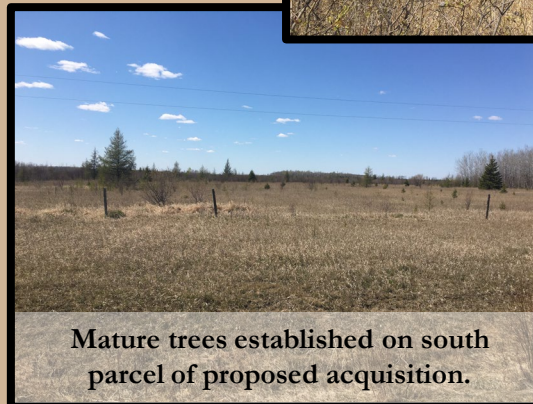
Enhanced Public Lands Open Landscapes – Phase II



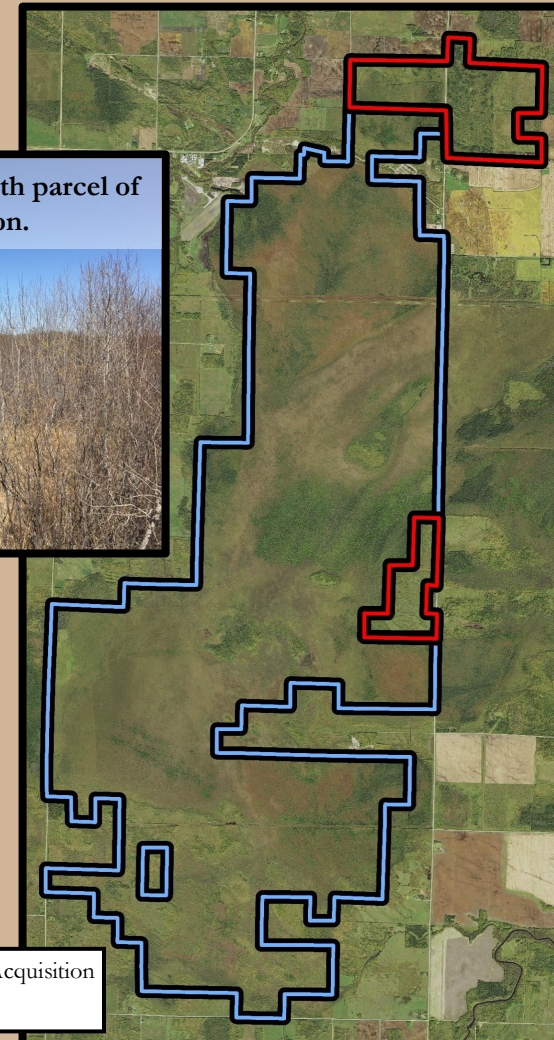
This proposal benefits Sharp-tailed Grouse and other open landscape wildlife species in the Northern Forest and Forest/Prairie Transition Regions by: (1) enhancing 5,000 acres of open landscape habitat on existing public lands and (2) protecting a 1,297 of Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat adjacent to the Carp Swamp WMA in Lake of the Woods County.



Brush encroachment on north parcel of proposed acquisition.



Mature trees established on south parcel of proposed acquisition.



Proposed 1,297 ac Acquisition
Carp Swamp WMA

- ★ Proposed Carp Swamp WMA Addn.
- ▲ Previous MSGS/PF Enhancements
- Previous MSGS/PF Acquisitions
- Yellow Priority Open Landscapes
- Light Green LSOHC Region – Forest/Prairie Transition
- Dark Green LSOHC Region – Northern Forest



Enhanced Public Lands Open Landscapes – Phase II



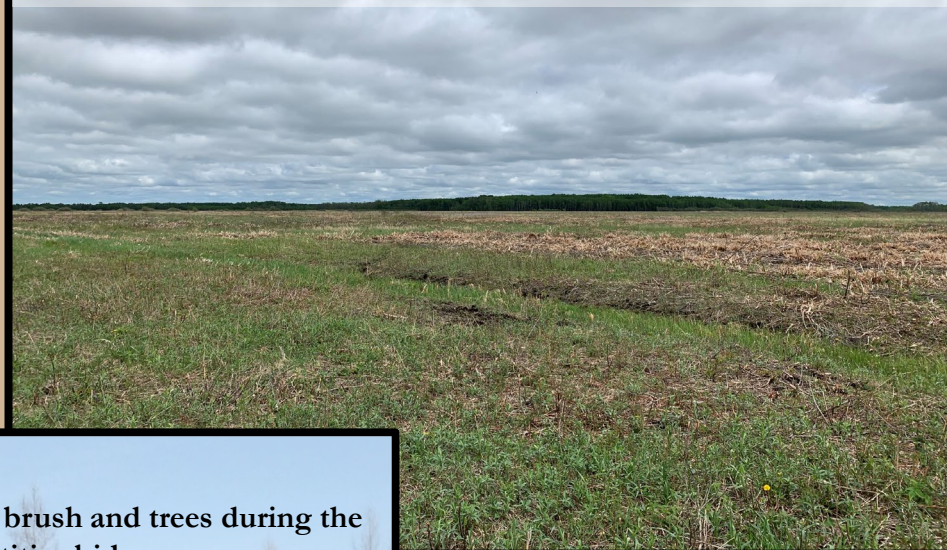
Before

Aitkin WMA-Rank brush and mature trees prevalent through site.



After

Aitkin WMA-DNR will burn the site to further reduce residue and improve open land habitat.



During

Local, private contractor hired to mow brush and trees during the winter of 2021 using a competitive bid process.

