



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Wetland Enhancement in the Big Woods
Laws of Minnesota 2023 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/29/2023

Project Title: Wetland Enhancement in the Big Woods

Funds Recommended: \$619,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 4(e)

Appropriation Language: \$619,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Scott-Le Sueur Waterfowlers to restore and enhance wetlands in Scott and Rice Counties. A list of proposed restorations and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Craig Hensel

Title: Volunteer Grant Manager

Organization: Scott-Le Sueur Waterfowlers

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Location Information

County Location(s): Rice.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

Scott Le Sueur Waterfowlers (SLW) is seeking to bring additional funding for wetland enhancement on 43 acres in Rice County. These basins will be enhanced by constructing durable, long-lasting water control structures, embankments, and/or removing sediments and invasive vegetation. The structures will allow water level management on degraded wetlands. The other activities will enhance wetland habitats on small isolated wetlands that are ideal for breeding waterfowl and keep water on the landscape.

Design and Scope of Work

SLW is committed to improving habitat in our area. We have also done many youth events to get kids involved in outdoor recreation. Although we have had to start a new club after the Minnesota Waterfowl Association dissolved, we have a core group of volunteers eager to put more habitat on the ground. We are nearing completion of a CPL grant for wetland restorations on a newly acquired WMA in Le Sueur County. This LSOHC grant will allow our conservation group to expand our habitat enhancement activities to a larger scale.

This grant will enhance 43 acres of small to midsize wetlands.

The small wetlands on existing WMAs will be enhanced by removing sediment and invasive reed canary grass along with ditch plugs constructed in drainage ways. Once construction is done wetland seeding will take place to establish beneficial native plants and fend off invasive species. The small wetlands on existing WMAs were often overlooked for restoration when originally purchased, now that there is a better understanding of their ecological importance. This helps maximize the productivity of our limited public lands for both game and nongame species.

The midsize wetlands to be enhanced under this grant application are typically 5-15 acres in size and were restored when the parcels were originally purchased in the 70s and 80s. At that time it was common practice to build an embankment with whatever material was close. This reduced cost and worked for several decades. After several repeated 50 and 100 year rain events the embankments have deteriorated. This combined with burrowing rodent activity has caused all or portions of the embankments to erode away. This has led to partially or fully draining the wetland basins. To remedy the situation new embankments will be designed with engineered fill, wave berms or rodent walls will be installed, and spillways designed to safely pass high intensity storms so they are durable and long lasting.

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

The Big Woods Subsection Profile states that 33 species of greatest conservation need are dependent on quality wetland habitat, including 30 birds, 2 mammals and 1 reptile (Common Snapping Turtle). The enhanced wetlands in this proposal will provide quality foraging, resting breeding and migration habitat for these listed species. Healthy wetlands in this area typically support populations of breeding or migrating; Northern pintail, Lesser Scaup, American Bittern, Black tern, Marsh Wren, Sedge Wren, Trumpeter Swan, Black-crowned Night Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, Forster's Tern, Common Tern, Common Moorhen, Virginia Rail, and the Least Bittern.

Many other SGCN will visit high quality wetlands to feed on the abundant resources including Common Nighthawk, Northern Harrier, and Bald Eagle.

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

Work on the WMA projects were requested by MNDNR Area Wildlife Manager and within a 3 mile radius of each other. This area of Rice County contains many lakes, WMAs, WPAs, conservation easements and private forest lands. This proposal helps to maintain the wetland component needed in the complex. The Big Woods Subsection Profile identifies these WMAs within or adjacent to key habitats.

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

- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *MNDNR staff will monitor enhancement of wetlands for waterfowl use and vegetation response.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Scott Le Sueur Waterfowlers has committed \$10,000 in cash. Volunteers within our organization have committed to providing \$35,000 of in-kind match to provide grant administration, project permitting, bidding, and process payments. We are also excited to work on performing hands on work to seed wetland areas, embankments or other small-scale work where possible.

We have brought in additional partners in the form of two local sportsman's clubs to provide cash leverage up to \$25,000.

We will continue to work to bring additional leverage and are in discussions with a local water board and SWCDs.

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.

Scott Le Sueur Waterfowlers desire for applying for this grant is to provide additional resources that may not be currently available and add capacity to area MNDNR staff to supplement work already taking place. This allows MNDNR to use existing funds on other important projects in the state.

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

MNDNR will continue to own and manage the wetlands located on WMA once needed infrastructure is designed and installed. Then it is ready to ensure an extended lifespan of greater than 50 years. DNR staff will evaluate management needs after projects are completed this could include prescribed fires, mowing, or manipulating water levels in wetlands were possible.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2028	MNDNR	DNR Area Wildlife Staff will evaluate habitat management needs	When needed wetlands may be burned, mowed or have water levels manipulated to maintain habitat quality at DNR's guidance.	DNR will monitor management results

Provide an assessment of how your program celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:

We intend to engage the local schools where BIPOC children attend and introduce all kids to local conservation projects. If children become excited about conservation and parents take interest, the entire family can enjoy recreating these projects.

The projects that have public access are smaller wetlands where large boats with vast amounts of equipment is required to be successful. Since a \$10,000 boat with a mud motor cannot access these areas, the financial barrier to start hunting is lowered. Resulting in a new BIPOC demographic of hunters competing on a level playing field for access to quality habitat.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

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 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA

Land Use

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

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Once plans and permits are completed projects will be sent out to bid for construction in accordance with State Contracting policies and procedures, contracts will be awarded, then constructed.	2027
Topographic survey data will be collected to evaluate wetland enhancement options for small and mid-sized wetlands on WMAs. This information will then be used to develop construction plans and obtain permits as needed, most of these basins are small or previously restored so permitting should be minimal.	2025
Advertise an RFP for engineering services and award according to State Contracting policies and procedures.	2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 06/30/2028

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

(a) Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. Money appropriated to acquire land in fee may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.

(b) Money appropriated in this section is available as follows:

- (1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2027;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this act is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2031;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2028;
- (4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and
- (5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	\$35,000	Volunteer time	\$35,000
Contracts	\$524,000	\$35,000	Cash from SLW and other area Sportsmans Clubs	\$559,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$85,000	-	-	\$85,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Grand Total	\$619,000	\$70,000	-	\$689,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Volunteer grant mgr.	0.1	5.0	-	\$35,000	Volunteer time	\$35,000

Amount of Request: \$619,000

Amount of Leverage: \$70,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 11.31%

DSS + Personnel: -

As a % of the total request: 0.0%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

The number of projects and enhanced wetland acres were reduced to accommodate the funding recommended. These were not necessarily reduced proportionally to the reduction in funding because the cost per acre varies for the various projects.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

SLW volunteers will provide in-kind services to manage the grant and perform small scale task where appropriate.

SLW and other local sportsman's clubs have pledged cash for contracts. These funds will come from their habitat funds or from charitable gambling funds

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Once the projects are designed and permits are awarded, they will be sent out for a competitive bid to qualified contractors who specialize in heavy civil and infrastructure construction. Bidding will be done in accordance with state contracting policies and procedures.

Federal Funds

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

No

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	43	-	-	-	43
Total	43	-	-	-	43

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$619,000	-	-	-	\$619,000
Total	\$619,000	-	-	-	\$619,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	0	-	-	43	-	43
Total	0	-	-	43	-	43

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$619,000	-	\$619,000
Total	-	-	-	\$619,000	-	\$619,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$14,395	-	-	-

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	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$14,395	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

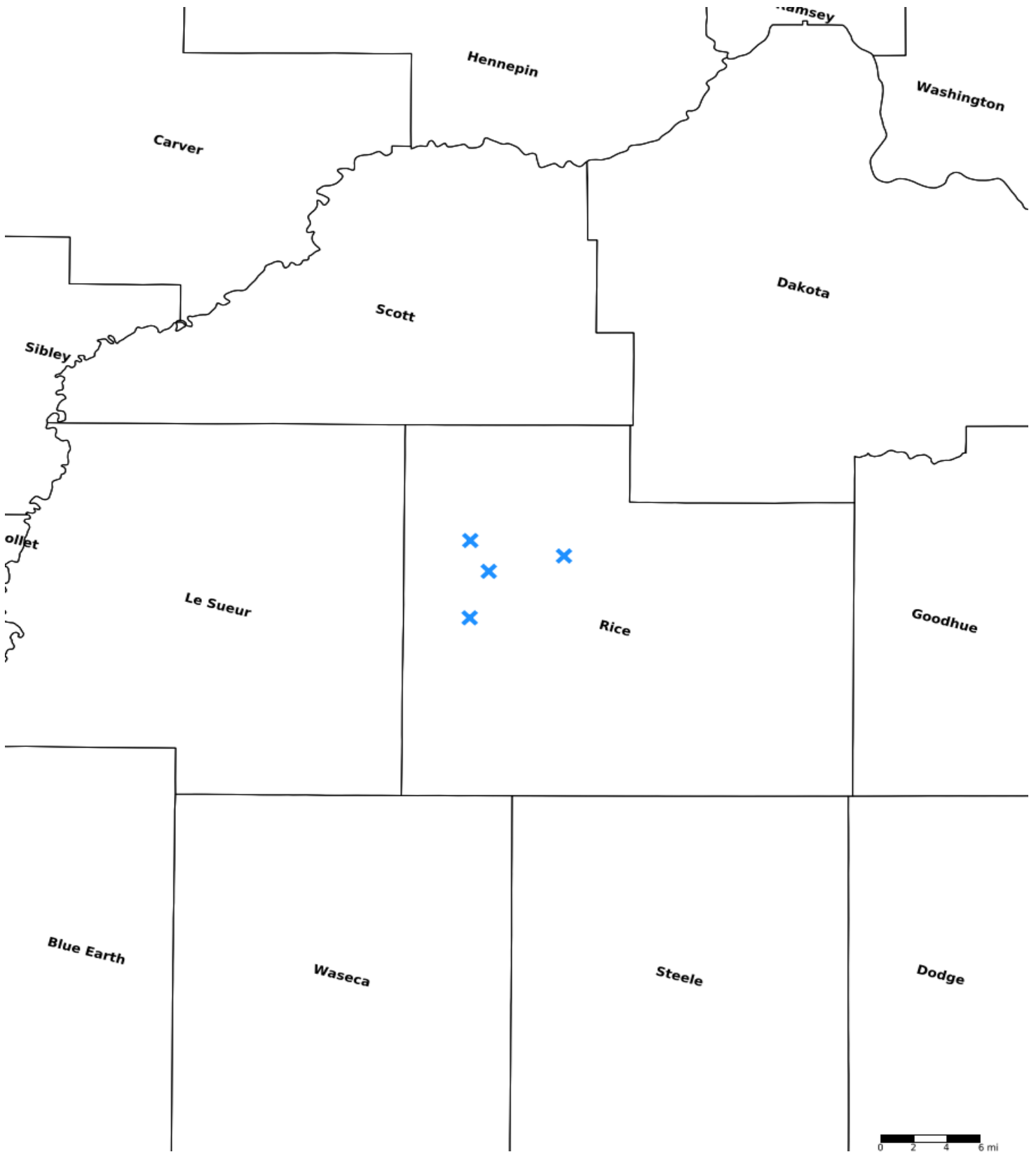
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Projects on WMAs were identified and prioritized by local and regional MNDNR Wildlife Section Staff using an internal ranking system. Scott Le Sueur Waterfowlers simply asked if we could help deliver on a backlog of projects in our local area.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Circle Lake WMA	Rice	11121216	45	\$640,000	Yes
Big Woods Heritage Forest WMA	Rice	11122223	10	\$133,000	Yes
Boyd Sartell WMA	Rice	11022203	31	\$482,000	Yes
Robert J. Lick WMA	Rice	11122210	2	\$23,000	Yes

Parcel Map



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