



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program Ph. 15 Statewide and Metro Habitat  
Laws of Minnesota 2023 Accomplishment Plan

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/08/2023

**Project Title:** Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program Ph. 15 Statewide and Metro Habitat

**Funds Recommended:** \$9,500,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(w)

**Appropriation Language:** \$9,500,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for a program to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$500,000 to local, regional, state, and national organizations for enhancing, restoring, or protecting forests, wetlands, prairies, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. Unless there are not enough eligible grant applications received, of this amount, at least \$2,500,000 is for grants in the seven-county metropolitan area and cities with a population of 50,000 or greater and at least \$3,000,000 is for grants to applicants that have not previously applied for money from the outdoor heritage fund. Grants must not be made for activities required to fulfill the duties of owners of lands subject to conservation easements. Grants must not be made from the appropriation in this paragraph for projects that have a total project cost exceeding \$1,000,000. Of the total appropriation, \$450,000 may be spent for personnel costs, outreach and support to first-time applicants, and other direct and necessary administrative costs. Grantees may acquire land or interests in land. Easements must be permanent. Grants may not be used to establish easement stewardship accounts. The program must require a match of at least ten percent from nonstate sources for all grants. The match may be cash or in-kind resources. For grant applications of \$25,000 or less, the commissioner must provide a separate, simplified application process. Subject to Minnesota Statutes, the commissioner of natural resources must, when evaluating projects of equal value, give priority to organizations that have a history of receiving, or a charter to receive, private contributions for local conservation or habitat projects. All restoration or enhancement projects must be on land permanently protected by a permanent covenant ensuring perpetual maintenance and protection of restored and enhanced habitat, by a conservation easement, or by public ownership or in public waters as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 103G.005, subdivision 15. Priority must be given to restoration and enhancement projects on public lands. Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 13, applies to grants awarded under this paragraph. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2026. No less than five percent of the amount of each grant must be held back from reimbursement until the grant recipient has completed a grant accomplishment report by the deadline and in the form prescribed by and satisfactory to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The commissioner must provide notice of the grant program in the summary of game and fish law prepared under Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.051, subdivision 2.

## Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** David Stein

**Title:** CPL Coordinator

**Organization:** MN DNR

**Address:** 500 Lafayette Rd.

**City:** St. Paul, MN 55155

**Email:** david.stein@state.mn.us

**Office Number:** 651-259-5375

**Mobile Number:**

**Fax Number:**

**Website:** <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/habitat/cpl/index.html>

## Location Information

**County Location(s):**

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Northern Forest
- Southeast Forest
- Metro / Urban
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Enhance
- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest
- Prairie
- Wetlands
- Habitat

## Narrative

### Abstract

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program is managed by the Department of Natural Resources to Provide competitive matching grants of up to \$500,000 to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities. In its first 13 years of funding the CPL program has provided over 900 grants, totaling over \$80 million to over 250 different grantee organizations and chapters, enhancing, restoring, or protecting over 350,000 acres of habitat. Demand continues as successful organizations return for additional grants and new organizations apply each year.

## Design and Scope of Work

The CPL Program fulfills MS 97a.056 Subd. 3a, directing LSOHC to establish a conservation partner's grant program encouraging/supporting local conservation efforts. \$9,000,000 of the requested \$9,500,000 will be available for grants. Of this amount, at least \$3,000,000 will be used for projects submitted from applicants who have not received CPL funds before, and at least \$2,500,000 will be used for projects in the 7-county metro area and in cities with a population of 50,000 people or greater. If funds remain from the \$3,000,000 new applicant fund after one grant round, and the \$2,500,000 metro fund after two grant rounds, they may be used for projects statewide. Statewide funds may be used in the metro area and for new applicants. Grant activities include enhancement, restoration, and protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% match from non-state sources is required for all grants and may be in-kind or cash.

Applicants must describe the project goals, methods, location, activity, habitat, urgency, and overall benefit. Staff works with applicants to submit applications, oversee grant selection, prepare/execute grant documents, review expenditures, approves payments/reports, monitor work, and assist recipients with close-out. Staff complies with Office of Grants Management policies. Grantees are required to submit annual and final accomplishment reports. The CPL program has 3 annual grant cycles- Traditional, Metro, and Expedited Conservation Projects (ECP). The Traditional and Metro cycles will have one grant round beginning August 2022 and a second round if funds remain.

Projects under \$25,000 will have a simplified application. The ECP grant cycle will be open continuously for eligible projects under \$50,000 beginning August 2023, and applications will be awarded up to 5 times through May 2024, depending on available funds. DNR may choose to make additional awards, consistent with DNR and OHF policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available.

CPL staff provides an administrative review of applications. Technical Review Committees, comprised of habitat experts across the state, review and score Traditional and Metro applications based on evaluation criteria (attached). The DNR Directors of Fish and Wildlife, Ecological and Water Resources, and Forestry review the committees' recommendations and provide a ranking to the Commissioner. Final decisions are made by the Commissioner. ECP grants are reviewed by CPL staff and DNR habitat experts using established criteria. The Director of Fish and Wildlife makes final decisions for ECP.

CPL staff conducts site visits for most projects over \$50,000 and smaller projects if needed. For projects over \$250,000, staff may conduct site visits annually for the duration of the grant to ensure that project objectives are being met. Administration costs of \$500,000 include salary/fringe, direct support services, travel, outreach, ongoing application system/database maintenance, and other professional services. 2.05 FTEs are needed to manage and promote the program, monitor grants, assist with applications and technical review meetings, and meet state requirements.

### **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?**

All CPL projects include a Natural Heritage Database Review, which addresses wildlife species of greatest conservation need, the MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories. These results are incorporated into the requests, along with mitigation measures if needed. Habitat value/species benefits is also one of the evaluation criterion used to score applications. When the projects are reviewed by the technical habitat experts, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, targeted species, and threatened/endangered species are all discussed, and add to the overall habitat quality and urgency of applications which is reflected in the scoring and funding recommendations.

## **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:**

The CPL program has a Technical Review Committee that reviews and scores projects based on evaluation criteria. One of the evaluation criterion addresses the overall project value, and includes the habitat quality and quantity of the site, whether or not it is part of a habitat corridor, and the use of currently accepted practices based on sound conservation science. A second evaluation criterion addresses the habitat benefits of the proposal, such as protecting areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey. A third evaluation criterion addresses public use and access, and the project's proximity to other protected lands. The technical experts ensure that CPL proposals recommended for funding are using current conservation science and best management practices.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

## **Which two other plans are addressed in this program?**

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda

## **Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?**

### **Forest / Prairie Transition**

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

### **Metro / Urban**

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

### **Northern Forest**

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

### **Prairie**

- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

### **Southeast Forest**

- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

## **Outcomes**

### **Programs in forest-prairie transition region:**

- Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

### **Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:**

- Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

### **Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

### **Programs in prairie region:**

- Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

### **Programs in southeast forest region:**

- Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

### **Does this program include leveraged funding?**

Yes

### **Explain the leverage:**

Leverage will be provided through local match of a minimum of 10% of each grant awarded. CPL grantees contribute cash, in-kind contributions, and donations as leverage to grants.

### **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 request is for the continuation of a program that did not exist prior to the legacy fund and would not continue to exist without an OHF appropriation.

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

Applicants are asked to describe or submit their long-term management plans when submitting a project proposal, and the Technical Review Committee considers these plans when scoring proposals and making funding recommendations. The sustainability of the project is also addressed through one of the evaluation criterion. Long term maintenance commitment from the applicant is crucial to a successful proposal. The CPL program has a monitoring process to ensure that funds are being used to complete work as described in the grantee's work plans. The CPL program manager and natural resource specialist conducts site visits for projects that are over \$50,000 and smaller projects as needed. When conducting site visits, CPL staff meets with the project manager and land manager to discuss and evaluate the work, and to address any issues that may have come up during the grant period, as well as discuss long-term management goals.

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

The Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program has the following specific ties to BIPOC and diverse communities:

- Tribes have been grantees or partners for CPL projects
- Many metro grantees and partners have CPL projects that restore or enhance public land in diverse communities
- Staff members will be providing outreach to BIPOC, diverse, and low to moderate income communities- informing them of the project and funding opportunities with CPL

The Minnesota DNR has adopted advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a key priority in its 2020-22

strategic plan. The plan focuses on increasing the cultural competence of our staff, creating a workforce that is reflective of Minnesota, continuing to strengthen tribal consultation and building partnerships with diverse communities. DNR's OHF projects aim to serve all Minnesotans. At the same time, we are bringing more focus in all our work to BIPOC and diverse communities. OHF achieves high quality habitat that provides ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF also supports public access and recreational opportunities on these lands. Project scoring and implementation benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities. The DNR has diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that benefit all OHF projects:

- Multilingual and culturally specific hunting and fishing education programs take place on public lands.
- All hiring is equal opportunity, affirmative action, and veteran-friendly. Contracting seeks out Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned businesses.
- Public engagement seeks out BIPOC voices and involves diverse communities. Outreach and marketing of projects has this focus as well.
- Partnerships are at the center of all projects. Tribes in particular are consulted in all pertinent areas of the DNR's work, under EO 19-24.

## Activity Details

### Requirements

**If funded, this program 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:**  
County board/LGU approval will be sought for WMA and SNA acquisitions, for all other acquisitions partners will notify the county board/LGU of the acquisition.

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

Yes

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

Yes

**Who will manage the easement?**

This depends on the grantees and applications.

**Who will be the easement holder?**

This depends on the grantees and applications.

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**

**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
- SNA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- Refuge Lands
- State Wilderness Areas
- State Forests
- WPA
- AMA
- County/Municipal
- Public Waters
- State Recreation Areas

## Land Use

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

No

**Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?**

No

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

Yes

**Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:**

The land may be open for hunting and fishing, depending on individual project applications. For acquisitions, the land will be open to hunting and fishing unless otherwise provided by law.

**Who will eventually own the fee title land?**

- State of MN
- Federal
- Tribal
- County
- Local Unit of Government
- NGO

**Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:**

- WMA
- AMA
- County Forest
- National Wildlife Refuge
- Tribal
- SNA

- State Forest
- WPA
- SRA
- City Owned : This will vary depending on applicants

**What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**

Yes

**Describe the expected public use:**

Public use will depend on the conditions of the easement. Most but not all CPL projects are on public lands/waters open for public use.

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

No

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

No

**Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?**

Yes

If enhancement or restoration is needed for any acquisitions the work will be a part of the grant to acquire the land.

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

Yes

**Timeline**

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
Final report due to council	October 2027
Grantees complete projects and submit final reports	June-July 2027
Status updates due to council	2024,2025,2026,2027
Ongoing monitoring, per OGM policy	Summer 2025,2026,2027
Second round grants encumbered, grantees begin work	May-June 2024
Second round applications awarded	April 2024
Second round applications due	March 2024
Solicit second round applications if needed	January 2024
First round grants encumbered, grantees begin work	January-April 2024
First round grantees announced	December 2023
First round applications due (ECP applications accepted continuously)	September 2023
Solicit Applications: RFP posted online	August 2023

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 11/01/2027

**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	\$360,000	-	-	\$360,000
Contracts	\$9,000,000	\$900,000	local organizations	\$9,900,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$40,000	-	-	\$40,000
Professional Services	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000
Direct Support Services	\$38,000	-	-	\$38,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$17,000	-	-	\$17,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$9,500,000</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>	-	<b>\$10,400,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Natural Resources	0.05	2.0	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
CPL Grant Specialist	1.0	2.0	\$170,000	-	-	\$170,000
CPL Grant Coordinator	1.0	2.0	\$180,000	-	-	\$180,000

**Amount of Request:** \$9,500,000

**Amount of Leverage:** \$900,000

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 9.47%

**DSS + Personnel:** \$398,000

**As a % of the total request:** 4.19%

**Easement Stewardship:** -

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

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

N/A

**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage will be provided through local match of a minimum of 10% of each grant awarded. CPL grantees contribute cash, in-kind contributions, and donations as leverage to grants.

## 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?**

Each year the appropriation funds one year of personnel time for CPL. Two years of personnel funding has been requested in case CPL does not get funded for a year, there will still be personnel funding available to work with grantees to complete projects.

## Contracts

**What is included in the contracts line?**

All partner grants

## 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**

**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?**

DNR Direct and Necessary Calculator

## 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	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-	-

**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?**

[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

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