Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Young Forest Conservation Phase IV

Laws of Minnesota 2024 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/20/2023

Project Title: Young Forest Conservation Phase IV

Funds Recommended: $2,229,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2024, Ch. X, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd.

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Peter Dieser
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Organization: American Bird Conservancy
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Fax Number:
Website: https://abcbirds.org/

Location Information

County Location(s): Aitkin, Beltrami, Carlton, Itasca, Lake of the Woods, Pine, Cass, Cook, Becker, St. Louis and Clearwater.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

Narrative

Abstract

Young Forest Conservation Phase IV will continue American Bird Conservancy's successful, ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, and Ruffed Grouse breeding habitat on publicly protected lands. This work also benefits a suite of associated deciduous and mixed forest habitat species within a diverse, contiguous landscape-level forest matrix. Through Phases I-III, ABC completed 9,204 acres of high-quality early successional habitat projects. Phase IV will continue habitat treatments on an additional 4,360+ acres in Phase IV, while expanding project work to include additional bird species, including, but not limited to, Red-headed Woodpecker and Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Design and Scope of Work

In Young Forest Conservation Phases I-III (2013-present), American Bird Conservancy (ABC) completed 9,204 acres of breeding habitat projects for the Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA), American Woodcock (AMWO), Ruffed Grouse (RUGR), and associated early successional forest and brushland species. To achieve this, ABC worked collaboratively with County, Tribal, State, Federal, and NGO partners. In Phase IV, ABC will continue to use science-based best management practices (BMPs) to implement projects on permanently protected lands, creating 4,360+ acres of habitat over five years.

In Phase IV, ABC will continue to prioritize projects in early successional deciduous forest habitats, and expand to include additional complimentary treatments in mixed forest covertypes to benefit young forest cohorts such as White-throated Sparrow, Veery, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. ABC will also complete a limited number of projects in adjacent brushland and oak savanna habitats to benefit Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) and Sharp-tailed Grouse (STGR). Projects will be completed using science-based best management practices within consensus focal regions.

From 2015-2018, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology finished a program to monitor species response on Phase I-II project sites. Monitors evaluated point locations within ABC-managed sites, observing a positive effect on GWWA and AMWO occupancy, resulting in >90% relative occupancy on shrubland data points of managed sites in Minnesota by year three. GWWA density nearly doubled and AMWO density increased to 1 male/4.84 acres.

Cutting projects emulate natural disturbance by reducing the density of woody vegetation (mostly brush) in non-commercial stands to create nesting, brood rearing, and browsing habitat. Mature trees and patchy, woody structure are retained to create site-level structural diversity to maintain perches for male GWWAs to claim territory and attract females, while providing nesting and forage for associated wildlife species.

Prescribed fire projects may be implemented in disturbance dependent habitats within established burn units with approved burn plans in forest, oak savanna, and shrubland habitats. Treatments will be completed on sites that have become overgrown with brush species that reduce ecological heterogeneity and limit the habitat's viability to meet life-cycle needs of a suite of migratory and resident bird species. The loss or degradation of these habitat types and transition zones greatly reduces the capacity of these areas to support robust wildlife populations.

Planting projects will focus on creating young forest habitat, expanding forest contiguity, and increasing habitat connectivity. Focal areas include, but are not limited to, DNR Wildlife Management Areas, Audubon Minnesota Important Bird Areas, and focal management regions for at-risk bird species.

Treatment of invasive species or woody encroachment via herbicide application may be implemented if

complimentary to other projects described herein. Treatments will utilize guidance provided by the Minnesota Management Plan for Invasive Species, written by the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council.

ABC provides technical and project management assistance to partners for all project phases, while engaging in cooperative forums, outreach, and continuing education associated with forest habitat. ABC's collaborative network and technical experience implementing habitat projects enables us to work across jurisdictional boundaries and address landscape-level priorities while meeting site-level goals.

Explain how the plan addresses habitat protection, restoration, and/or enhancement for fish, game & wildlife, including threatened or endangered species conservation

Minnesota is a key state in an international initiative to conserve AMWO and GWWA, Minnesota Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), across their full life-cycle ranges. ABC also collaborates with international partners in Central and South America to conserve GWWA wintering habitat, while implementing a regional program throughout the Great Lakes.

GWWA and AMWO breed in young forest and shrubland habitats within diverse, contiguous, deciduous and mixed forest landscapes. Minnesota holds the largest remaining breeding population of GWWA of any U.S. state and the second largest population of AMWO. Rangewide habitat loss and degradation has led to GWWA population declines of approximately 68% since 1966. As a result, GWWA is a Partners in Flight (PIF) Red Watch List Species and has been considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. AMWO populations steadily declined over the last quarter century at a rate of 1-2% per year and is on the 2016 North American Bird Conservation Initiative State of the Birds Watch List. The GWWA Status Review and Conservation Plan and the AMWO Conservation Plan identify 38 bird species of conservation concern frequently associated with GWWA and AMWO habitat.

Red-headed Woodpecker (RHWO) breeds in oak savanna/brush prairie habitats. It is a Minnesota SGCN and is identified as a PIF Species of Continental Importance, declining 54% across its range since1966.

Sharp-tailed Grouse (STGR) is a SGCN that breeds in brushland and grassland habitats and occupies a fraction of its historical range in Minnesota. Populations declined 53-70% in Minnesota between 1980-1993. A state-wide management plan was recently written to address this decline, which is associated with habitat loss and degradation from succession, fragmentation, and conversion.

Where present on the landscape and given an appropriate forest matrix that fulfills additional habitat requirements, projects associated with this proposal will also provide habitat benefits for the following Minnesota SGCN:

- Eastern Whip-poor-will
- Brown Thrasher
- Veery
- Black-billed Cuckoo
- White-throated Sparrow
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Sedge Wren
- Elk
- Moose
- Willow Flycatcher
- Least Flycatcher
- Brown Thrasher

Additional Non-SGCN of note that also benefit from this work include:
- Ruffed Grouse
- Eastern Towhee
- Indigo Bunting
- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Snowshoe Hare
- Yellow Warbler

What are the elements of this plan that are critical from a timing perspective?

Since 1970, North American bird populations indicated a net loss of 2.9 billion birds or 29% of total population abundance across all species. Phase IV offers a unique opportunity to build upon the success of Phases I-III to assist in the recovery of at-risk bird species through strategic habitat planning and management in critical habitats.

- GWWA has experienced a 68% population decline since 1966. Minnesota contains approximately 10% of the breeding range, though 45% of the population breeds here each year.
- AMWO populations have steadily declined 1-2% annually over the last quarter century. Minnesota is home to the second-largest AMWO breeding population in the country.
- RHWO has been declining 54% across its range since 1966. In Minnesota this decline was more precipitous, falling 6.3% per year between 1966-2012.
- STGR declined >53% in Minnesota between 1980-1993, leading to a close of the hunting season in 2021.

Describe how the plan expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:

ABC will continue to prioritize young forest and brushland habitat for GWWA, AMWO, and RUGR in Phase IV, while also including openlands and oak savanna habitat treatments to benefit STGR and RHWO. In Phases I-III, ABC had numerous project opportunities to complete openlands and oak savanna habitat projects on sites within relative proximity to work being conducted for GWWA and AMWO, but could not complete them because those projects fell outside of the scope of work described in previous OHF agreements. In response to this need and opportunity, the Phase IV scope has been expanded to support collaboration between ABC project managers and natural resource partners to implement a more holistic conservation approach that impacts a broader range of focal species, while expanding habitat corridors or complexes and increasing habitat contiguity.

The work outlined in this project advances the scientifically-established goals set forth in the GWWA Status Review and Conservation Plan, AMWO Conservation Plan, RHWO Minnesota Conservation Plan, and Minnesota STGR Management Plan. All work is completed within focal areas identified in these plans and using associated, science-based best management practices. Projects are designed with consideration to site, neighborhood, and landscape level biological and ecological factors, as well as integrating species considerations across adjacent habitat types when applicable.

ABC also created a Minnesota focal area through the use of a combination of GIS data layers to emphasize a landscape level focus on locating project sites within contiguous forest and brushland complexes on protected lands in Minnesota. We also utilize a habitat occupancy models developed by the Natural Resources Research Institute, project monitoring data collected by agency partners and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas species monitoring data, and MN DNR's Natural Heritage Information System when determining priority habitat areas. This additional work is reflected in the ABC Minnesota Northwoods BirdScape, which is a target investment area for conservation based on its importance to focal species and potential for

landscape-scale impact. By relying on established science, ABC ensures that our work produces habitat required to meet landscape goals that provide meaningful impact for target species.

Which Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Projects Joint Ventures Plan

Explain how this plan will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.

Focal species included herein are expected to experience range contraction or shift as climate change impacts native habitats. Increasing average temperature and changes in precipitation patterns are projected to continue in the coming decades. As a result, alterations in native plant community composition due to climate change is projected to continue.

Due to this and the life-cycle needs of focal species, ABC looks beyond site-level habitat considerations when designing projects, and incorporates neighborhood considerations to promote habitat connectivity and forest contiguity into the planning process. ABC also designs its projects to emulate natural disturbance and increase biological, ecological, and age class diversity to create high-quality habitat for focal species and associated species that share this habitat. Promoting contiguity, connectivity, and diversity increases habitat resilience and adaptability to climate change impacts, and facilitates movement of native communities as they adapt to shifting habitats and ranges.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

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

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 ~ *The majority of work will be completed in the Northern Forest Region, with an undetermined percentage of project acres falling within the Forest-Prairie Transition Region. In Phases I-III, a number of sites were located at the border of these two regions and in Phase IV this is likely to continue with some habitat projects and prescribed fire units also falling in the Forest-Prairie region. This region is included in this proposal to avoid revising this input to accommodate online reporting if similar circumstances occurs in Phase IV. Outcomes for this region are evaluated as described for the Northern Forest Region.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *ABC provides site identification, project design, and project management assistance to cooperative partners for all project phases. ABC project coordinators work hand-in-hand with partners to manage project implementation. ABC also uses GIS to track completed work via GPS units and satellite imagery, allowing us to assess final completed acres with the highest degree of accuracy possible. Project work is also evaluated by project coordinators that mange ongoing project operations and visit completed sites to confirm that they fall within the post treatment conditions defined in the project management plan.*

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 only requests supplemental funds for planning and implementation of the habitat projects described herein and does not supplant any existing funds of public and tribal agency partners.

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

ABC has a mission to conserve native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. To realize this mission, we have built an organizational structure that continuously supports species of priority concern throughout the Americas without relying exclusively on any single funding source. As such, this project is one aspect of a collaborative, full life-cycle conservation initiative on public, tribal, and private lands for the focal species identified herein. Due to the scope of this initiative, numerous state, federal, and private funding sources will continue to be used to maintain quality habitat in breeding, migratory, and wintering ranges now and in the future. Though the capacity to complete this vital work would be diminished if future MN OHF funding is not available, ABC would continue to seek alternate funding to maintain this and complimentary programs. Further, by continuing to engage a broad network of partners while promoting education and outreach of priority species BMPs, ABC's conservation efforts to promote early successional habitat has resulted in a greater awareness within the natural resources community of how to best utilize the most recent research and new funding sources to implement quality habitat treatments to benefit these focal species.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2024-2029	Public Funding (MN OHF IV)	Complete 4,360+ Acres of Habitat Treatments on Permanently Protected Land	Continue to Refine BMPs by Supporting Research and Monitoring	Continue to Expand Network of Partner Agencies and Organizations
2029-2034	Private Donations and Public Funding (TBD)	Continue Public and Private Lands Programs	Continue Outreach and Education Programs for Priority Species	Continue to Monitor and Evaluate Focal Species Response to Young Forest Conservation Program

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

ABC celebrates not only the diversity of birds and their habitats, but also the diversity of all who celebrate and conserve birds. ABC is committed to supporting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) within our organization and across the bird conservation community. ABC has established a JEDI program made up of staff from all departments who meet monthly to design best practices for expanding ABC's engagement in all communities, economies, and cultures.

Advancing our JEDI program means working collaboratively with diverse partners throughout the Americas. We carry out our bird conservation work through numerous partnerships, including public and tribal agencies, industry professionals, private citizens, and nonprofits throughout the Americas. When possible through our tribal partnerships, we incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into decision making for habitat management. We also establish and nurture new partnerships that help to expand birding and bird conservation to more people.

When recruiting new staff, ABC reaches beyond traditional networks. When implementing projects, ABC posts all subcontracts in public forums to ensure we attract appropriately qualified candidates. We also work with our project partners to identify local contractors and post projects on their forums when available. We review all applications/proposals and evaluate applicants based upon qualities that match our project or program requirements. ABC embraces and celebrates diversity and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, opinions, politics, and physical ability.

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
- WPA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal
- Refuge Lands
- State Forests
- Other : Tribal Lands, State Parks

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?
No

Will neonicotinoid pesticide products be used within any activities of this program?
No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Complete 4360+ acres (800-1000/yr) of Habitat Enhancement on Permanently Protected Lands	July 2029

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2029

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, 2028;
(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, 2032;
(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2029;
(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	$838,000	$310,000	American Bird Conservancy, USFWS Tamarac NWR, USFWS Rice Lake NWR	$1,148,000
Contracts	$1,309,000	-	-	$1,309,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$37,000	$45,000	USFWS Tamarac NWR and Rice Lake NWR Vehicle Use	$82,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$13,000	$81,000	USFWS Tamarac NWR and Rice Lake NWR Office/Facility Use	$94,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$2,000	$29,000	USFWS Tamarac NWR Equipment Use and ABC Computers	$31,000
Supplies/Materials	$30,000	-	-	$30,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$2,229,000**	**$465,000**	**-**	**$2,694,000**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
USFWS Rice Lake NWR Staff	0.15	5.0	-	$75,000	USFWS Rice Lake NWR	$75,000
USFWS Tamarac NWR Staff	0.25	4.0	-	$160,000	USFWS Tamarac NWR	$160,000
ABC Program Staff	2.15	5.0	$838,000	$75,000	American Bird Conservancy	$913,000

Amount of Request: $2,229,000
Amount of Leverage: $465,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 20.86%
DSS + Personnel: $851,000
As a % of the total request: 38.18%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?
ABC received 72% of its OHF proposal request and reduced budget items and acreage proportionally (4,360) to the extent possible to allow 5 years to complete 800-1000 acres of habitat projects per year. It is notable that new Prevailing Wage protocols have increased project costs and reduced target acreage.

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
ABC received $385000 in in-kind leverage from Tamarac/Rice Lake NWRs for office space and programmatic support over 5 years. ABC will provide approximately $25000yr in match starting year 3 for the Public Lands Director and MN Private Lands Foresters, and $5000 for computers.

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?**
> There will be one year of overlap between Phase III and Phase IV. This allows a seamless transition between Phases and the ability to continue completing projects and support Project Coordinators without budget shortfalls or dips in project accomplishments due to funding being exhausted. For example, the overlapping year between Phases I-II and Phases II-III enabled the ABC Public Lands Coordinator to utilize all remaining project funds from the previous Phase and begin using project funding from the subsequent Phase immediately.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
Funds will be used to hire contractors to complete habitat projects described herein. This work will concentrate on hiring contractors for brush cutting, planting, prescribed fire, and invasive species removal projects. This proposal is designed to maximize funds spent directly on project implementation.

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
No allocated travel funds will be used for purposes other than traditional travel costs: 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?
The Direct Support Services budget was determined using timesheet data from MN OHF programmatic funding for grant implementation support requirements for Young Forest Conservation Phases I-III.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?
Field equipment to be purchased includes items such as rubber boots, rain gear, mosquito nets, flagging tape, forester's vests, GPS units (for contractor and Coordinator use), roller drum maintenance (such as repairing breaks to the hitch assembly), forestry prisms, forestry paint, etc.

Federal Funds

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

Are the funds confirmed?
Yes

Is Confirmation Document attached?
Yes

- In Kind : $385,000

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	-	-	4,360	-	4,360
Total	**-**	**-**	**4,360**	**-**	**4,360**

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	-	-	$2,229,000	-	$2,229,000
Total	**-**	**-**	**$2,229,000**	**-**	**$2,229,000**

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	-	500	-	-	3,860	4,360
Total	**-**	**500**	**-**	**-**	**3,860**	**4,360**

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	-	$240,000	-	-	$1,989,000	$2,229,000
Total	**-**	**$240,000**	**-**	**-**	**$1,989,000**	**$2,229,000**

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	-	-	$511	-

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	-	$480	-	-	$515

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

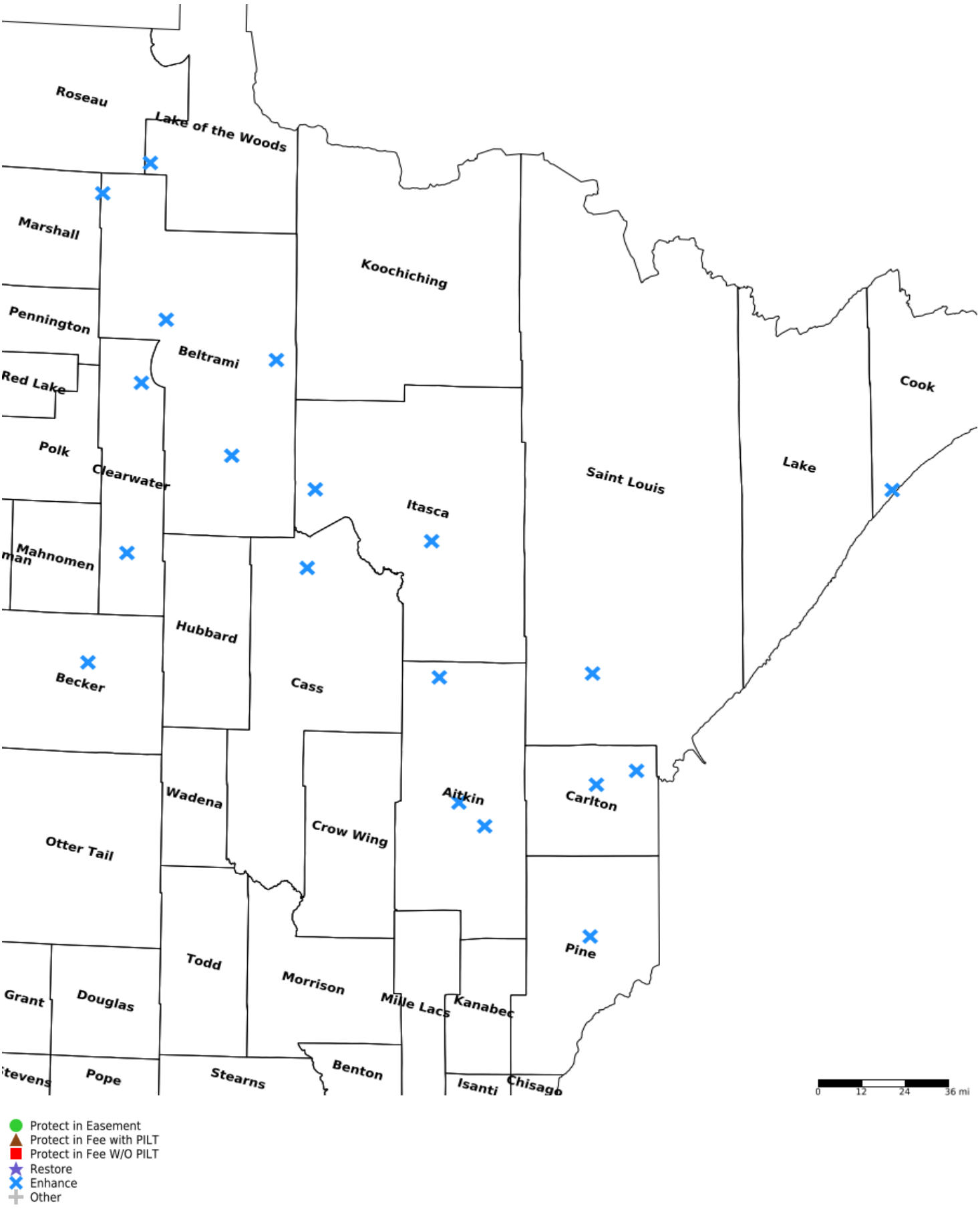
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
This parcel table reflects the partners that ABC has identified as project partners in Phase IV. All of these partners have worked with ABC in the past to complete habitat projects in Phases I-III or though other funding opportunities and are eager to continue to work with ABC in Phase IV. ABC will also continue to work to identify additional partners to work with throughout Phase IV. This may also add additional counties to the parcel table throughout the period of performance.

Prospective project sites will be evaluated using the attached selection criteria and via collaboration with public, tribal, NGO foresters and biologists using habitat and species best management practices. Project identification and design utilize the Sign-up Criteria included herein and also the management guidance set forth in the GWWA Status Review and Conservation Plan, AMWO Conservation Plan, RHWO Minnesota Conservation Plan, and Minnesota STGR Management Plan, and other associated resources. All work is completed within focal areas identified in these plans or by ABC agency and organizational partners. Projects are designed with consideration to site, neighborhood, and landscape level biological and ecological factors, as well as integrating species considerations across adjacent habitat types when applicable.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Aitkin Co. #1	Aitkin	04725201	250	$78,750	Yes
Rice Lake NWR #1	Aitkin	04723231	250	$78,750	Yes
MN DNR Aitkin #1	Aitkin	05225219	200	$63,000	Yes
Tamarac NWR #1	Becker	14139227	500	$157,500	Yes
MN DNR Wapati WMA #1	Beltrami	15838230	1,000	$315,000	Yes
MN DNR Bemidji #1	Beltrami	15230219	250	$78,750	Yes
Beltrami Co. #1	Beltrami	14832206	400	$126,000	Yes
Red Lake Reservation #1	Beltrami	15335207	750	$236,250	Yes
Carlton Co. #1	Carlton	04818217	400	$126,000	Yes
MN DNR Cloquet #1	Carlton	04916231	200	$63,000	Yes
Chippewa NF #1	Cass	14429203	100	$31,500	Yes
Red Lake Reservation #2	Clearwater	15137224	750	$236,250	Yes
White Earth Reservation #1	Clearwater	14537229	100	$31,500	Yes
Superior NF #1	Cook	05905236	100	$31,500	Yes
MN DNR Grand Rapids #1	Itasca	14729212	100	$31,500	Yes
Itasca Co. #1	Itasca	05726223	300	$94,500	Yes
MN DNR Red Lake WMA #1	Lake of the Woods	15936220	300	$94,500	Yes
Pine Co. #1	Pine	04319236	250	$78,750	Yes
St. Louis Co. #1	St. Louis	05218218	300	$94,500	Yes

Parcel Map


Roseau
Lake of the Woods
Marshall
Koochiching
Pennington
Beltrami
Red Lake
Cook
Polk
Clearwater
Saint Louis
Lake
Itasca
Mahnomen
Hubbard
Becker
Cass
Wadena
Carlton
Aitkin
Crow Wing
Otter Tail
Pine
Todd
Morrison
Mille Lacs
Kanabec
Grant
Douglas
Stearns
Benton
Isanti
Chisago
Pope
0
12
24
36 mi
Protect in Easement
Protect in Fee with PILT
Protect in Fee W/O PILT
Restore
Enhance
Other

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Young Forest Conservation Phase IV

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2024 - Young Forest Conservation Phase IV
Organization: American Bird Conservancy
Manager: Peter Dieser

Budget

Requested Amount: $3,110,000
Appropriated Amount: $2,229,000
Percentage: 71.67%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	$900,000	$310,000	$838,000	$310,000	93.11%	100.0%
Contracts	$2,050,000	-	$1,309,000	-	63.85%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	$50,000	$45,000	$37,000	$45,000	74.0%	100.0%
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$35,000	$81,000	$13,000	$81,000	37.14%	100.0%
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$5,000	$29,000	$2,000	$29,000	40.0%	100.0%
Supplies/Materials	$70,000	-	$30,000	-	42.86%	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$3,110,000**	**$465,000**	**$2,229,000**	**$465,000**	**71.67%**	**100.0%**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Target acres to be competed will range from 1000-1300 acres/year given two Project Coordinator Positions. Budget scaling will remain in this range unless reduced budgets require ABC to remove one Coordinator position from the final budget, which would result in a reduced final acreage goal of 500-700 acres/yr.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
ABC will evaluate scalability of DSS and Personnel based on multiple factors, including acreage goals, number of Project Coordinators funding can support, and the number of implementation years final budgets are projected to support. All of these budget items will be adjusted proportionally though some differences in scalability may occur.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Target acres to be competed will range from 1000-1300 acres/year. Budget scaling will remain in this range unless reduced budgets require ABC to remove one of the Project Coordinator positions from the final budget, which would result in a reduced final acreage goal of 500-700 acres/yr.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
DSS and Personnel budget lines will remain proportional to target acreage goals. ABC will evaluate DSS and Personnel based on multiple factors, including final target acreage goals, number of Project Coordinators funding can support, and the number of implementation years final budgets are projected to be able to support.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	6,500	4,360	67.08%

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$3,110,000	$2,229,000	71.67%

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	6,500	4,360	67.08%

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$3,110,000	$2,229,000	71.67%

ABC Young Forest Conservation Phase IV Sign Up Criteria

In Phase IV, ABC will work with agency and organizational partners to identify and implement noncommercial forest, brushland, and open land habitat projects on protected lands to benefit Minnesota bird Species of Conservation Need (SGCN).

Non-commercial Cutting:

Deciduous Forest, Mixed Forest or Forest Brushland Habitat:

Prospective sites are overgrown with shrub and sapling species reducing their habitat usability by early successional forest and brushland bird species. Targeted cutting projects have the potential to create nesting and brood rearing habitat for Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, Ruffed Grouse and/or associated young forest and brushland species. Potential project sites must be closed canopy brush or forest systems that cannot be completed using commercial harvest practices. 10-15 trees will be retained when present. When 10-15 trees are not present, sites will retain 25-50% shrub/sapling cover distributed throughout the site. In some cases, brush will not be retained if sufficient tree cover exists.

Additional site and neighborhood level considerations include:

- Conifer component < approximately 30% (some sites may exceed this total for focal species including Veery, White-throated Sparrow, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak)
- Mix of mature and early successional forest age classes
- May maximize forest edge with legacy patches and/or feathered borders
- Created habitat is ≤ 5 mi (preferably ≤ 1 mi) from other breeding habitat patches

Additional habitats such as wet meadow/Carr systems, oak-aspen woodlands, and oak savanna will also be considered for cutting operations in Phase IV. Brush cutting operations will emulate natural disturbance and may compliment additional habitat treatments, such as implementation of prescribed fire. Standing snags will also be preferentially retained, in groups if possible, for Red-headed Woodpecker nesting sites and foraging perches.

Oak-aspen woodlands and savannas: Target project areas ideally contain 25-50% cover by forb species such as northern bedstraw, wild sarsaparilla, and goldenrod species. Shrub layer density is ideally approximately ≤25% and common species are bur oak, juneberry, chokecherry, American hazelnut, poison ivy, and gray dogwood. Canopies range from 10-50% (ideal range) and most common species are bur oak and quaking aspen. Sites will be evaluated for potential cutting projects if they exceed 25% brush cover.

Wet meadow/Carr Systems: In the absence of fire, graminoid and forb dominated communities can become overrun by shrubs, making this habitat less desirable to SGCN such as Sharp-tailed Grouse. Management in these native plant communities identifies the need for regular disturbance (preferably fire) every 5-10 years or as needed to set back succession. Shrub densities of 10-40% across the focal management units are ideal. Management will be prioritized on sites that exceed this density range and have been confirmed to have a breeding lek present in previous years.

Planting Projects:

Planting projects will focus on expanding contiguous forest habitat in deciduous, mixed, and conifer cover types into areas that are presently unforested (such as fields adjacent to contiguous forest blocks). Additionally, planting projects may be designed to increase forest diversity and thermal cover, such as planting conifer clumps in deciduous forest stands to create thermal cover for Ruffed Grouse. Priority will

be given to working in locations with a management focus of creating high quality wildlife habitat. Focal areas include, but are not limited to DNR Wildlife Management Areas, Audubon Minnesota Important Bird Areas, and focal management regions for at-risk bird species.

Prescribed Fire:

Prescribed fire projects will be completed in disturbance-dependent native plant communities within established burn units with approved burn plans in forest, oak savanna, and shrubland habitats. Treatments will be completed in ecological communities that have become overgrown with brush species that reduce ecological heterogeneity and limit the habitat's viability to meet the life-cycle needs of a suite of migratory and resident wildlife. The loss or degradation of these habitat types and transition zones can greatly reduce the capacity of these areas to support robust populations of game and nongame bird species.

Habitats that once depended on low to mid severity fire events to maintain their natural plant community composition risk losing their ability to support the bird species that once occupied those systems. Prescribed fire implementation can also provide a number of additional benefits to these habitats such as

1) Reducing the density of shrub layer and allow native forbs and grasses to become or remain established
2) Consuming excess fuel and reducing ladder fuels, witch mitigates the risk of future high severity fire events
3) Creating openings to allow advance regeneration of future canopy trees to become established
4) Reducing the establishment and spread of invasive and pest species

Focal habitats for prescribed fire implementation include, but are not limited to:

Oak-aspen Woodlands and Savannas: These plant communities historically experienced frequent surface fires and return intervals. Target project areas ideally contain 25-50% cover by forb species such as northern bedstraw, wild sarsaparilla, and goldenrod spp. Shrub layer density is 25-100% and common species are bur oak, juneberry, chokecherry, American hazelnut, poison ivy, and gray dogwood. Canopies range from 5-75% and most common species are bur oak and quaking aspen.

Wet meadow/Carr Systems: In the absence of fire, graminoid and forb dominated communities can become overrun by shrubs, making this habitat less desirable to species of concern such as Sharp-tailed Grouse. Management in these native plant communities identifies the need for regular disturbance (preferably fire) every 5-10 years or as needed to set back succession. Shrub densities of 10-40% across the focal management units are ideal and sites will be prioritized that exceed this range (indicating shrub density is beginning to exceed ideal habitat limits). Management will also be prioritized on sites that have been confirmed to have a breeding lek present in previous years.

Invasive or Woody Species Removal: Treatment of invasive species or encroaching woody species will be limited in scope, and only implemented if complimentary to other habitat projects described herein. Priority will be given to implementing treatments (hand pulling, herbicide application, etc.) on sites where encroaching or invasive species threaten the integrity and usability of native habitats by at-risk bird species and associated wildlife.

Treatment and removal of invasive species will utilize guidance provided by the Minnesota Management Plan for Invasive Species, written by the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council.