



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Roving Crew 3

Laws of Minnesota 2025 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/10/2025

Project Title: DNR Roving Crew 3

Funds Recommended: \$12,642,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2025, Ch. 36, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(u)

Appropriation Language: \$12,642,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat on permanently protected lands throughout Minnesota using the roving crew program of the Department of Natural Resources.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Greg Hoch

Title: Prairie Habitat Supervisor

Organization: DNR

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Location Information

County Location(s): Roseau, Faribault, Lake of the Woods, Lincoln, Kandiyohi, Pennington, Mille Lacs, Chippewa, Polk, Morrison, Goodhue, Benton, Lyon, Cottonwood, Cass, Pipestone, Marshall, Fillmore, Redwood, Cook, Freeborn, Carlton, Washington, Stearns and Aitkin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Southeast Forest

Activity types:

Restore

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Forest

Habitat

Narrative**Abstract**

Grasslands and wetlands in western Minnesota continues to be the most threatened habitat in the state. At the same time, the DNR continues to work to make the forests on WMAs more productive for wildlife.

This proposal will enhance wildlife habitat on permanently protected lands, most of which are open to public hunting. While the majority of restoration and enhancement action will be on WMAs, Crews will also work, when needed, on DNR SNAs, AMAs, NPB easements, and State Forests, as well as National Forests, WPAs and NWRs to meet specific wildlife habitat goals.

Design and Scope of Work

Roving Crews are fully equipped to conduct a range of habitat projects. The staff on these crews are solely dedicated to habitat enhancement and restoration. In the prairies and western prairie pothole wetlands, they focus on prescribed burns, tree removal, grassland restorations, removal of old fencing, installing fenceposts for conservation grazing. In wetlands the focus is on wild rice collection and seeding, wetland restoration, invasive species control, cattail spraying, and sediment removal. Forest projects include prescribed burns in fire-dependent forests and brushlands; seed harvesting and planting, seedling planting, protection, and/or release of species such as oak and winter cover such as conifer; mowing and shearing of brushlands.

In the farmland region, we continue to lose ground on wetlands and grasslands. Therefore, it's critical that the remaining public and protected habitats are in as high a quality as possible to both produce resident wildlife, such as pheasants, and be attractive to migratory waterfowl that breed to our north. These same habitats benefit dozens of non-game species and hundreds of pollinators.

This proposal will fund five Roving Crews. These include the 8 person Crews near Crookston (DNR Region 1), 8 person Crew at Lac Qui Parle (Region 4), 8 person Crew at Rosemount (Region 3), 6 person Crew south of Fergus Falls (Region 1), and the 4 person Crew near Grand Rapids (Region 2). This will be a total of 34 crew staff.

We estimate that on a good to average year the crews will enhance over 28,000 acres of habitat annually, or 56,000 acres over two years, across the state. However, droughts or wet spring and other issues can affect the large acre projects such as prescribed fire, so it's difficult to make an exact estimate of our accomplishments.

Due to unexpected budget increases and inflation, our previous ML23 proposal may not be enough to cover five crews over two years. Therefore, we are requesting an additional \$500,000 to cover the Northeast Crew for one year of the timeframe covered by the ML23 appropriation. We provide more detail in the attached memo. We also provide a new funding timeline to supplement the information we provided at the Dec 2023 Council meeting.

This is our third Roving Crew appropriation. We are almost spent down on the first and will begin to spend down the second July 1, 2024.

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

Because these crews are working in grasslands, wetlands, forests, as well as brushland and savanna, they will be able to benefit wildlife that depend on a wide range of habitat types. In the forests, habitats that are critical for many species are brushlands and early successional forests. These often require mechanical treatment. Similarly, many of our pine and oak forests are dependent on prescribed fire. In other areas, seeds or seedlings can be planted to enhance forest succession and benefit wildlife. Grasslands need repeated fire to continue to enhance their benefits for wildlife. Tree encroachment and invasive species are also a common and recurring threat to grasslands. Roving Crews also work on cattail removal

With few exceptions, grassland and wetlands habitats for game species, nongame species, SGCN, and T&E species are similar. All these species need habitat composed of a diversity of native grasses and forbs and a range of wetland types, sizes, and depths.

While the work proposed here will benefit many wildlife species, it will also go beyond these objectives to provide numerous ecosystem services such as water filtration, floodwater retention and reduced flood damage, and create pollinator habitat to help sustain segments of the agricultural economy. All of these habitats are very good at carbon storage and removing carbon from the air, helping to both slow climate change and help our landscapes adapt to the effects of climate change.

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

Traditionally, grasslands and wetlands have been seen primarily as wildlife habitat. We have Plans that tell us how to best do this work on the landscape. In recent years researchers in Minnesota and surrounding states have been demonstrating how strategic landscape planning for grassland/wetland work can improve water quality for wildlife and people. Water quality issues continue to be an economic and health problem in rural Minnesota. Combining wildlife habitat and water plans shows how strategic planning can benefit wildlife and people at the same time.

In the same way, healthy forests provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife, protect surface and groundwater, and are a strong part of the state's economy.

Providing diverse and healthy habitats produces more wildlife making hunting more attractive to both experienced and new hunters. They will also provide opportunities for birdwatching, nature photography, and related activities.

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

The grassland and wetland projects in this proposal will be guided primarily by the Prairie Conservation Plan, and Pheasant and Duck Action Plans. First and foremost, these Plans outline focal areas (Core Areas and Habitat Complexes) where we can build on an existing base of conservation lands and improve the habitat there. The Prairie Plan identifies specific corridors and complexes that connect larger core areas. The latest science is telling us that it isn't the size of an individual habitat parcel that matters as much as the amount of habitat in the larger surrounding landscape. These Plans, and the work proposed here, build on these concepts of landscape level habitat planning. We will not restrict ourselves to these focal areas. There are critical habitats outside these areas. However, we will use these Plans to focus our efforts in areas where they can have the greatest wildlife benefits.

The DNR has a number of plans for forests in different parts of the states including the DNR's Conservation Agenda, Deer Plan, Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and Section Forest Resource Management Plans. These plans coordinate the management of types and ages of forests across the landscape, as well as the local management of each unit and regional management of the larger landscape to assure there are multiple forest habitat types that benefit all forest wildlife species.

Which top 2 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN

North American Waterfowl Management 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.

All the work done with this proposal will increase carbon capture and storage. The manager of this grant (Hoch) is on multiple Climate teams and cmtes within the DNR and across state agencies. He has given presentation on climate and OHF in the past and was featured on a segment of MN Bound in recent years relative to climate and carbon capture.

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

Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

Prairie

Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

Southeast Forest

Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

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 ~ *Migratory game and non-game birds will be some of the primary beneficiaries of this work. We hope to continue to strengthen partnerships with the University of Minnesota to incorporate graduate students into research and monitoring work.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *Monitoring will take place with the base level monitoring conducted by DNR staff and staff from other agencies/NGOs.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *Monitoring will take place with the base level monitoring conducted by DNR staff and staff from other agencies/NGOs. This includes surveys such as moose, sharp-tailed and ruffed grouse, and woodcock, which are all dependent on open areas.*

Programs in prairie region:

Restored and enhanced upland habitats ~ *The multi-agency/NGO Grassland Monitoring Team (GMT) has developed standardized protocols for sampling grassland vegetation and a number of the sites on this request will be sampled over the 5 year period. They recently published the first results of this project.*

Programs in southeast forest region:

Healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *DNR non-game staff will continue ongoing, long-term monitoring of a range of wildlife species.*

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.

These funds are for additional enhance/restoration work beyond what the DNR is already conducting. These funds are not supplanting or substituting any funds.

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

We select projects with these funds that strategically enhance priority habitats. The OHF provides Minnesota's conservation community with a large amount of non-Federal dollars as match that other Midwestern states don't have. In recent years, the conservation partners have been coordinating to maximize our efforts with funding sources such as the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) as well as the American Bird

Conservancy's RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) for young forests, to name just a couple of examples.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027 and beyond	OHF, DNR funds, partner funds	conduct enhancements	monitor vegetation and wildlife responses	-

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

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. Work such as seeding new wetland with wild rice has both strong wildlife and cultural benefits.

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. For instance, work in the upper reaches of a watershed can often capture floodwater and reduce downstream flooding, where many of our rural cities are. 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.

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

SNA

AMA

Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

County/Municipal

Refuge Lands

Public Waters

State Forests

Other : potentially Con-con lands or national forests, if there is a clear wildlife habitat benefit to the work

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?

Yes

Explain what will be planted and include the maximum percentage of any acquired parcel that would be planted into foodplots by the proposer or the end owner of the property:

Corn or soybeans plantings for a year or two may be used to prepare soil for restoration.

Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Enhance and restore habitats across Minnesota	FY2027-28, complete July 2028

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 for fee title acquisition of land 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, 2029;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this section is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2033;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2030;
- (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	\$8,775,000	-	-	\$8,775,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$2,629,000	-	-	\$2,629,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$803,700	-	-	\$803,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Supplies/Materials	\$384,300	-	-	\$384,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$12,642,000	-	-	\$12,642,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Roving Crew members	34.0	2.0	\$8,195,000	-	-	\$8,195,000
Rov Crew Admin	0.25	2.0	\$80,000	-	-	\$80,000
NE Rov Crew (3rd year)	4.0	1.0	\$500,000	-	-	\$500,000

Amount of Request: \$12,642,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$9,578,700

As a % of the total request: 75.77%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

We will be able to accomplish slightly fewer projects and acres than planned. These proposals are made of numerous projects so we can be flexible if needed.

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

This proposal is composed of numerous projects. We would simply eliminate projects or scale down the size of some projects.

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

They would be proportionally reduced using the DNR calculator.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Travel

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

Yes

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

Travel may include equipment leases or rentals.

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?

We used the standard DNR Direct and Necessary Calculator.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?

Drip torches, chain saw, etc.

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?

These funds would be matched to Pittman-Roberson funds on an annual cycle through the DNR.

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	4,000	-	-	4,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	9,000	39,500	3,500	-	52,000
Total	9,000	43,500	3,500	-	56,000

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$903,100	-	-	\$903,100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,031,200	\$8,917,600	\$790,100	-	\$11,738,900
Total	\$2,031,200	\$9,820,700	\$790,100	-	\$12,642,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	4,000	-	4,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	1,000	18,000	1,000	29,500	2,500	52,000
Total	1,000	18,000	1,000	33,500	2,500	56,000

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$903,100	-	\$903,100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$225,800	\$4,063,700	\$225,000	\$6,660,000	\$564,400	\$11,738,900
Total	\$225,800	\$4,063,700	\$225,000	\$7,563,100	\$564,400	\$12,642,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$225	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$225	\$225	\$225	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$225	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$225	\$225	\$225	\$225	\$225

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

Parcels are identified by Area Wildlife Managers and approved by Regional Managers. Priorities are set by the Plans identified earlier in this proposal. The parcels listed below are representative of the types of projects Roving Crews would work on. The parcel list below are simply some placeholder projects. New projects are always coming to the Crews' attention or they need to switch from one project to another due to weather or other issues. It is difficult at this time to identify with any accuracy the projects the Crews will actually work on.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Four Corners WMA	Cottonwood	10332231	33	\$23,000	Yes	Grassland Restoration
Rice Lake WMA	Faribault	10427221	27	\$27,000	Yes	Woody Removal
Chain-O-Sloughs WMA	Lincoln	10946222	95	\$75,600	Yes	Grassland Restoration
Mille Lacs WMA	Mille Lacs	04125229	100	\$115,000	Yes	Woody Removal
Liberty WMA	Polk	14745216	75	\$30,000	Yes	Grassland Restoration
Bayport WMA	Washington	02920222	75	\$270,125	Yes	Woody Removal
Bayport WMA	Washington	02920222	16	\$45,600	Yes	Grassland Restoration

Other Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Aitkin WMA: Main Unit	Aitkin	04423202	300	\$118,500	Yes
Graham WMA: Main Unit	Benton	03830201	24	\$19,500	Yes
Blackhoof River WMA	Carlton	04220226	550	\$750	Yes
Birchdale WMA	Cass	13430208	200	\$92,000	Yes
Farnham Lake WMA	Cass	13532218	100	\$50,000	Yes
Lac qui Parle WMA: Controlled Hunting Zone	Chippewa	11842201	5	\$12,000	Yes
Lac qui Parle WMA: Controlled Hunting Zone	Chippewa	11841206	276	\$150,000	Yes
Caribou Falls WMA: West Unit	Cook	05806236	103	\$16,860	Yes
Choice WMA	Fillmore	10208214	70	\$56,000	Yes
Boyd Sartell WMA: Main Unit	Freeborn	10114205	1,500	\$250,000	Yes
Izaak Walton League WMA	Goodhue	10511212	80	\$120,000	Yes
Gopher Ridge WMA	Kandiyohi	12233231	15	\$80,000	Yes
RIM Memorial WMA	Kandiyohi	12036226	11	\$45,000	Yes
Red Lake WMA: Main Unit	Lake of the Woods	15735229	400	\$60,000	Yes
Prairie Dell WMA	Lincoln	11345216	38	\$15,000	Yes
Gabriel Anderson WMA	Lyon	11340206	10	\$7,500	Yes
Eckvoll WMA	Marshall	15539211	500	\$125,000	Yes
Ereaux WMA	Morrison	04131230	86	\$68,800	Yes
Pembina WMA: Pennington County Unit	Pennington	15345217	20	\$50,000	Yes
Eden WMA	Pipestone	10546224	135	\$96,000	Yes
Cedar Rock WMA: South East Unit	Redwood	11336210	87	\$90,000	Yes
Roseau River WMA	Roseau	16342209	904	\$45,555	Yes
Alice Hamm WMA	Stearns	12229233	425	\$72,100	Yes



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