



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program - Phase XIV

ML 2025 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/03/2024

**Proposal Title:** Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program - Phase XIV

**Funds Requested:** \$12,990,000

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$550,000

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** Yes

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Jon Schneider

**Title:** Manager - Minnesota Conservation Program

**Organization:** Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Meeker, Douglas, Murray, Lincoln, Becker, Sibley, Yellow Medicine, Nicollet, Big Stone, Jackson, Cottonwood, McLeod, Lyon, Clay, Freeborn, Redwood, Rice and Kandiyohi.

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

- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Wetlands
- Prairie

## Narrative

### **Abstract**

This Phase 14 request supports Ducks Unlimited's prairie land acquisition and restoration program. DU proposes to acquire and restore 1,000 acres of land containing drained wetlands and land bordering shallow lakes in Minnesota's Prairie Pothole Region for inclusion in MNDNR state WMAs and USFWS federal WPAs/NWRs. This ongoing land acquisition/restoration program focuses on restoring cropland with drained wetlands near existing WMAs and WPAs/NWRs to help enlarge prairie wetland habitat complexes for breeding ducks, other wildlife, and people. DU biologists and engineers will survey, design, and hire private sector contractors to restore drained wetlands and uplands.

### **Design and Scope of Work**

This is Ducks Unlimited's ongoing program to Acquire and Restore pothole wetlands and prairie grasslands on land for sale adjacent to MNDNR State Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) or National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). DU works with willing seller private landowners with drained wetlands and converted prairie uplands, and land on shallow lakes in need of protection. DU purchases and temporarily holds land title through our Wetlands America Trust (WAT), DU's supporting land-holding organization, of which DU is the sole corporate member.

Our goal is to help restore functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes and complement other conservation efforts to protect intact native prairie. Our work addresses the habitat goals in Minnesota's Long-range Duck Recovery Plan, Minnesota's Prairie Conservation Plan, and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This work is time-sensitive because farmland adjacent to public lands is rarely offered for sale for conservation, and tracts are only available for a short time. DU works quickly and has spent much of our past OHF appropriations for land acquisition.

Ducks Unlimited works closely with Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to find land parcels for sale, and partners with other NGOs, and local sportsmen clubs to restore lands acquired. Although approval is not requested from county boards for DU land acquisitions, DU communicates frequently with county and township officials to ensure local official awareness of our conservation work, and often attends county and township board meetings to discuss projects. The acquisitions and restorations proposed represents the amount of work DU can accomplish over 4-8 years, is scalable, and benefits game and non-game wildlife species alike - from mallards to monarch butterflies.

Because 90% of Minnesota's prairie wetlands have been drained and 99% of prairie uplands converted in Minnesota, acquisition and restoration of prairie and small wetlands is critical – especially for breeding ducks in the Prairie Pothole Region of SW Minnesota where DU focuses our efforts. Furthermore, most remaining undrained wetlands here are in poor ecological condition due to massive landscape prairie conversion to cropland and wetland drainage that degrades both wetland condition and habitat function for prairie wildlife.

Although many of our remaining prairie wetlands and shallow lakes are contained within state WMAs or federal WPAs, these small public land patches rarely provide optimal wildlife habitat due to their disconnected, fragmented shape and small size. Similarly, most prairie shallow lakes are surrounded by a thin ribbon of uplands that fail to adequately buffer them from surrounding agricultural land runoff. Therefore, acquisition and restoration of drained wetlands and cultivated cropland in close proximity to our public lands will improve and buffer our public shallow lakes and remaining wetlands and help create functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes for breeding ducks and other prairie wildlife.

DU professional engineers and biologists work closely with MNDNR and USFWS biologists to plan and implement robust prairie pothole wetland and grassland restorations, including diverse native forb/grass seed plantings and complex wetland restorations that often involve extensive tile drainage systems.

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

This proposal protects and restores prairie lands, including native prairie grasslands and small pothole emergent wetlands, which are identified as critical habitats for many “Species of Greatest Conservation Need” listed in Minnesota’s “Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild & Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife.” Specific species listed in the Action Plan as requiring prairie (page 255) include seven species of butterflies and three bird species that are native prairie specialists: chestnut-collared longspur, Sprague’s pipit, and Baird’s sparrow. The Prairie Parkland has 139 species listed on the SGCN with 13 of these species being unique to the section.

In addition to these specific wildlife species listed as SGCN examples in the Action Plan, restored prairie in the Prairie Parkland will also provide habitat of significant value for other species listed in Appendix B of the Action Plan. Restored and protected prairie will provide habitat of significant value for other SGCN including bird species: upland sandpiper, bobolink, burrowing owl, Le Conte’s sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, swamp sparrow, sharp-tailed grouse, short-eared owl, northern harrier, dickcissel, Henslow’s sparrow, and Nelson’s sharp-tailed sparrow. Upland nesting waterfowl will also benefit including waterfowl listed as SGCN; northern pintail and lesser scaup, which have both seen declines in continental populations. Wetland associated birds such as trumpeter swan, black tern, American bittern, Wilson’s phalarope, and marbled godwit will benefit from wetlands either restored or buffered in the prairie landscape. Mammals such as northern grasshopper mouse and Richardson’s ground squirrels, reptiles such as lined snake and Blanding’s turtle, and amphibians such as northern cricket frog and common mudpuppy are listed as SGCN for the Prairie Parkland.

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

Most wetlands and nearly all native prairie uplands have been drained and converted for agricultural use in southern Minnesota. Most public prairie wildlife lands are small and fragmented, and do not provide viable productive patches of functioning habitat that support prairie wildlife populations. Thus, acquisition of prairie lands for sale is a key component of our overall Minnesota Prairie Plan conservation efforts to enlarge, restore and protect wildlife habitat. This work is time-sensitive because private land near or adjacent to state WMAs and federal WPA boundaries only rarely becomes available for sale to conservation interests, and thus it is critical to respond quickly to these land acquisition and restoration opportunities when they arise. Most private landowners will wait and work with conservation NGO land buyers for a short time, but won’t wait indefinitely for conservation funding, and a generation may pass before these key parcels become available for purchase again.

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

Ducks Unlimited uses science to strategically focus acquisition of lands adjacent to existing state WMAs with restorable wetlands to build prairie-wetland complexes for breeding ducks or buffer managed shallow lakes. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s “Thunderstorm Map” and “Restorable Wetlands Inventory” help determine importance to breeding waterfowl. We prioritize lands with restorable wetlands and prairie in areas of relatively high biological diversity and significance based on the Minnesota DNR County Biological Survey (MCBS) to improve the ecological functionality of existing public WMAs for ducks. Three potential land acquisition examples include:

Minneota WMA Tract 8 in Jackson County is 136 acres adjacent to an existing WMA and WPA totaling 400 contiguous acres of wetland-grassland habitat. This area is a MCBS Site of Moderate Biodiversity due to abundant native prairie. This parcel would also protect 5 acres of native prairie and part of a 45-acre wetland of Moderate Biological Significance. It supports 10-25 breeding duck pairs per square mile (PPSM) and falls within a Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan Strategic Habitat Complex. There are restorable uplands and numerous restorable wetlands on this property that will increase habitat for breeding waterfowl and other grassland birds.

Gobbler WMA Tract 4 is 320 acres just west of Prairie Dell WMA in northern Lincoln County and will create a new WMA to enlarge prairie-wetland complex supporting 10-25 breeding duck PPSM in a prairie pothole wetland complex protected by other public lands and easements, near an MBCS site of high biodiversity site of significance, and just a mile from a Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan Core Area and in MPCP Plan Corridor.

Moccasin WMA Tract 17 in Becker County is 640 acres in the upper reaches of Moccasin Creek of the Red River Watershed where flood control is a priority. The property is poorly drained cropland with an estimated 160 acres of restorable wetlands that can also provide flood water storage as will be designed by DU engineers to strategically provide both flood control and wildlife habitat benefits, and supports over 40 duck PPSM. It is located in a MN Prairie Conservation Plan Corridor near the Waubun Core Area.

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

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

**Explain how this proposal 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.**

Acquiring and restoring prairie cropland back to pothole wetlands and diverse native prairie grasslands with nearly 100 species of native plants will curb annual carbon released during annual cropland cultivation and will capture and store atmospheric carbon in native perennial vegetation restored on lands acquired. Moreover, as climate change causes more variable weather throughout North America, restored wetlands and prairie habitat in Minnesota's Prairie Pothole Region will geographically expand the area in which migratory birds have to breed as they move north each spring, thereby increasing the prairie-wetland habitat complexes and patches they have to choose from in which to migrate and breed.

**Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?**

**Prairie**

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

**Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:**

This program will permanently protect and restore prairie and wetlands adjacent to existing state WMAs and federal WPAs and NWRs to increase their size and viability as habitat for wildlife, and lands acquired and restored will be transferred to the Minnesota DNR for long-term management and public outdoor recreational use. The goal



of this work is to create functioning prairie-wetland complexes for breeding and migrating waterfowl and other prairie wildlife species. It has taken over 100 years to fragment the prairie landscape, and it will take a long-term approach to restore wildlife habitat here, piece by piece and prairie wetland complex by complex. Therefore, our work will help add to the significant and permanent conservation legacy for the public, and in the long-term will result in improved and viable habitat patches and complexes for both wildlife and people alike.

## Outcomes

### Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Land bordering shallow lakes and land containing drained wetlands will be acquired and restored back to native grasslands with prairie pothole wetlands. These restored grasslands with wildflowers surrounding pothole wetlands will provide functioning habitat for pollinators, migratory birds, and resident wildlife. Lands transferred to state and federal wildlife agencies will provide additional habitat for migratory species and public use, both of which will be monitored by MNDNR/USFWS. Lands acquired/restored will be monitored by MNDNR/USFWS wildlife field staff and managed to optimize prairie wildlife habitat conditions. Prairie uplands will be managed to minimize trees and encourage native plants.*

### What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

### 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 does not supplant or substitute previous funding. This request is for new land acquisition funding to supplement traditional DU conservation activities and allow DU to expand our conservation program to buy/restore land, and will not supplant or substitute traditional private sources of funding for DU conservation programs.

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

All lands acquired will be transferred to the Minnesota DNR for inclusion in the state's Wildlife Management Area system or to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge system (which includes Waterfowl Production Areas). Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service land managers will sustain and maintain the prairie and wetlands acquired and restored by Ducks Unlimited in perpetuity, and manage them to provide optimal wildlife habitat and for public use. Both agencies routinely use prescribed fire and water level management techniques to maintain ecological productivity of prairie grasslands and wetlands for wildlife habitat. Both state WMAs and federal WPAs are open for wildlife habitat compatible public uses, and both agencies maintain public accesses for visitors.

### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2030	DNR G&F Fund, OHF	Mow restored prairie for weed control	Periodically burn native prairie every 5 years as needed	Assess and manage water levels in larger restored wetlands as vegetation and ecological conditions warrant action

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

Ducks Unlimited conserves wetlands for waterfowl and people alike. Our habitat projects restore natural infrastructure, which helps to alleviate society's climate impacts and provide clean water for culturally diverse communities and low/moderate income households who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of wetland loss and climate change. This program acquires and restores new public lands for our state Wildlife Management Areas and federal Waterfowl Production Areas that are open and available to all Minnesotans including diverse and low-income people.

Wetlands recharge groundwater in aquifers that provide clean, dependable water supplies while removing pollutants and reducing downstream flooding. Generational wealth in some cultures and communities is compromised by a lack of natural infrastructure such as wetlands. Community resiliency is enhanced by the function of wetlands and adjacent grassland habitats that clean water and help absorb impacts from severe weather events.

Restoring wetlands in the Mississippi River watershed benefits communities who draw their water from the river such as Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Cloud. Minneapolis alone draws 21 billion gallons of water a year from the Mississippi River to produce 57 million gallons of drinking water each day.

Public lands and waters also provide numerous opportunities for fishing, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, birding, and outdoor education for diverse and lower-income communities that may not otherwise have access to natural open spaces. Indigenous communities benefit from DU wetland enhancements and restorations that create suitable conditions for wild rice to proliferate. Wetlands deliver a return on investment that support the health, resiliency, and well-being of culturally diverse and lower-income communities.

In this program, Ducks Unlimited works closely with the Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to strategically purchase lands with drained wetlands and lands bordering shallow lakes that are important to waterfowl, other wildlife, and people too. Ducks Unlimited restores drained pothole wetlands and adjacent uplands back to native prairie grasslands for both wildlife habitat and the public using competitively-selected contractors following state procurement guidelines. These new public lands are open to all for outdoor recreation, community programs, environmental education, including for diverse and lower income people to access nature.

### Activity Details

#### **Requirements**

**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:**

DU notifies and strives to discuss land acquisition plans with counties and townships prior to land acquisition closings. Discussions with local county and other government officials will be held in conjunction with acquiring lands only if and after private land negotiations result in a legal purchase agreement. Initial notification will include initial phone contact to individual board members representing the location of the land to be acquired. Official written notification to township and county boards will be made at least 30 days before closing. Because private land acquisitions are very personal and sensitive matters, especially between private landowners and private non-profit conservation organizations,

disclosing details publicly in advance of purchase agreements can jeopardize land deals with private landowners. Because requesting formal local approval involves elected officials publicly voting on private land deals, which invites local politics and makes private landowner intentions public, DU does not seek local government approval of our land acquisitions. Instead, DU contacts and meets with county and township boards in person to inform and discuss pending plans to ensure local government awareness of the public benefits of our land acquisition and restoration work, and changes in future tax payments. DU pays taxes in full at the county assessed rate during our hold time, and because state PILT amounts are typically higher than previous assessed county tax rates for cultivated land acquired by DU in the Prairie Section of SW Minnesota that results in more tax revenue, county boards have usually been pleased with DU land acquisitions for the Minnesota DNR.

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

No

**Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:**

Some land tracts or portions of lands may contain some acres under state RIM easement, but the value of those acres will be separated in appraisal valuation and OHF grant funds will not be used to pay for those acres. Some tracts may have federal USFWS Wetland Easements that protect intact wetland basins imbedded within agricultural lands, which prohibits wetland drainage, burning, and filling, but otherwise allowing farming when dry, so the impact on value of most agricultural lands is minimal and the value of these areas will be determined and discussed in the appraisal report.

**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:**

DU purchases land in Minnesota to protect and restore prairie, wetlands, and shallow lake shoreland for ducks and other prairie and wetland-dependent wildlife. Lands acquired will be transferred to the Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for incorporation into state WMAs and federal WPAs for long-term wildlife habitat management and public use. Initial Development and Restoration Plans are developed in partnership with Minnesota DNR and USFWS land manager approval according to agency management plan goals. The primary purposes of WMAs and WPAs are to provide habitat for the production of wildlife and provide opportunities for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for resident wildlife, and both DNR and USFWS use farming to prepare land for native prairie grassland restoration.

Lands proposed to be acquired for prairie restoration as WMAs and WPAs may utilize limited farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is the standard prairie restoration practice across the Midwest. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. DU works closely with DNR through our cooperative acquisition and restoration planning process to minimize purchasing land tracts where DNR requires placement of food plots and instead defers those to DNR to acquire directly, as restoration of prairie and wetlands for waterfowl is our strategic focus and mission. However, some lands may be acquired with some acres where DNR determines food plots are required.

Most lands to be acquired and restored through this program will be farmland with cropped fields, which DU will restore to prairie and wetland habitat. Very limited short-duration row-cropping of soybeans or use of oats as a cover crop, or other farming activity may be required immediately after acquisition prior to restoration via native prairie grass and forb seeding to rid the soil of residual herbicides that limit native plant growth and excess nutrients that promote weeds. Increasingly, farmers are using herbicides with an 18-month carryover residual effect, that requires an additional year of farming with other compatible herbicides before native plants can be seeded. DU strives to minimize this circumstance by working with private landowners to guide their final year of cropping prior to selling, but arranging such is not always possible and use of cover crops or an additional year of "safe" row cropping in soybeans is sometimes required. DU will strive to use non-GMO treated seed if planting of crops is required before land restoration.

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

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:**

All lands to be acquired are in rural areas and will be included in state Wildlife Management Areas or federal USFWS Waterfowl Production Areas or National Wildlife Refuge, and open to public use as per Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service rules. Whereas all lands acquired for inclusion in federal Waterfowl Production Areas will be open for public hunting as per federal requirements, some lands acquired for National Wildlife Refuges may have limited hunting restrictions, depending on the Refuge.

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

- State of MN
- Federal

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

- WMA
- National Wildlife Refuge
- WPA
- AMA

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

Yes

### Other OHF Appropriation Awards

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

Yes

**Are any of these past appropriations still OPEN?**

Yes

Approp Year	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
2024	\$7,670,000	-	-	-
2023	\$6,871,000	\$5,387,600	\$1,483,400	78.41%
2022	\$4,779,000	\$4,054,400	\$724,600	84.84%
2021	\$4,581,000	\$4,460,400	\$120,600	97.37%
2020	\$4,608,000	\$4,035,000	\$573,000	87.57%
2019	\$6,150,000	\$5,007,000	\$1,143,000	81.41%
2018	\$4,770,000	\$4,716,900	\$53,100	98.89%
2017	\$5,750,000	\$5,732,200	\$17,800	99.69%
2016	\$5,801,000	\$5,800,000	\$1,000	99.98%
2015	\$9,040,000	\$8,660,000	\$380,000	95.8%
2013	\$3,530,000	\$3,530,000	-	100.0%
2010	\$2,625,000	\$2,436,200	\$188,800	92.81%
2009	\$450,000	\$450,000	-	100.0%
Totals	\$66,625,000	\$54,269,700	\$12,355,300	81.46%

### Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Appraise and acquire lands in fee-title.	June 2028
Complete land transfers to Minnesota DNR.	June 2029
Complete land restorations	June 2031

**Budget****Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$840,000	\$200,000	DU Private, NAWCA, and USFWS IRA-NbS Funding	\$1,040,000
Contracts	\$2,200,000	\$590,000	DU private and federal USFWS NAWCA	\$2,790,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$8,000,000	-	-	\$8,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,000,000	-	-	\$1,000,000
Easement Acquisition	-	\$500,000	USFWS Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp)	\$500,000
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$60,000	\$10,000	DU private and federal USFWS NAWCA	\$70,000
Professional Services	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
Direct Support Services	\$80,000	-	-	\$80,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$192,000	-	-	\$192,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$90,000	-	-	\$90,000
Supplies/Materials	\$60,000	-	-	\$60,000
DNR IDP	\$168,000	-	-	\$168,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$12,990,000</b>	<b>\$1,300,000</b>	-	<b>\$14,290,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Biologists and Engineers - Acquire & Restore Land	1.4	5.0	\$750,000	\$200,000	DU Private, NAWCA, and USFWS IRA-NbS Funding	\$950,000
Manager - Grant Administration and Program Coordination	0.13	5.0	\$90,000	-	-	\$90,000



**Amount of Request:** \$12,990,000  
**Amount of Leverage:** \$1,300,000  
**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 10.01%  
**DSS + Personnel:** \$920,000  
**As a % of the total request:** 7.08%  
**Easement Stewardship:** -  
**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$1,300,000	\$550,000	42.31%	\$750,000	57.69%

**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**

DU will work diligently to leverage OHF grant funds with additional sources of private support from individuals, foundations, and corporations and via federal NAWCA grants for specific projects, especially by using OHF grant land acquisition expense to leverage federal grants to restore wetlands and prairie uplands on lands acquired.

**Does this proposal 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?**

The budget in this request will be scaled proportionately to the funding recommended.

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

The budget for personnel and DSS in this request will be scaled proportionately to the funding recommended.

**If the project received 30% of the requested funding**

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

The budget in this request will be scaled proportionately to the funding recommended.

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

This budget for personnel and DSS in this request will be scaled proportionately to the funding recommended.

**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?**

DU assigns site-specific, unique project numbers to each land acquisition or wetland restoration project, and biologist/engineering staff charge time and expenses to these specific project number codes so charges are tracked to specific sites by each individual. Furthermore, charges are only billed to one OHF grant or another, therefore staff charges can be spread among multiple projects funded by multiple grants. Despite DU staff working on multiple projects and grants throughout the year, DU staff cost invoicing is OHF grant-specific. This allows the DU team of 13 staff working in Minnesota to work on multiple projects throughout

the state with multiple OHF grants throughout the year.

DU strives to minimize overlap among OHF grants for the same program, and we strive to spend acquisition funds from earlier grants first before more recent grants. Restoration work overlaps by nature, however, due to the time it takes to plan and restore land. Currently, we anticipate spending most past OHF grant fund appropriations in 2024 along with a significant portion of our newest ML24 appropriation, thus we anticipate being largely spent out of OHF land acquisition funding by summer 2025.

## Contracts

### What is included in the contracts line?

Contracts include private contractor charges to restore/enhance wetlands (earthmoving) and grasslands (tree removal, grass seeding, fencing) on lands acquired. Wetland restoration in southern Minnesota is very expensive and requires engineering due to intensive drainage via complex networks of private/public tile/ditches that affect private neighbors and public roads.

## Professional Services

### What is included in the Professional Services line?

- Appraisals
- Design/Engineering
- Other : Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessments, land acquisition closing costs beyond title and legal fees (such as warranty deed tax), and county or watershed district fees associated with restoring wetlands on judicial ditches and in watersheds, including county consultant engineering review, permit fees, etc.
- Surveys
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

## Fee Acquisition

### What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

We anticipate purchasing 16-18 land tracts in total, including about 15-16 land tracts for Minnesota DNR with the \$8 million for Fee-title Land Acquisition with PILT and one or two land tracts for USFWS with the \$1 million in Fee-title Land Acquisition without PILT requested. This, of course, depends on size, location, and appraised value of lands available for sale from willing sellers in 2025-2028. This also assumes the average price is about \$9,000/acre and the average land tract size acquired is about 55-60 acres. This also assumes that purchase offers for 25-40% of the lands appraised and surveyed are declined by willing sellers or attempts to purchase land at auction fail, as has been our recent past experience.

## 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

None - DU travel costs consist of in-state mileage and lodging for land manager, biologists, and engineering field staff. DU generally does not request OHF grant reimbursement for food expense.

**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?**

Minnesota DNR grants staff previously reviewed and approved DU accounting methodology for Direct Support Services, which are calculated and included in DU staff costs. DU Direct Support Services constitute approximately 8-10% of DU overall staff costs on average among DU conservation staff billing categories. DU breaks out and invoices for Direct Support Service expenses approved by DNR for reimbursement separately from Personnel expenses. In accordance with 2 CFR 200, DU uses the direct allocation method of allocating costs to programs and final cost objectives. This process of allocating costs is accomplished through the use of hourly rates. The direct cost of activities, including direct support expenses, is included in these hourly rates. The rates are comprised of costs for salaries, benefits, office space, general insurance, support staff, office supplies, and other various direct expenses incurred at the regional offices and conservation department at the home office. All costs are assigned to conservation projects (net of applicable personnel and other costs that are non-conservation related.) Hourly charges represent the amount that DU charges conservation projects per hour for each staff member working on the project. These costs represent expenses that directly support the labor cost necessary for the development of a specific water/wetlands conservation project.

## Other Equipment/Tools

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

GPS survey equipment for performing engineering wetland restoration survey work and engineering surveys of shallow lake and large wetland enhancement projects, including GPS survey equipment lease charges for larger main components instead of actual outright equipment purchases to avoid buying expensive technical equipment that becomes obsolete due to upgrades and technological advancements. Other equipment may include laptop and/or tablet computers and other office equipment for biologists or engineers may be needed, along with hand tools and other field equipment as needs arise.

## Federal Funds

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

Yes

**Are the funds confirmed?**

Yes

- Cash : \$500,000
- In Kind : \$100,000

**Is Confirmation Document attached?**

[Yes](#)

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	180	710	0	0	890
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	20	90	0	0	110
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,000</b>

**Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$2,338,200	\$9,222,900	-	-	\$11,561,100
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$259,800	\$1,169,100	-	-	\$1,428,900
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,598,000</b>	<b>\$10,392,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$12,990,000</b>

**Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	890	0	890
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	110	0	110
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,000</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	-	-	-	\$11,561,100	-	\$11,561,100
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$1,428,900	-	\$1,428,900
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$12,990,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$12,990,000</b>

**Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$12,990	\$12,990	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$12,990	\$12,990	-	-
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	-	-	-	\$12,990	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$12,990	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

Ducks Unlimited prioritizes purchase of prairie farmland with restorable wetlands adjacent to existing public lands, and land adjacent to shallow lakes managed by DNR for inclusion in the Minnesota DNR's state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system and federal Wildlife Refuge System, including Waterfowl Production Areas. DU focuses on acquiring and restoring converted/cultivated prairie with drained wetlands adjacent to existing WMAs to enlarge existing WMAs to create functioning prairie-wetland habitat complexes that benefit ducks and other prairie wildlife. This work also complements other conservation efforts to protect intact native prairie.

DU works in close partnership with the Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service regarding land acquisition opportunities, and coordinates with other national and state NGO partners including Pheasants Forever, The Conservation Fund, and The Nature Conservancy to periodically review parcels for sale that DNR desires for WMAs. DU pursues priority parcels in the Prairie Pothole Region in southern and western Minnesota that are highly regionally ranked by DNR/USFWS that add a good mix of prairie and wetland restorations to existing public lands.

DU strategically prioritizes tracts of land with restorable wetlands that DU wetland engineers can survey, design, and restore, especially those adjoining existing patches of prairie and wetland habitat that are not functioning as viable prairie-wetland complexes due to their small size and fragmented shape. DU also prioritizes land bordering shallow lakes managed by DNR in order to buffer those shallow, ecologically-sensitive wildlife lakes and help expand existing prairie-wetland complexes.

### Protect Parcels

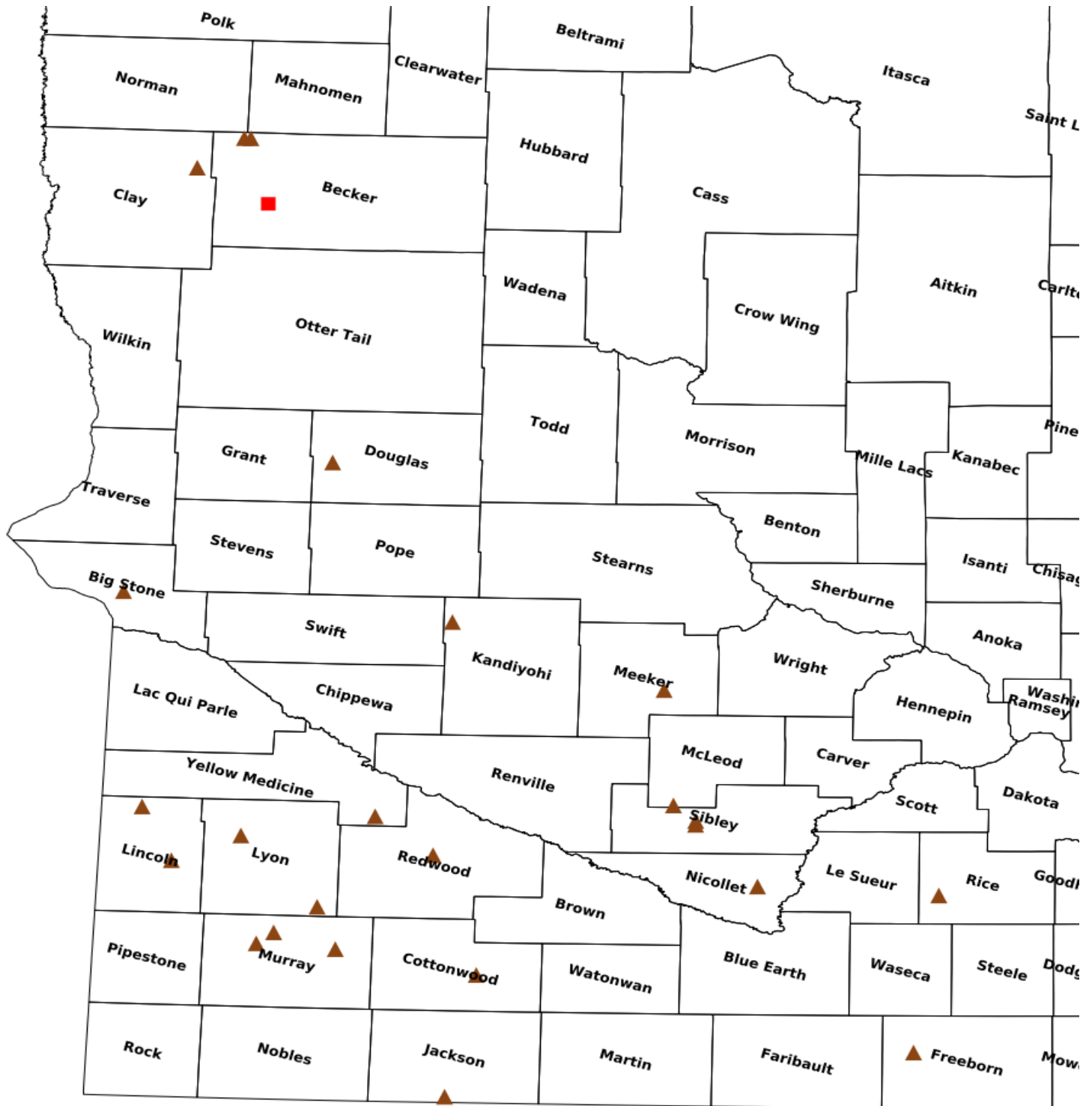
Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Moccasin WMA - Tract 17E	Becker	14242207	320	\$1,600,000	No
Hamden Slough NWR - Nelson Tract	Becker	13942203	197	\$1,200,000	No
Moccasin WMA - Tract 17W	Becker	14243212	320	\$2,000,000	No
Goose Prairie WMA - Tract 10	Clay	14144222	61	\$300,000	No
Little Swan Lake WMA - Tract 14	Cottonwood	10635218	17	\$125,000	No
Urness WMA	Douglas	12840210	4	\$20,000	No
Freeborn Lake WMA	Freeborn	10323224	113	\$500,000	No
Minneota WMA - Tract 8	Jackson	10136229	136	\$820,000	No
Greenhead WMA - Tract 2	Lyon	10940221	119	\$500,000	No
Grandview WMA - Tract 7	Lyon	11242219	160	\$1,100,000	No
Kujas WMA - Tract 2	McLeod	11430235	156	\$1,300,000	No
Casey WMA - TBD	Meeker	11930233	40	\$400,000	No
Great Oasis WMA - Tract 17	Murray	10742210	334	\$1,900,000	No
Skandia WMA - Tract 33	Murray	10841230	80	\$500,000	No
Dovray WMA - Tracts 19/19a	Murray	10740213	165	\$1,000,000	No
Coot WMA - Tract 17	Murray	11144230	60	\$285,000	No
Swan Lake WMA - SLAWA Tracts	Nicollet	11027217	140	\$2,100,000	No
Daubs Lake WMA - Tract 2/2a	Redwood	11137211	160	\$1,300,000	No
Caron Lake WMA - Tract	Rice	11022227	277	\$1,500,000	No
Indian Lake WMA - Tract 10	Sibley	11329228	67	\$500,000	No
Indian Lake WMA - Tract 9a	Sibley	11329221	50	\$500,000	No
Posen WMA - Tract 7a	Yellow Medicine	11338219	18	\$150,000	No



## Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Thielke Lake WMA - Tract 4	Big Stone	12246203	130	\$900,000	No	1	\$0
Cabinrock WMA - Tract 7	Kandiyohi	12136205	81	\$400,000	No	3	\$30,000
Gobbler WMA - Tract 4	Lincoln	11345217	320	\$2,220,000	No	3	\$50,000

## Parcel Map



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

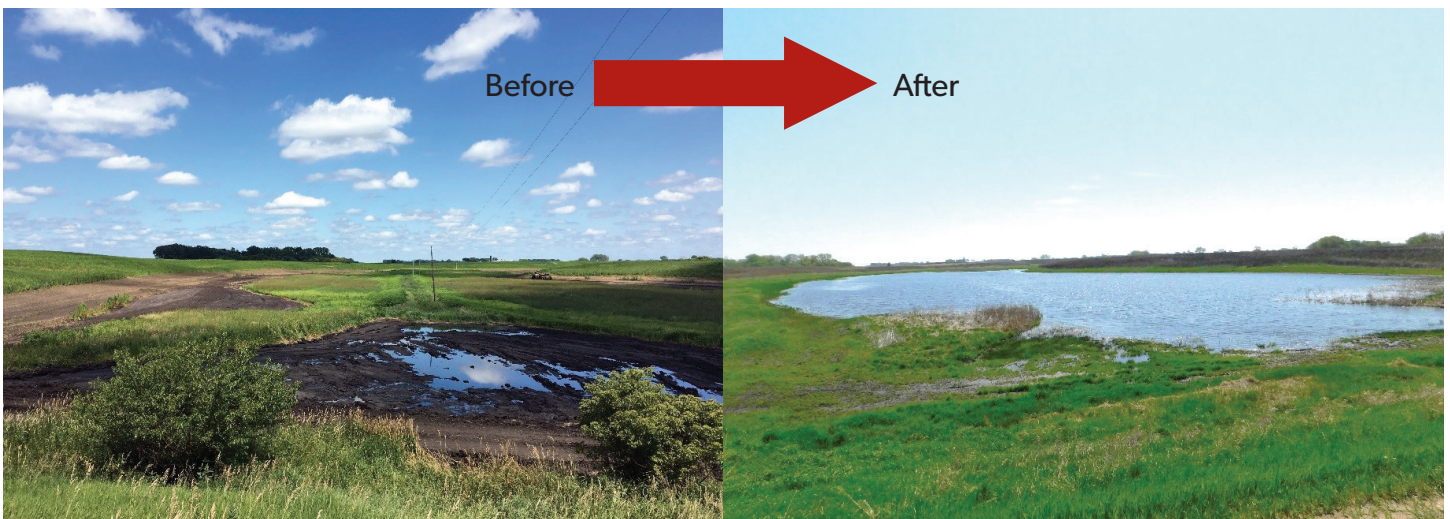
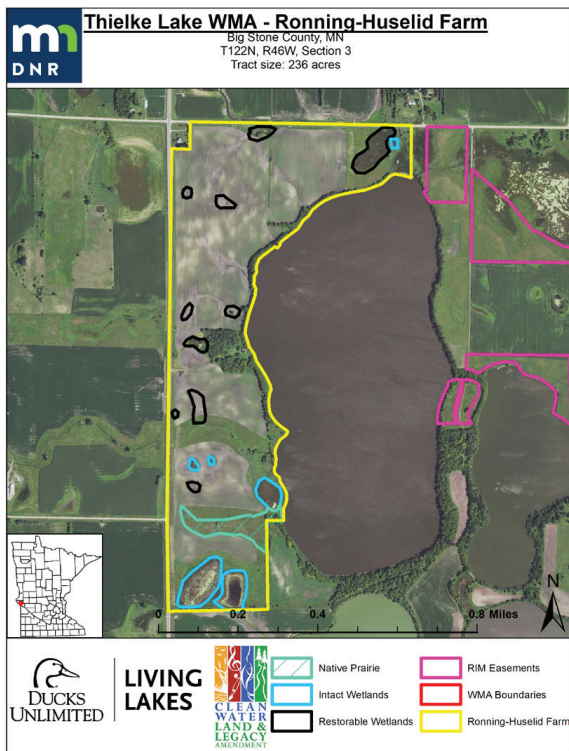
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# SHALLOW LAKE & WETLAND PROTECTION & RESTORATION PROGRAM - **PHASE XIV**

**Proposal Request:** \$12,990,000

**Proposal Abstract:** This Phase 14 request supports Ducks Unlimited's prairie land acquisition and restoration program. DU proposes to acquire and restore 1,000 acres of land containing drained wetlands and land bordering shallow lakes in Minnesota's Prairie Pothole Region for inclusion in MNDNR state WMAs and USFWS federal WPAs/NWRs. This ongoing land acquisition/restoration program focuses on restoring cropland with drained wetlands near existing WMAs and WPAs/NWRs to help restore prairie wetland habitat complexes for breeding ducks, other wildlife, and people. DU biologists and engineers will survey, design, and hire private sector contractors to restore drained wetlands and uplands.







# SHALLOW LAKE & WETLAND PROTECTION & RESTORATION PROGRAM - **PHASE XIV**

