



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shallow Lakes and Wetland Enhancements Phase 18 (Habitat Projects/Critical Staff Combination)
Laws of Minnesota 2026 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/08/2026

Project Title: Shallow Lakes and Wetland Enhancements Phase 18 (Habitat Projects/Critical Staff Combination)

Funds Recommended: \$3,744,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language: \$3,744,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to enhance and restore shallow lakes and wetland habitat statewide.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Ricky Lien

Title: Wetland Habitat Team Supervisor

Organization: DNR

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Location Information

County Location(s): Otter Tail, Murray, Pope, Meeker, Lincoln, St. Louis and Kandiyohi.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Prairie

Activity types:

Enhance

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Narrative**Abstract**

This proposal will implement wetland and shallow lake projects impacting 829 acres. Planned work includes both restoration and enhancement of habitat via construction (tile breaks, ditchplugs, sediment removal, placement of water control structures, etc.) and cattail management actions. Additionally, this proposal will partially fund four shallow lake specialist positions. These positions were established beginning in 2011 via OHF funding to expand and accelerate shallow lake and wetland habitat efforts. Waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species will benefit greatly from the proposed habitat work.

Design and Scope of Work

In addition to being critical for waterfowl, wetlands and shallow lakes provide habitat for a wide range of species, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood water storage, shoreline protection, and economic benefits. An estimated 90% of Minnesota's prairie wetlands have been lost and more than 50% of our statewide wetlands. Wetlands that remain are often compromised by degraded quality. This proposal will accomplish wetland habitat work throughout Minnesota on state lands and public waters, though the majority of work will occur in the strategic prairie region of Minnesota.

Projects identified on the parcel list were proposed and reviewed by DNR Area and Regional supervisors and Wetland Habitat Team staff. Planned work includes wetland infrastructure construction, including water control structures and dikes, sediment removal, tile breaks, and ditch plugs needed to bring about wetland habitat enhancement and restoration. Direct management to impact monotypic cattail stands will be employed to bring about needed wetland enhancement.

The Shallow Lakes Program (SLP) is a component of the DNR's Wetland Habitat Team. The SLP focuses on assessments and management of Minnesota's shallow lakes to provide critical waterfowl habitat. OHF funds were used to expand the SLP by three shallow lake specialists in 2011, with another OHF-funded specialist added in 2018. Subsequent OHF appropriations provided funding to maintain these positions. These four OHF-funded positions are critical to advancing wetland and shallow lake work in Minnesota and this appropriation will provide a portion of the money required to keep them in the field through FY28.

To improve efficiency and meet mutual goals, projects may be done in cooperation with Duck Unlimited or other conservation partners. Parcels may be added, modified, or deleted from the parcel list to accommodate engineering feasibility results, provide resources to new opportunities, or to address the challenges associated with complex shallow lake and wetland projects. All changes shall be in keeping with the scope of the project and will be fully reported in the subsequent Final Report.

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

The Minnesota Duck Action Plan 2025-2030 notes that, "The restoration, protection, and enhancement of duck habitat is a vital part of the Minnesota DNR's mission," and the Plan goes on to state this work is a specific goal. The need for this work is additionally identified in Managing Minnesota's Shallow Lakes for Waterfowl and Wildlife, and the Minnesota Duck Recovery Plan, highlighting the need for the staff who will be funded by this proposal.

These people will allow for shallow lake and wetland restoration and enhancement work that will not otherwise be possible. Approximately 50% of all federally endangered animal are wetland-related. As a measure of the importance of wetlands to Minnesota Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), the word 'wetland' appears 127 times in Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025 (WAP). Conservation Focus Areas are priority areas for working with partners to identify, design, and implement conservation actions and report on the effectiveness toward achieving the goals and objectives defined in the Wildlife Action Plan. Target Habitat Complexes within Conservation Focus Areas commonly include Prairie Wetland Complexes and other wetland community types. The protection and management of wetlands and wetland/grassland complexes are noted extensively in the discussion of Conservation Focus Area Target, Conservation Issues and Approaches. Specific management actions mentioned include reed canary grass and invasive cattail control, "natural disturbance management" (i.e. water level management, prescribed fire, woody vegetation removal). Target Habitat Complexes within Conservation Focus Areas commonly include Prairie Wetland Complexes and other wetland community types. As noted in the WAP, wet meadows and fens typically provide optimal habitat for sedge wrens, yellow rails, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrows and numerous other SGCN. Wetland Management Options to support SGCN include prevention of wetland degradation, restoration of wetland complexes, and management of invasive, all actions implemented by staff supported by this OHF proposal. For shallow lake habitat, examples of SGCN include lesser scaup, northern pintail, common moorhen, least bitterns, American bitterns, marsh wrens, and Virginia rails. Wetland management actions to benefit SGCN include the restoration of large complexes of shallow lakes and wetlands.

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

The Status and Trends of Wetlands in Minnesota: Depressional Wetland Quality Assessment (2007 – 2012), produced by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, noted that wetlands in the prairie and central regions of the state are dominated by degraded vegetation communities. Vegetation communities in more than half of these depressional wetlands are in poor condition (56%), with only 17% in good condition, similar to the quality of all wetland types in the central hardwood and former prairie regions. Non-native invasive plants are having the greatest impact. In other words, not only have most wetlands been lost in much of the prairie and forest-transition areas of Minnesota, what remains are degraded and need management action to produce quality habitat. Work as described in this proposal will provide needed habitat, while also providing the other benefits found in healthy wetlands - water quality, floodwater storage, places to hunt and recreate, and carbon sequestration.

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

The Minnesota Duck Recovery Plan goals include boosting the state's breeding duck population. The most productive prairie waterfowl habitat is a mix of wetland and grassland as a habitat complex. A complex could be 4 - 9 square miles and should be comprised of 10% temporary/seasonal wetlands, 10% permanent wetlands, and 40% grasslands, with the remaining 40% available for crops. In addition to mixes of grasslands and healthy wetlands, The Duck Plan also called for accelerated efforts to restore 1,800 shallow lakes, including wild rice lakes.

The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, which is a plan for both uplands and wetlands in the prairie region of Minnesota, outlines 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 Wetland Initiative component of this OHF proposal would contribute to these identified Core Areas and Habitat Complexes by working to actively manage and improve small wetlands on public lands, especially on those lands contributing to the Minnesota Comprehensive Prairie Plan. The Status and Trends of Wetlands in Minnesota: Depressional Wetland Quality Assessment (2007 – 2012), produced by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, noted that while most wetlands in northern Minnesota are in good condition, the opposite is true in the central and former prairie regions of the state, where degraded vegetation communities are predominant. Vegetation communities in more than half of these

depressional wetlands are in poor condition (56%), with only 17% in good condition, similar to the quality of all wetland types in the central hardwood and former prairie regions. Non-native invasive plants are having the greatest impact.

The work done by the staff supported by this OHF proposal will directly contribute to expanded and healthy wetland complexes and increased shallow lakes work. Work will renovate existing wetland infrastructure and establish new management, especially in the critical prairie region of Minnesota. More specifically, the work done by the Wetland Management Program is targeted to identify key wetland complexes in the prairie region and bring management actions to the wetlands of those complexes.

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

Long Range Duck Recovery Plan

Managing Minnesota's Shallow Lakes for Waterfowl and Wildlife

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.

Highlighting just how important wetlands are to adaptation and climate action, the Global Center on Climate Adaptation noted, "Wetlands capture CO₂ from the atmosphere, making them nature's own solution to the climate emergency. In fact, they store more carbon than any other ecosystem on Earth, and peatlands alone store twice as much as all the world's forests. According to Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel, wetlands cover only nine percent of the planet's surface, but store up to 35 percent of terrestrial carbon." Additionally, wetlands and shallow lakes provide the ability to hold precipitation and run-off that occur from major storm events that occur more frequently due to climate change.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Northern Forest

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

Prairie

Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ *Intensive wetland management and habitat infrastructure maintenance will provide the wetland base called for in numerous prairie, shallow lake and waterfowl plans. DNR Area Wildlife staff and/or Wetland Habitat Team members will monitor completed projects to determine success of implementation and to assess the need for future management and/or maintenance.*

Programs in prairie region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Intensive wetland management and habitat infrastructure maintenance will provide the wetland base called for in numerous prairie, shallow lake and waterfowl plans. DNR Area Wildlife staff and/or Wetland Habitat Team members will monitor completed projects to determine success of implementation and to assess the need for future management and/or maintenance.*

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This request is an acceleration of the Minnesota DNR's Section of Wildlife wetland habitat work to a level not attainable but for the appropriation.

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

Qualified engineers and staff will oversee replacement/renovation of infrastructure to achieve long-lasting results. A typical goal is to have water control structures, dikes and fish barriers last a minimum of 30-40 years. The management of completed infrastructure projects will fall on existing staff of the Department of Natural Resources. Enhancement work implemented by this staff such as invasive species removal, supplemental vegetation planting, or water control structure installation, maintenance, or replacement, will be accomplished through annual funding requests to a variety of funding sources including, but not limited to, the Game and Fish Fund, bonding, gifts, the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Outdoor Heritage Fund, and federal sources such as North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants and Pittman-Robertson funds. Wetland enhancement projects such as cattail control, prescribed burns, invasive fish management and the like are implemented to achieve quality, long-lasting habitat benefits, but the benefit lifespan may be variable due to conditions imposed by climate, physical factors, etc. Monitoring by area wildlife staff, wetland management specialists, and shallow lakes specialists will ensure that follow-up management is employed as needed.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
1 year post-implementation of management action	DNR	Wetland Management Program, Shallow Lakes Program, and Area Wildlife staff evaluate management effectiveness.	-	-
10-12 months post-completion of engineered	DNR	Qualified engineers conduct warranty inspection of project.	-	-

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

Actions that have the following specific ties to BIPOC and diverse communities include wild rice seeding which has tribal support to re-establish culturally valuable wild rice. A potential partnership regarding this effort is being discussed. 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. 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. Shallow lake and wetland habitat projects provide ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF also supports public access and recreational opportunities on these lands. OHF projects and outcomes benefit

BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities. The DNR has diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that benefit all OHF projects:• Multilingual and culturally specific hunting and fishing education programs take place on public lands. • All hiring is equal opportunity, affirmative action, and veteran-friendly. Contracting seeks out Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned businesses. • Public engagement seeks out BIPOC voices and involves diverse communities. Outreach and marketing of projects has this focus as well. •

Partnerships are at the center of all projects. Tribes in particular are consulted in all pertinent areas of the DNR’s work, under EO 19-24.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

Will 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

Public Waters

WPA

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?

No

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
Wetland Restorations	June 2031
Cattail Management /	September 2029
Infrastructure Construction Projects	June 2031

Date of Final Report Submission: 10/01/2031

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, 2030;
- (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, 2034;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2031;
- (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	\$239,500	-	-	\$239,500
Contracts	\$2,781,000	-	-	\$2,781,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$24,000	-	-	\$24,000
Professional Services	\$467,000	-	-	\$467,000
Direct Support Services	\$67,000	-	-	\$67,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
Supplies/Materials	\$116,500	-	-	\$116,500
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$3,744,000	-	-	\$3,744,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Shallow Lake Specialists	1.0	2.0	\$239,500	-	-	\$239,500

Capital Equipment

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Trimble Survey Unit	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000

Amount of Request: \$3,744,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$306,500

As a % of the total request: 8.19%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

The extensive project list in the proposal was cut down to seven of the highest priority projects, plus cattail management to occur on sites to-be-determined. The proposal request to continue 10 OHF-funded staff whose funding was expiring has been replaced with plans to partially fund 4 of the positions.

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?

A reduced funding amount would be addressed by using Program and Regional Wildlife staff to prioritize projects based on need, strategic importance, and efficiency. Acres and activities may not be proportionally affected due to the variety of project sizes and costs.

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

Personnel and Travel costs shown in the Budget Table accurately reflect costs to support two years of critical habitat staff. Cutting Personnel and Travel costs to 30% would be inadequate to maintain dedicated staff needed to perform critical wetland habitat work.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

The contract line includes funding to hire companies to implement wetland restorations actions including sediment removal, placement of ditchplugs, construction of infrastructure, and implementation of management actions to enhance wetlands.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Design/Engineering

Other : In addition to the above items, professional services may include permitting expenses.

Surveys

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

In addition to traditional travel costs of mileage, food and lodging, the amount budget in Travel may be used to cover DNR fleet costs associated with equipment used by staff. Such equipment could include MarshMasters, tractors, trailers, heavy equipment, and other equipment needed for wetland enhancement activities.

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?

Direct Support Services is determined by a standard DNR process taking into account the amount of funding and the number of allocations made with that funding.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

Equipment and tools that may be purchased would be hand and power tools, canoe/kayak/small boat and trailer, small pumps, and other items necessary for wetland management activities.

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?

Unknown, but previously implemented OHF projects have incorporated funding from federal sources such as NAWCA, Inflation Reduction Act, Joint Venture, and others. involved

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	138	-	-	-	138
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	691	-	-	-	691
Total	829	-	-	-	829

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	\$1,279,200	-	-	-	\$1,279,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,464,800	-	-	-	\$2,464,800
Total	\$3,744,000	-	-	-	\$3,744,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	138	0	138
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	655	36	691
Total	-	-	-	793	36	829

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$1,279,200	-	\$1,279,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$1,494,700	\$970,100	\$2,464,800
Total	-	-	-	\$2,773,900	\$970,100	\$3,744,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	\$9,269	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$3,567	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$9,269	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$2,281	\$26,947

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:

Proposals for individual projects are submitted by DNR Area Wildlife Staff and Wetland Habitat Team members into a statewide database. Projects are reviewed at the regional and central office levels and appropriate projects are selected for inclusion in this OHF proposal. The parcel list may be modified by the program manager as needed and the Final Report will reflect an accurate and complete parcel list.

In addition to the projects shown on the parcel list, additional parcels will be selected for cattail management by Wetland Management Program staff to meet their program goal of enhancing wetland complexes to benefit waterfowl. The Final Report will accurately show all parcels.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Cabinrock WMA Wetland Enhancements	Kandiyohi	12236232	27	\$127,200	Yes	Remove sediment, place berms, tile replacement
Tyler WMA North Swan Water Control Structure replacement	Lincoln	10944204	88	\$350,000	Yes	Replace WCS
Restoration Provencher WMA	Meeker	11831226	5	\$91,000	Yes	Remove sediment, place berms
Long Lake WMA Water Control Structure	Murray	10841204	188	\$500,000	Yes	Recent WMA purchase needs berm repair and replace culvert with rock spillway
Restoration & Impoundment Peters WMA	Murray	10642209	71	\$783,000	Yes	Tile break
Coyour Memorial WMA Water	Otter Tail	13144233	32	\$200,000	Yes	Design and construction of wetland infrastructure
Fergus Falls WMA	Otter Tail	13343222	20	\$240,000	Yes	Sediment removal, tile break, berms.
Orwell WMA Water Control Structure	Otter Tail	13244235	20	\$150,000	Yes	Replace failed WCS and manage and moist soil unit.
White Bear WMA Wetland Restoration	Pope	12539204	42	\$93,000	Yes	Remove sediment, place berms
Great Scott WMA Water Control Structure Replacement	St. Louis	05819233	36	\$475,000	Yes	Replace failed WCS

