Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Talcot Lake

Laws of Minnesota 2026 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/02/2025

Project Title: Talcot Lake

Funds Recommended: $1,000,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Ricky LIen
Title: Wetland Habitat Team Supervisor
Organization: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Address: 500 Lafayette Road
City: St. Paul, MN 55155-4020
Email: ricky.lien@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-259-5227
Mobile Number:
Fax Number: 651-297-4961
Website: https://www.dnr.state.mn.us

Location Information

County Location(s): Cottonwood.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Activity types:

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

The Talcot Lake dam was built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration creating the 996-acre lake. The structure is nonfunctional and needs to be replaced. The eventual renovation project will include partial channel restoration, dam modification to include a rock riffle fish passage, and a variable crest water control component to retain water level management capabilities. Restoring water level management capabilities is important because Talcot Lake is completely within Talcot Lake WMA and managed for fish and wildlife habitat. This appropriation will be used to hire a consulting engineering firm to survey and design the project for future construction.

Design and Scope of Work

Talcot Lake is located within the Talcot WMA in Cottonwood County and covers 996 acres. It is managed for fish and wildlife habitat. Talcot Lake was first established as a National Wildlife Refuge and the original dam was built in 1936. This dam consisted of a 250-long clay-cored dike and 175-foot concrete weir with a 16-foot radial arm gate for water level management. In 2007, the radial arm gate failed and was replaced with stop logs. The 24 steel stop logs were subsequently welded together, filled with concrete, and reinforced with steel braces because of high water flow. These modifications made the stop logs unusable for water level management. Multiple sandbagging efforts to reinforce the dam have occurred during high water years since 1990. There has been a fish barrier component of the dam for most of its 90 years. This fish barrier restricted upstream movement of fish and other wildlife, but has not been functional since 2011.

This appropriation will be used to hire a consulting engineering firm to survey and design the project for future construction. The eventual project will include renovations and/ enhancements to manmade structures that will restore connectivity and hydrology to Talcot Lake, as well as several minor watersheds within the headwaters of the Des Moines River. An improved water control structure will restore the ability to manage water levels for fish and wildlife habitat in Talcot Lake. Resources Managers wish retain water management capabilities in Talcot Lake. This could include replacing the existing stop-log bay component in the outlet weir or building a secondary water control structure in a strategic location that would only be used for implementing water level drawdowns. Determination of the preferred water control structure option would be based on engineering consultation. The improved water control structure also will allow resource managers to implement temporary water level drawdowns to improve fish and wildlife habitat, as well as maintain the appropriate pool elevation in Talcot Lake. Water level drawdowns are used to decrease the abundance of rough fish species (e.g., common carp and fathead minnows). Fewer rough fish in a basin often results in better water clarity and increased aquatic vegetation growth, which provides aquatic organisms with higher quality habitat.

A planned rock riffle component will help restore fish passage to part of the Des Moines River and could be used to replace all or part of the existing fixed crest weir. The existing dam has created a barrier to desirable native fish species and other aquatic organisms by preventing them from making necessary life stage migrations in and out of Talcot Lake. This project should increase the abundance of these native species by providing them with more access to the basin and other parts of the watershed through the rock riffle component.

Additionally, the improvements to the outlet of Talcot Lake will help protect and restore the stream bank.

A JPA will be developed with the Cottonwood County SWCD to allow them to implement portions of this project.

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

Talcot Lake is located at the bottom of a large watershed (331,408 acres). The existing infrastructure has been in place for almost 90 years and there has been a fish barrier component of the dam for most of that time. This fish barrier has significantly restricted upstream movement of fish and other aquatic wildlife. Enhancing the current infrastructure at the outlet of Talcot Lake will help improve connectivity in 42 minor watersheds, including several branches of the Beaver Creek Watershed (50,683 acres), three branches of the Lime Creek Watershed (39,018 acres), the Lake Shetek Watershed (21,416 acres), and the Talcot Lake Watershed (7,297 acres). The engineering on the project for planned future construction will provide impacts on a very large scale and result in reconnecting areas not otherwise accessible to aquatic fish and wildlife. Renovating the dam to include a rock riffle component will help restore the connection to other parts of the watershed for these species. It is important to note that several of these aquatic organisms are considered threatened or species of special concern in Minnesota - black sandshell mussels (special concern status), Blanding's turtles (threatened status), mucket mussels (threatened status), round pig toe mussels (special concern status), and spike mussels (threatened status). There also are numerous native fish and aquatic wildlife species throughout the watershed that will benefit from restoring this connection. In addition to the benefits provided by the rock riffle component of this project, water level management opportunities provided by a functional control structure will allow resource managers to implement temporary drawdowns to improve fish and wildlife habitat and maintain the appropriate pool elevation in Talcot Lake. Water level drawdowns are used to decrease the abundance of rough fish species (e.g., common carp and fathead minnows). Fewer rough fish in a basin often results in better water clarity and increased aquatic vegetation growth, which provides aquatic organisms with higher quality habitat. Migratory waterfowl and shallow lake dependent species will benefit from these habitat improvements.

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

The existing infrastructure at Talcot Lake was built in 1936 and is nonfunctional in terms of water level management, which is needed to provide quality waterfowl and wetland wildlife habitat. As an indicator of its dilapidated state, multiple sandbagging efforts to reinforce the dam have occurred during high water years since 1990.

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

This appropriation will hire a consulting engineering firm to survey and design a project for future construction. The eventual project will include renovation and/or enhancements to manmade structures to help restore some connectivity and hydrology to Talcot Lake, as well as several minor watersheds within the headwaters of the Des Moines River.The Headwaters of the Des Moines River Watershed (a.k.a. the West Fork of the Des Moines River) is around 798,627 acres. The portion of the watershed that will be impacted by this project is about 331,408 acres. Enhancing the current infrastructure at the outlet of Talcot Lake will help improve connectivity in 42 minor watersheds, including several branches of the Beaver Creek Watershed (50,683 acres), three branches of the Lime Creek Watershed (39,018 acres), the Lake Shetek Watershed (21,416 acres), and the Talcot Lake Watershed (7,297 acres). The impacts of the planned future construction will be on a very large scale and result in reconnecting areas not otherwise accessible to aquatic fish and wildlife.

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

Long Range Duck Recovery 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.

Highlighting just how important wetlands are to address climate action, the Global Center on Climate Adaptation noted, "Wetlands capture CO_2 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?

Prairie

Protect, restore, and enhance shallow lakes

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

Enhanced shallow lake productivity ~ *The Minnesota DNR Shallow Lake Program performs standardized shallow lake assessments to identify those waters needing management and to evaluate the impact of management actions. Standardized assessments measure physical and biological components of a lake and are an accepted means to evaluate the health of shallow lake habitats. A 2023 shallow lake assessment of Talcot Lake confirmed the poor conditions that currently exist. Another shallow lake assessment will be performed after the planned future construction to evaluate expected habitat improvements.*

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 will survey and produce design plans for planned future construction at the outlet of Talcot Lake.. A typical goal is to have water control structures, dikes and fish barriers last a minimum of 30-40 years. The future construction will require staff of the Department of Natural Resources to find appropriate funding. Potential funding sources include, but are 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. The benefit lifespan may be variable due to conditions imposed by climate, physical factors, etc.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027	DNR	Shallow Lakes Program, Area Wildlife/Fisheries,	-	-

		and DNR engineers review design plans for appropriateness.		
2027	State or Federal	Funding is sought for project construction	-	-

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

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.

OHF funds high quality habitat projects that provide ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF funding 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

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
Engineering survey and design	June 2027

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2028

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	-	-	-	-
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	$985,400	-	-	$985,400
Direct Support Services	$14,600	-	-	$14,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$1,000,000**	**-**	**-**	**$1,000,000**

Amount of Request: $1,000,000
Amount of Leverage: -
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%
DSS + Personnel: $14,600
As a % of the total request: 1.46%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?
Survey and design work will be done leading to a set of design plans and cost estimates suitable for future construction.

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?
Scalability could be achieved if enough funding ($1 million) is awarded to move ahead with engineering. A subsequent request would be made to move ahead with construction. Obviously, it would be easier to do all this in one appropriation.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
No personnel funding is requested. DSS would be determined for the awarded amount based on the DNR formula that takes into account the amount of funding received and what it is being used for.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Design/Engineering

Surveys

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.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?
No

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	0	-	-	-	0
Total	**0**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**0**

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	$1,000,000	-	-	-	$1,000,000
Total	**$1,000,000**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$1,000,000**

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	0	-	0
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**0**	**-**	**0**

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	$1,000,000	-	$1,000,000
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$1,000,000**	**-**	**$1,000,000**

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

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

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?
No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Minnesota DNR Shallow Lakes staff and Area Wildlife and Fisheries staff, Cottonwood County officials, and Cottonwood County Soil and Water Conservation District have long known of issues at Talcot Lake that are the result of an extremely old and non-functioning water control structure. A 2023 shallow lake assessment confirmed the poor biological and physical conditions that resulted in the current sub-optimal habitat. The poor habitat conditions, along with the threat of the structure's failure during high water events that have necessitated sandbagging, have made this a priority project.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Talcot Lake	Cottonwood	10538217	0	$7,590,000	Yes	Engineer and construction rock riffle, water control structure, and outlet modification

Parcel Map


Lyon
Redwood
Brown
Murray
Cottonwood
Nobles
Jackson
0
2
4
6 mi
Protect in Easement
Protect in Fee with PILT
Protect in Fee W/O PILT
Restore
Enhance
Other

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Talcot Lake

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2026 - Talcot Lake
Organization: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Manager: Ricky LIen

Budget

Requested Amount: $7,590,000
Appropriated Amount: $1,000,000
Percentage: 13.18%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contracts	$6,500,000	-	-	-	0.0%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	$1,000,000	-	$985,400	-	98.54%	-
Direct Support Services	$90,000	-	$14,600	-	16.22%	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$7,590,000**	**-**	**$1,000,000**	**-**	**13.18%**	**-**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Scalability could be achieved if enough funding ($1 million) is awarded to move ahead with engineering. A subsequent request would be made to move ahead with construction. Obviously, it would be easier to do all this in one appropriation.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
No personnel funding is requested. DSS would be determined for the awarded amount based on the DNR formula that takes into account the amount of funding received and what it is being used for.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
30% of funding would allow engineering to move ahead. Construction could not move forward as it would not be adequate for all anticipated construction, as all construction would need to occur at the same time.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
No personnel funding is requested. DSS would be determined for the awarded amount based on the DNR formula that takes into account the amount of funding received and what it is being used for.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	996	0	0.0%

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$7,590,000	$1,000,000	13.18%

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	996	0	0.0%

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$7,590,000	$1,000,000	13.18%