



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Enhancing Critical Wildlife Forest Habitats and Watersheds on Superior National Forest  
ML 2026 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/26/2025

**Proposal Title:** Enhancing Critical Wildlife Forest Habitats and Watersheds on Superior National Forest

**Funds Requested:** \$4,728,000

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$132,400

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** Yes

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Candace Leong

**Title:** Chief of Staff/Director of Grant Administration

**Organization:** Patriot Restoration OPS (PROPS)

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** St. Louis.

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

Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

Enhance

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

Forest

## Narrative

### Abstract

Patriot Restoration OPS is a national veteran-driven nonprofit improving wildlife habitat with returning US veterans. Superior National Forest habitat enhancement on 2,630 acres will beneficially affect 643,000 St. Louis County watershed acres. Three-year scalable treatments at Echo Shaded Fuels Break, Crane Lake, and Lake Vermilion creates healthier habitat for moose, grey wolf, bald eagle, Canada lynx, and 40+ sensitive wildlife/vegetation species. Current decreased water and habitat quality, high fuel loads, overstocked forests, spruce budworm, and difficult site access will gain long-term forest habitat/watershed biodiversity, health, resilience, management, and public access; reduced spruce budworm and wildfire risks.

### Design and Scope of Work

This scalable wildlife enhancement project will create open and healthier habitat, forage, and water on overstocked forests that have spruce budworm spread. The forest's current conditions have degraded water and wildlife habitat and resilience, low resilience to spruce budworm spread, are difficult to access and treat, high wildland-urban interface (WUI) wildfire risks to wildlife and communities, and several critical community, visitor, and site management ingress/egress routes that are extremely vulnerable to wildfires.

Wildlife enhancement on 2,630 acres will beneficially affect 643,000 forest and watershed habitat acres of mixed ownership (federal, state, county, tribal, local, and private). Through PROPS' expertise and USFS partnership, habitat treatments will be completed in three years at Echo Shaded Fuels Break (1,291 acres), Crane Lake (719), and Lake Vermilion (620). Projects will have unit layout to mark/flag project boundaries and resources before mechanical and/or hand treatments such as cut/pile, mastication, and timber stand improvement are implemented. Site monitoring will occur throughout with USFS. Public outreach will be take place via ways such as media, events, or partnerships. Future maintenance and prescribed fire return will be easier due to treatments and healthier, resilient landscape. This project will strengthen existing/future enhancement projects from mixed all-lands management in Arrowhead Landscape Collaborative Group.

A wide variety of threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife, migratory bird, and vegetation species will enhance 2,630 treated acres and beneficially affect 643,000 acres. Iconic wildlife such as moose, grey wolf, bald eagle, northern goshawk, Canada lynx, Northern long eared bat, white pine, songbirds, neotropic migratory birds, and over 40 other sensitive wildlife and vegetation species will benefit. Hunting grounds for ruffed grouse and hunter walking trails for ruffed grouse and deer will have improved access and safety. USFS will be able to more easily and cost effectively manage long-term forest habitat/watershed biodiversity, health, resilience, and public access; and have reduced spruce budworm, wildfires, and Vermilion River impacts (Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River).

Forest and watershed health and resilience will have: 1) improved moose and wildlife habitat, 2) improved water quality, quantity, filtration, 3) increased native vegetation and wildlife biodiversity, 4) reduced high fuel loads on overstocked forest, 5) reduced spruce budworm spread, 6) increased recreation and open space accessibility, 7) easier future maintenance and prescribed fire return for wildlife enhancement, 8) improved air, soil, carbon sequestration quality from reduced wildfire risks, 9) improved visitor and WUI community health and safety on ingress/egress routes to community sites, and 10) new long-term enhancement partnerships and public outreach.

There's never enough funding to treat every acre, which is why this is a crucial project. USFS chose key project sites adjacent to planned, funded, and/or implemented sites, are vulnerable WUI wildfire risk areas, key Arrowhead Landscape Collaborative sites, and is the only Region 9 National Forest to identify Potential Operational

Delineations (PODs) restoration sites to reduce wildfire risk benefitting wildlife. Now is the time to enhance immediate and long-term wildlife habitat resilience.

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

The project sites have High Biodiversity Significance (MN Biological Survey) and are adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park. Wildlife enhancement will treat spruce and aspen sites heavily impacted by spruce budworm. These high priority project sites have dense and degraded habitat, high fuel loads, are difficult to access requiring additional resources, expertise, and special contractors, and if left untreated will allow spruce budworm to continue its devastating wildlife habitat-impacting spread throughout the larger National Forest. PROPS has expertise in carefully performing treatments at project sites that are traditionally difficult at a pace quicker than traditionally anticipated.

The forest habitat is impacted by many stressors such as climate change, larger wildfires, overstocked fuel loads, competition for limited resources, disease, and pests such as spruce budworm that feed on growing buds of spruce and balsam fir. Recent warm winters have led to several years of spruce budworm infestation creating high balsam fir mortality. Reducing overstocked, dead, diseased and/or infested trees will enhance forest habitat resilience, vegetation filtration and return, water capacity, a diverse mosaic of open habitat, vegetation, and bedding preferred by moose and other wildlife, and create crucial fuel breaks reducing wildfire risks for wildlife. The project will enhance tree age diversity and structure, open up forest canopy and forest floor allowing desired habitat forbs and vegetation to thrive, and tribal interests for creating more open and young forest patches desired by moose, grouse, and deer.

This project will increase the pace and scale of treating dense and degraded forest habitat; reduce spread of disease and pest impacted trees to enhance resilient habitat, water, trees, and vegetation desired by a variety of wildlife. The treated sites will have healthier remaining forest habitat; more available resources such as resilient forest, watershed, vegetation, hydrologic capacity; reduced resource competition; reduced wildfire risks; and will be more easily accessible, healthier, and safer for WUI communities, public, USFS staff, and firefighters. USFS will be more easily able to maintain the post-treatment sites, return prescribed fire as needed, and focus on the next tier of priority forest enhancement projects.

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

This project is critical to enhancing healthy open wildlife habitat; reduce degraded habitat and wildfire risks caused by spruce budworm, high fuel loads, overly stocked forest, and reduced forest and watershed habitat health and resilience. The forest habitat is not going to improve on its own without creating open healthier habitat. We want to enhance the forest's habitat resilience, hydrologic storage capacity, and strategic fuel breaks before a catastrophic wildfire occurs.

The project can be impacted by limited operating periods (LOPS) caused by wildlife restrictions, and site accessibility from weather and wildfires. The most impactful LOP will be wildfires so we would like to get on the ground as soon as possible to begin unit layout and wildlife habitat enhancement. PROPS has experience planning for LOPs and does not anticipate any issues, as we have been reducing fuels on adjacent Lake Vermilion sites as of May 2025 and 2024.

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

The project sites are overly stocked dense forest habitat that have spruce budworm infestation and a high fuel loads. PROPS will open up healthier habitat on 2,630 forest acres that will beneficially affect 643,000 forest and watershed acres. Creating healthier habitat will reduce spruce budworm spread and enhance habitat resilience, vegetation filtration and return, water capacity, a diverse mosaic of open habitat, vegetation, and bedding preferred by moose and other wildlife, and reduce habitat wildfire risks.

The project will enhance habitat diversity and structure; open up forest canopy and forest floor allowing desired habitat forbs and vegetation to thrive; and create more open and young forest patches desired by moose, grouse, and deer. Wildlife with small and large migration range will benefit from healthier and resilient forests and watersheds occurring at three project sites. These project sites were strategically chosen as priority sites and will build upon adjacent past, current, and future forest enhancement projects (see attached maps).

This project will increase the pace and scale of healthy forest habitats, reduce spread of disease and pest impacted trees to enhance resilient habitat, water, trees, and vegetation desired by a variety of wildlife. Enhanced sites will have healthier remaining forest habitat, more available resources such as resilient forest, watershed, vegetation, hydrologic capacity; reduced resource competition and wildfire risks; and will have easier and safer outdoor public access. USFS will be more easily able to maintain the post-treatment sites, return prescribed fire as needed, and begin restoration on their next tier of priority forest enhancement projects.

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

Other : Arrowhead Landscape Collaborative Group - all lands, cross-collaborative of USFS, state, county, tribal and organizations

Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management 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.**

This project will improve 2630 acres of habitat health and resilience beneficially affecting 643,000 acres through: 1) improved moose and wildlife habitat, 2) improved water quality, quantity, filtration, 3) increased native vegetation and wildlife biodiversity, 4) reduced high fuel loads on overstocked forest, 5) reduced spruce budworm spread, 6) increased recreation and open space accessibility, 7) easier future maintenance and prescribed fire return for wildlife enhancement, 8) improved air, soil, carbon sequestration quality from reduced wildfire risks, 9) improved visitor and WUI community health and safety on ingress/egress routes to community sites, and 10) new long-term enhancement partnerships and public outreach.

Wildlife will have more healthy and diverse open habitat space to nest, forage, and migrate, which will reduce their stress levels and encourage population growth and dispersion. There will be young forest and new vegetation to forage on post-treatment that will also improve hydrologic filtering and storage.

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

### Northern Forest

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

### 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:

The Superior National Forest provides habitat for over 100 species of migratory breeding birds; has the greatest diversity of North America songbirds; and thousands of breeding, wintering, and migratory terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. This forest habitat project is critical to creating healthier, open, and more resilient wildlife habitat that has reduced wildfire risks and spruce budworm spread. These enhancements will improve the forest's resilience, hydrologic storage capacity and availability, and strategic open habitat before a catastrophic wildfire occurs. It is easier to improve a wildlife habitat's overstocked and stressed resilience by reducing fuel loads, rather than improve a scorched black forest habitat with hydrophobic soil, no vegetation, and unhealthy soil.

The project's outcome will lead to desired long-term wildlife habitat and ecosystem conditions by forest type, composition, age class, and management indicator habitats. A variety of residential and migratory wildlife such as songbirds and neotropical migratory birds will benefit. Over 40 threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife and vegetation species will benefit from improved healthy, resilient, and diverse ecosystems and habitats; open habitat; returned fire to fire-dependent habitat ecosystems; increased vegetation health and biodiversity; and coordinated collaborative landscape planning. These outcomes would be achieved through habitat treatments benefitting multiple landscapes and adjacent mixed landowners.

### Outcomes

#### Programs in the northern forest region:

*Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ PROPS will enhance wildlife habitat on 2,630 acres beneficially affecting 643,000 watershed acres. The project will improve vegetation and moose/wildlife habitat biodiversity and quality; forest/watershed health and resilience; water quantity and quality; and reduce wildfire risks and spruce budworm spread.*

*This project will directly enhance 2,630 acres at three sites. Projects will have unit layout to mark/flag project boundaries and resources before mechanical and/or hand treatments such as cut/pile, mastication, and timber stand improvement are implemented. Sites will be tracked by total acres and evaluated pre-, during, and post-treatment alongside USFS.*

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

Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

### 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.

No funding has been allocated for the proposed wildlife habitat enhancement project treatments. Any LSOHC funding would be greatly appreciated in enhancing wildlife habitat at a faster pace and scale than if left unfunded, untreated, and unstopped spruce budworm spread.

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

The Superior National Forest and PROPS have partnered to increase the pace and scale of a variety of forest and watershed habitat improvement projects that also increase community safety and access, and reduce spruce budworm. As the project's landowner, the Superior National Forest will provide support, project planning, project access, and long-term maintenance and monitoring in conjunction with PROPS.

This long-term partnership will greatly contribute towards longstanding wildlife habitat resilience and stewardship of National Forest System lands and its many associated public benefits. The Superior National Forest and PROPS continue to implement a variety of habitat resilience projects throughout the forest and will perform site monitoring and future enhancement maintenance treatments as needed. The requested scalable wildlife habitat activities will accelerate the pace and scale of Superior National Forest habitat enhancement needs which will allow this partnership to focus on the next tier of priority projects to be funded, implemented, and maintained. PROPS and the Superior National Forest look forward to continuing our long-term partnership as we apply for grant and other funding sources for future planning and implementation enhancement projects.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026 and onward	USFS and TBD	USFS and PROPS continues to seek additional funding sources for future and adjacent planning and wildlife enhancement implementation projects	USFS and PROPS implements planning and wildlife enhancement implementation projects using secured additional funds	USFS continues long-term maintenance and monitoring of other project sites with PROPS support as needed
2029 and onward	USFS landowner	USFS continues long-term maintenance and monitoring of project sites with PROPS support as needed	USFS continues to implement long-term enhancement and maintenance with PROPS support as needed	-

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

Public outreach will occur by PROPS, a local community partner, and/or USFS in a variety of ways such as media, events, or partnerships. As the landowner, the Superior National Forest continues to engage with tribes, the public, and diverse community partners.

USFS incorporated Fond du Lac, Bois Forte, and Grand Portage's tribal forest and wildlife habitat interests into these projects including improving moose and deer habitat; managing the whole landscape versus piecemeal; prescribed fire return; and improving hunting and gathering access.

Outdoor public access, safety, hunting, hunter walking trails, fuel loads, wildfire risks, and aesthetics will be improved for all households and the larger 643,000 acres of mixed ownership.

The Crane Lake project will improve the safety for the single ingress/egress road for Town of Crane Lake and thousands of annual visitors. Improved habitat will be noticeable at this popular fishing, snow mobile, and launching off recreation spot that's bordered by and used as access points to other neighboring lakes and public lands on three sides (Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, MN's only National Park (Voyageurs National Park), and Canada)).

The Lake Vermilion project will reduce impacts to Vermilion River from Lake Vermilion to Crane Lake (Vermilion River is an Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River). Habitat, safety and access will benefit this popular fishing, camping, day-use, and launching off recreational spot. It will also reduce habitat impacts to Minnesota's 7th largest lake which has 365 islands, is one of the most scenic lakes, and is in Minnesota's Arrowhead Region.

The Echo Shaded Fuels Break project will open wildlife habitat and forage further from roads and reduce habitat wildfire risks. Healthier open habitats will also beneficially improve public access and safety to popular sites such as Echo Trail, Jeanette Campground, Lake Jeanette which are used by neighboring locals, Minnesotans, and visitors. Jeanette Campground is highly used, always full throughout summer, has repeat annual visitors, and is along Echo Trail. Lake Jeanette has campsites, boat launches, a few islands, and is a popular destination.

## Activity Details

### Requirements

**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?**

Other : Superior National Forest (Federal; National Forest System lands)

### 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 proposal either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**

No

### Other OHF Appropriation Awards

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

No



**Timeline**

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
Perform unit layout on up to 2,000 acres (mark and flag unit and special resources) before healthier open habitat enhancement for all three project sites - Echo Shaded Fuels Break, Lake Vermilion, and Crane Lake	6/30/26
Perform healthier open habitat treatments on 2,630 acres for all three project sites - Echo Shaded Fuels Break, Lake Vermilion, and Crane Lake	6/30/29
Evaluate and monitor project pre-, during, and post-habitat enhancement treatment on 2,630 acres for all three project sites - Echo Shaded Fuels Break, Lake Vermilion, and Crane Lake	6/30/29
Conduct public outreach during project	6/30/29

**Budget****Totals**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Funding Request</b>	<b>Total Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	\$429,500	\$72,400	USFS	\$501,900
Contracts	\$4,218,500	-	-	\$4,218,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$58,800	USFS	\$58,800
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	\$65,000	-	-	\$65,000
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	\$1,200	USFS	\$1,200
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$4,728,000</b>	<b>\$132,400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,860,400</b>



**Personnel**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Annual FTE</b>	<b>Years Working</b>	<b>Funding Request</b>	<b>Total Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unit Layout Team (2 staff)	2.0	1.0	\$240,000	-	-	\$240,000
USFS Staff	-	3.0	-	\$72,400	USFS	\$72,400
Forest System Specialist (up to 3 staff)	0.15	3.0	\$12,800	-	-	\$12,800
GIS Specialist (up to 2 staff)	0.3	3.0	\$27,800	-	-	\$27,800
Quality Control and Monitoring (up to 3 staff)	0.3	3.0	\$31,800	-	-	\$31,800
Project Manager (up to 3 staff)	0.87	3.0	\$86,000	-	-	\$86,000
Grant/Project Associate (up to 2 staff)	0.06	3.0	\$5,400	-	-	\$5,400
Principal Investigator	0.03	3.0	\$6,100	-	-	\$6,100
Director of Grant Administration	0.12	3.0	\$19,600	-	-	\$19,600

**Capital Equipment**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Three (3) USFS-certified self-contained fire suppression units at \$15,000 each. One unit per project team. Fire suppression units are required for this wildlife enhancement work and are part of proper planning for safety and potential immediate fire suppression needs. Each fire suppression unit has a water tank and water hose, radio communication system, and other necessary items for safety, fire suppression, and communication in case of any potential fire risks that can be addressed immediately. This will be available for three project team units during implementation. After the project, equipment will be able to be used by PROPS for future enhancement projects on Superior National Forest.	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000
An enclosed fire trailer that will house fire suppression equipment and tools such as radios, pump units, self contained USFS-certified fire suppression units (at the end of the day), and other necessary supplies and equipment for safety and communication in case of any potential fire risks. After the project, equipment will be able to be used by PROPS for future enhancement projects on Superior National Forest.	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000

**Amount of Request:** \$4,728,000**Amount of Leverage:** \$132,400**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 2.8%**DSS + Personnel:** \$444,500**As a % of the total request:** 9.4%**Easement Stewardship:** -**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$132,400	\$132,400	100.0%	-	0.0%

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

USFS and PROPS are committed long-term to improving wildlife habitat and outdoor access. USFS will provide project oversight, implementation inspections, and long-term post-treatment monitoring and maintenance.

The Superior National Forest will provide staff and vehicles for inspections, monitoring, administrative oversight; vehicles, boats, mileage, gas, and flagging supplies.

**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?**

This is a scalable project so the current 2,630 habitat enhancement acres could be proportionally reduced. Unit layout could occur up to 2,000 acres or proportionally adjusted. Depending on funding, public outreach would either occur by PROPS, USFS and/or a community partner.

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

This is a scalable project so personnel and unit layout could be reduced proportionally, but would still be quite critical to properly enhancing and overseeing the project. Public outreach may need to be conducted by USFS rather than by PROPS and/or a community partner.

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

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

This is a scalable project so the current 2,630 habitat enhancement acres could be proportionally reduced. Unit layout could occur up to 2,000 acres or proportionally adjusted. Depending on funding, public outreach would either occur by PROPS, USFS and/or a community partner.

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

This is a scalable project so personnel and unit layout could be reduced proportionally, but would still be quite critical to properly enhancing and overseeing the project. Public outreach may need to be conducted by USFS rather than by PROPS and/or a community partner.

**Personnel**

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**

No

**Contracts**

**What is included in the contracts line?**

Contractors provide staff, equipment, and operators to enhance 2630 wildlife habitat beneficially affecting 643,000 habitat acres.

\$620,000 - Lake Vermilion - 620 wildlife habitat enhanced acres

\$2,821,000 - Echo Shaded Fuels Break - 1,291 habitat acres

\$777,500 - Crane Lake - 719 habitat acres

## Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

\$15,000 - Public outreach (up to 3 years) solely for this project. PROPS and/or a community partner will perform outreach in a variety of ways such as media, communication, community events, or partnerships.

PROPS is currently enhancing adjacent Lake Vermilion habitat as of May 2025 and last year (see attached Letters of Support and Pictures). Our on-the-ground presence and engagement with the community and public has resulted several private landowners asking for PROPS' help to reduce fuel loads and enhance wildlife habitat on their private properties adjacent to these public lands. Additionally, several have offered dock use and access to PROPS for our contractors more easily enhance wildlife habitat. The community has also expressed PROPS support for this wildlife enhancement work in their backyard as they have seen what the recent Brimson Complex fires can easily become in their own backyards if left untreated, since wildfires do not respect landownership lines.

Separately, PROPS will continue to pursue other outside funding opportunities to work with private landowners that are adjacent to the Superior National Forest in order to increase cross-boundary and a larger holistic landowner wildlife habitat enhancement acres. This recent example highlights potential wildlife enhancement cross-boundary collaboration that can be increased through funded public outreach.

## Federal Funds

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

Yes

**Are the funds confirmed?**

Yes

In Kind : \$132,400

**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	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	2,630	0	2,630
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,630</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,630</b>

**Restoration/Enhancement Acres Breakdown of Existing Protected Lands (Table 1a.2)**

	RESTORE		ENHANCE	
	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc)	-	-	-	-
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	0	-	2,630
Easements	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,630</b>

**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	-	-	\$4,728,000	-	\$4,728,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,728,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,728,000</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	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	2,630	2,630
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,630</b>	<b>2,630</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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	\$4,728,000	\$4,728,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,728,000</b>	<b>\$4,728,000</b>

### 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	-	-	\$1,797	-

### 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	-	-	-	-	\$1,797

### 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:

The Superior National Forest has identified these parcels to directly enhance 2,630 forest habitat acres that are critical to improving wildlife habitat and will beneficially affect 643,000 acres of watershed and wildlife habitat of high mixed federal, state, county, local, and private landownership. This project is scalable to improve wildlife habitat in these three project sites - Echo Shaded Fuels Break, Crane Lake, and Lake Vermilion. The St Louis County project sites have High Biodiversity Significance, and when enhanced, would tangentially reduce wildfire threats for the adjacent Outstanding Biodiversity Significance habitats of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Boundary (MN Biological Survey).

The forest wildlife habitat enhancement project will lead to desired long-term habitat and ecosystem conditions by forest type, composition, age class, and management indicator habitats. Specifically, the project's outcomes will improve healthy, resilient, and diverse ecosystems and habitats; reduce and manage fuel loads to desired fuel levels; return fire to fire-dependent ecosystems; increase vegetation diversity; improve wildlife habitat for wildlife including moose, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, songbirds, neotropical migratory birds; reduce spruce budworm spread; and improve public outdoor access. The project would also provide secondary benefits of coordinated collaborative landscape planning; managed reasonable road accessibility; and provide sustainable forest products for a variety of uses for current and future generations. These outcomes would be achieved through open space forest habitat enhancements benefitting multiple landscapes and adjacent mixed landowners.

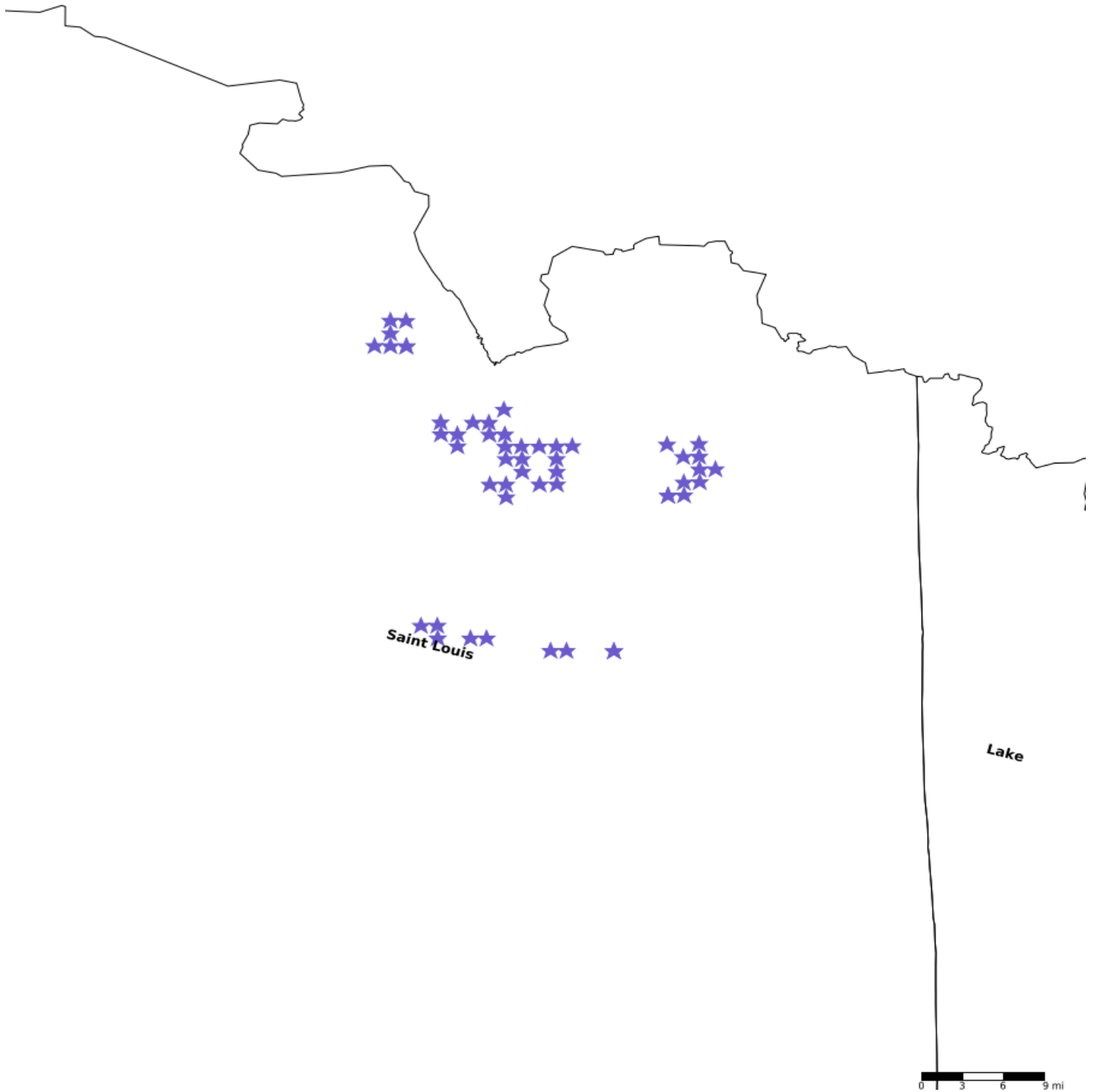
### Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717223	38	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717234	272	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717222	155	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717235	38	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717227	212	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake	St. Louis	06717233	6	-	Yes	-
Crane Lake (overall project site; is a summary of all Crane Lake parcels listed above)	St. Louis	06717235	719	\$882,665	Yes	Restore 719 wildlife habitat acres via fuels reduction and benefitting a larger 500,000 acre wildlife habitat and watershed landscape.
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06616231	47	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516212	117	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516211	64	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516202	40	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516203	60	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516208	59	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516205	42	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516206	36	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06616226	104	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06616234	92	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06616233	77	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514233	10	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514234	70	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514227	13	-	Yes	-



Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514226	23	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514223	10	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514224	66	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514214	103	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514215	87	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514211	15	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06514209	21	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515230	207	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515229	76	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515220	46	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515217	187	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515209	6	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515208	166	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06515207	23	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516235	44	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516227	100	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516226	27	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516224	28	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516213	50	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break	St. Louis	06516214	36	-	Yes	-
Echo Shaded Fuels Break (overall project site; is a summary of all Echo Shaded Fuels Break parcels listed above)	St. Louis	06514233	1,291	\$3,011,855	Yes	Restore 1,291 wildlife habitat acres via fuels reduction and benefitting a 1,291 acre wildlife habitat and watershed landscape.
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06317224	100	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06317223	50	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06316229	200	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06316228	54	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06317225	104	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06315232	40	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06315235	80	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion	St. Louis	06315231	45	-	Yes	-
Lake Vermilion (overall project site; is a summary of all Lake Vermilion parcels listed above)	St. Louis	06315235	620	\$713,480	Yes	Restore 620 wildlife habitat acres via fuels reduction and benefitting a larger 141,855 acre wildlife habitat and watershed landscape.

Parcel Map



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

# Enhancing Critical Wildlife Forest Habitats and Watersheds on Superior National Forest



## Who

**Patriot Restoration OPS (PROPS)** is a national veteran-driven environmental conservation non-profit. PROPS' unique mission is to improve landscape-scale ecosystems by providing work and training opportunities in forestry and wildlife habitat restoration to returning and transitioning military personnel and their spouses. PROPS engages and reestablishes work forces through training and partnerships with returning U.S. veterans, tribes, critical industries such as timber, prescribed fire crews, railways, businesses, and others to restore critical ecosystems and wildlife habitat. We take pride in what we do and recognize the value of incorporating, training, and supporting our veterans and their families into our national workforce to improve our nation's lands.



PROPS veterans, staff, and partners getting to work enhancing wildlife habitat.

## What

This scalable wildlife enhancement project will improve 2,630 forest habitat acres of overstocked forests that have spruce budworm spread and are difficult to access for treatment. The forest's current conditions have degraded water and wildlife habitat and resilience, low resilience to spruce budworm spread, are difficult to access and treat, have high wildland-urban interface (WUI) wildfire risks to wildlife and communities, and several critical community, visitor, and site management ingress/egress routes that are extremely vulnerable to wildfires.



Lake Vermilion's degraded wildlife habitat site representative of all project sites.





Warblers, moose, Canada lynx, and other wildlife will benefit from habitat enhancement (USFWS, USFS).

## Why

This project will benefit moose, grey wolf, bald eagle, Canada lynx, Northern long eared bat, song birds, neotropical migratory birds, and over 40 sensitive wildlife and vegetation species. Current decreased water and habitat quality, high fuel loads, overstocked forests, spruce budworm, and difficult site access will gain long-term forest habitat/watershed biodiversity, health, resilience, management, and public access; reduced spruce budworm, wildfires, and Vermilion River impacts.

The project sites have High Biodiversity Significance that if left untreated will allow spruce budworm spread to increase tree mortality throughout the larger National Forest. Reducing overstocked and/or infested trees will a diverse age and mosaic of open habitat, vegetation, and bedding preferred by moose and other wildlife, enhance forest resilience, vegetation filtration and return, water capacity, a diverse age and mosaic of open habitat, vegetation, and bedding preferred by moose and other wildlife, and create crucial fuel breaks reducing wildfire risks. The forest canopy and forest floor will open up allowing desired forbs and vegetation to thrive, and tribal interests for creating more open and young forest patches desired by moose, grouse, and deer.



PROPS' before and after wildlife habitat enhancement treatments at adjacent Lake Vermilion site. Degraded and overstocked forest (left) versus diverse age, structure, and open habitat space (right).

## Where, When, and How

Enhancing 2,630 forest habitat acres will beneficially affect 643,000 forest and watershed acres in St. Louis County on the Superior National Forest. Treatments will occur from 2026-2029 and benefit wildlife habitat, reduce wildfire risks, and increase public access and safety to Lake Vermilion, Crane Lake, and Echo Shaded Fuels Break (Echo Trail, Jeanette Campground, and Lake Jeanette).

Projects will have unit layout to mark/flag project boundaries and resources before mechanical and/or hand treatments. Sites will be monitored and public outreach will occur throughout project in many ways such as media, events, or partnerships. USFS will be more easily able to maintain the post-treatment sites, return prescribed fire as needed, and begin treatments on their next tier of priority forest enhancement projects.