Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/19/2026

Project Title: Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28

Funds Recommended: $13,109,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: David Stein
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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Northern Forest

Southeast Forest

Metro / Urban

Prairie

Activity types:

Enhance

Protect in Fee

Restore

Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Forest

Prairie

Wetlands

Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

The Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program is managed by the Department of Natural Resources to Provide competitive matching grants of up to $500,000 to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities. Since 2011, the CPL program has provided over 1160 grants, totaling over $130 million to over 290 different grantee organizations, enhancing, restoring, or protecting over 630,000 acres of habitat. Demand continues as successful organizations return for additional grants and new organizations apply each year.

Design and Scope of Work

The CPL Program fulfills MS 97a.056 Subd. 3a, directing LSOHC to establish a conservation partners grant program encouraging/supporting local conservation efforts. $12,509,000 of the requested $13,109,000 will be available for grants. Of this amount, at least $3,000,000 will be used for projects submitted from applicants who have not received CPL funds before, and at least $3,000,000 will be used for projects in the 7-county metro area and in cities with a population of 50,000 people or greater. If funds remain from the $3,000,000 new applicant fund and the $3,000,000 metro fund after one grant round, they may be used for projects statewide. Statewide funds may be used in the metro area and for new applicants. Grant activities include enhancement, restoration, and protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% match from non-state sources is required for all grants and may be in-kind or cash.

Applicants must describe the project goals, methods, location, activity, habitat, urgency, and overall benefit. Staff works with applicants to submit applications, oversee grant selection, prepare/execute grant documents, review expenditures, approves payments/reports, monitor work, and assist recipients with close-out. Staff complies with Office of Grants Management policies. Grantees are required to submit annual and final accomplishment reports. The CPL program has 4 annual grant cycles- Traditional, Metro, New Applicant, and Expedited Conservation Projects (ECP). The Traditional and Metro cycles will have one grant round beginning August 2027 and a second round if funds remain.

Projects under $25,000 will have a simplified application. The ECP grant cycle will be open continuously for eligible projects under $75,000 beginning August 2027, and applications will be awarded up to 5 times through May 2028,

depending on available funds. DNR may choose to make additional awards, consistent with DNR and OHF policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available.
CPL staff provides an administrative review of applications. Technical Review Committees, comprised of habitat experts across the state, review and score Traditional and Metro applications based on evaluation criteria (attached). The DNR Directors of Fish and Wildlife, Ecological and Water Resources, and Forestry review the committees' recommendations and provide a ranking to the Commissioner. Final decisions are made by the Commissioner. ECP grants are reviewed by CPL staff and DNR habitat experts using established criteria. The Director of Fish and Wildlife makes final decisions for ECP.

CPL staff conducts site visits for most projects over $50,000 and smaller projects if needed. For projects over $250,000, staff may conduct site visits annually for the duration of the grant to ensure that project objectives are being met. Administration costs of $600,000 include salary/fringe, direct support services, travel, outreach, ongoing application system/database maintenance, and other professional services. 3.0 FTEs are needed to manage and promote the program, monitor grants, assist with applications and technical review meetings, and meet state requirements.

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

All CPL projects include a Natural Heritage Database Review, which addresses wildlife species of greatest conservation need, the MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories. These results are incorporated into the requests, along with mitigation measures if needed. Habitat value/species benefits is also one of the evaluation criterion used to score applications. When the projects are reviewed by the technical habitat experts, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, targeted species, and threatened/endangered species are all discussed, and add to the overall habitat quality and urgency of applications which is reflected in the scoring and funding recommendations.

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

The CPL program will prioritize habitat projects of which applicants have demonstrated a conservation urgency. This may include protecting lands of high conservation value that are at immediate risk of development, preventing the spread of invasive species on public lands or waters, etc. Urgency is one of the six evaluation criterion used in the review process. CPL involvement continues to grow every year and supporting this appropriation will keep the momentum going with the local conservation culture.

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

The CPL program has a Technical Review Committee that reviews and scores projects based on evaluation criteria. One of the evaluation criterion addresses the overall project value and includes the habitat quality and quantity of the site, whether or not it is part of a habitat corridor, and the use of currently accepted practices based on sound conservation science. A second evaluation criterion addresses the habitat benefits of the proposal, such as protecting areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey. A third evaluation criterion addresses public use and access, and the project's proximity to other protected lands. The technical experts ensure that CPL proposals recommended for funding are using current conservation science and best management practices.

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

Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Metro / Urban

Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Northern Forest

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

Prairie

Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

Southeast Forest

Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

Programs in the northern forest region:

Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

Programs in prairie region:

Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

Programs in southeast forest region:

Other ~ *Outcomes depend on applications received and projects funded*

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 for the continuation of a program that did not exist prior to the legacy fund and would not continue to exist without an OHF appropriation.

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

Applicants are asked to describe or submit their long-term management plans when submitting a project proposal, and the Technical Review Committee considers these plans when scoring proposals and making funding recommendations. The sustainability of the project is also addressed through one of the evaluation criterion. Long term maintenance commitment from the applicant is crucial to a successful proposal. The CPL program has a monitoring process to ensure that funds are being used to complete work as described in the grantee's work plans. The CPL program manager and natural resource specialist conducts site visits for projects that are over $50,000 and smaller projects as needed. When conducting site visits, CPL staff meets with the project manager and land manager to discuss and evaluate the work, and to address any issues that may have come up during the grant period, as well as discuss long-term management goals.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
ML 2027	LSOHC	CPL Request for Proposals will be made publicly available and application system will open.	CPL Technical Review Committee will meet to score projects based on application quality and outcomes.	DNR Division Directors and Commissioners will approve or deny funding for projects based on Technical Review Committee findings.

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

The Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program has the following specific ties to BIPOC and diverse communities:

- Tribes have been grantees or partners for CPL projects
- Many metro grantees and partners have CPL projects that restore or enhance public land in diverse communities
- Staff members will be providing outreach to BIPOC, diverse, and low to moderate income communities- informing them of the project and funding opportunities with CPL

The Minnesota DNR has adopted advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a key priority in its 2023-27 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. DNR's OHF projects aim to serve all Minnesotans. At the same time, we are bringing more focus in all our work to BIPOC and diverse communities. OHF achieves high quality habitat that provides ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF also supports public access and recreational opportunities on these lands. Project scoring and implementation benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities. 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 county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**
No

> **Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:**
> County board/LGU approval will be sought for WMA and SNA acquisitions, for all other acquisitions partners will notify the county board/LGU of the acquisition.

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

Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?
Yes

Who will manage the easement?
The easement manager will be specified in each CPL application and work plan.

Who will be the easement holder?
The easement holder will be specified in each CPL application and work plan.

What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?
This depends on the amount of CPL grants received and awarded.

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
>
> SNA
>
> Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
>
> Refuge Lands
>
> State Wilderness Areas

State Forests

WPA

AMA

County/Municipal

Public Waters

State Recreation Areas

Land Use

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

Explain what will be planted and include the maximum percentage of any acquired parcel that would be planted into foodplots by the proposer or the end owner of the property:
Short term cover crops such as annual rye, winter wheat, oats, clover, etc. may be planted to prepare sites for restoration.

Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?
No

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?
No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?
Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:
The land may be open for hunting and fishing, depending on individual project applications. For acquisitions, the land will be open to hunting and fishing unless otherwise provided by law.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of MN

Federal

Tribal

County

Local Unit of Government

NGO

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA

AMA

County Forest

National Wildlife Refuge

Tribal

SNA

State Forest

WPA

SRA

City Owned : This will vary depending on applicants

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?
This will vary depending on applications received.

Will the eased land be open for public use?
Yes

Describe the expected public use:
Public use will depend on the conditions of the easement. Most but not all CPL projects are on public lands/waters open for public use.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved, beyond those used for maintenance and management, as a result of the proposed acquisition?
No

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?
No

Acquired parcels may or may not be restored and enhanced under this appropriation depending on awarded CPL project scopes.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?
Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Final report due to council	October 2031
Grantees complete projects and submit final reports	June-July 2031
Ongoing monitoring, per OGM policy	Summer 2029,2030,2031
Status updates due to council	2028,2029,2030,2031
Second round grants encumbered, grantees begin work	May-June 2028
Second round applications due	March 2028
Second round applications awarded	April 2028
Solicit second round applications if needed	January 2028
First round grants encumbered, grantees begin work	January-April 2028
First round grantees announced	December 2027
First round applications due (ECP applications accepted continuously)	September 2027
Solicit Applications: RFP posted online	August 2027

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, 2031;
(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, 2035;
(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2032;
(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	$450,000	-	-	$450,000
Contracts	$12,509,000	$1,250,900	Grantees	$13,759,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$30,000	-	-	$30,000
Professional Services	$30,000	-	-	$30,000
Direct Support Services	$69,200	-	-	$69,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$20,800	-	-	$20,800
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$13,109,000**	**$1,250,900**	**-**	**$14,359,900**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grants Specialist	1.0	2.0	$150,000	-	-	$150,000
CPL Administrator	1.0	2.0	$150,000	-	-	$150,000
CPL Coordinator	1.0	2.0	$150,000	-	-	$150,000

Amount of Request: $13,109,000
Amount of Leverage: $1,250,900
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 9.54%
DSS + Personnel: $519,200
As a % of the total request: 3.96%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?
With the reduced appropriation recommendation, the CPL program will implement a reduced budget structure. Under this budget structure, $12,509,000 will be allocated toward grant contracts, and $600,000 will be allocated towards administrative costs.

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
Leverage will be provided through local match of a minimum of 10% of each grant awarded. CPL grantees contribute cash, in-kind contributions, and donations as leverage to grants.

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?
If the program receives less funding, less projects will be awarded and funded. Acres will be somewhat proportionally reduced, but this is unknown until applications are submitted.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS expenses will not be proportionally reduced. In order to operate the CPL program, two staff are needed to work with applicants and grantees.

Personnel

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

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
All partner grant projects.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Other : Online Application System Maintenance and Improvement

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
N/A

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?
The DNR Direct and Necessary Cost Calculator.

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	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

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	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**

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?
Yes - Sign up criteria is attached

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Parcels are determined by project applications, and will be selected through the technical review process of the CPL program.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2027 - Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28
Organization: DNR
Manager: David Stein

Budget

Requested Amount: $15,000,000
Appropriated Amount: $13,109,000
Percentage: 87.39%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	$450,000	-	$450,000	-	100.0%	-
Contracts	$14,400,000	$1,440,000	$12,509,000	$1,250,900	86.87%	86.87%
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	$30,000	-	$30,000	-	100.0%	-
Professional Services	$30,000	-	$30,000	-	100.0%	-
Direct Support Services	$69,200	-	$69,200	-	100.0%	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$20,800	-	$20,800	-	100.0%	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$15,000,000**	**$1,440,000**	**$13,109,000**	**$1,250,900**	**87.39%**	**86.87%**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
If the program receives less funding, less projects will be awarded and funded. Acres will be somewhat proportionally reduced, but this is unknown until applications are submitted.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS expenses will not be proportionally reduced. In order to operate the CPL program, two staff are needed to work with applicants and grantees.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
If the program receives less funding, less projects will be awarded and funded. Acres will be somewhat proportionally reduced, but this is unknown until applications are submitted.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS expenses will not be proportionally reduced. In order to operate the CPL program, two staff are needed to work with applicants and grantees.

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	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	-	-	-

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	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	-	-	-