Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase XIX

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/08/2026

Project Title: Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase XIX

Funds Recommended: $4,500,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sabin Adams
Title: MN State Coordinator
Organization: Pheasants Forever
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Location Information

County Location(s): Meeker, Becker, Brown, Kandiyohi and Douglas.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

In this phase of the Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area program, Pheasants Forever (PF) seeks to permanently protect and restore parcels of land as Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) in the prairie, prairie forest transition, and metro regions of Minnesota. Acquired parcels will be either adjacent to or between existing public lands to create larger complexes or corridors for a variety of wildlife species. These properties will have habitat restored to the greatest extent possible with regard to time and budget constraints.

Design and Scope of Work

Loss and degradation of grasslands and wetlands pose a severe threat to the future of Minnesota's flora and fauna. Over 90% of wetland and 99% of grassland habitats have been converted to other uses, primarily those surrounding agricultural and urban development. This habitat loss significantly reduces wildlife populations abilities to increase or remain stable in the face of multiple stressors including climate change, pressure from invasive species, etc. This proposal works to slow habitat decline by acquiring and restoring previously converted wetland and grassland habitats into WPA's that are open to public recreation. This program continually builds on prior phases and augments current efforts by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their partners to increase waterfowl populations through the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program (SWAP). By improving wetland quality, quantity, and public access this program provides multiple benefits to Minnesotans.

Potential properties will be identified and evaluated based on landscape level planning tools such as the USFWS Duck Breeding Density Maps, MN DNR natural heritage data, and other state level conservation plans. Once purchased, all wetlands will be restored by either surface ditch "plugs," breaking sub-surface tile lines, or other best practices for wetland restoration. Restoration of grasslands will be completed using site-appropriate native grasses and forbs while following best management practices. Quality grassland restoration results typically take three to five years, allowing for one to two years of post-acquisition farming to allow residual herbicides to leave the soil. This timing allows us to address weed management issues, chemical carryover, and any other site-specific issues that may prevent the site from being restored to its fullest potential. Other restoration activities that may be needed include invasive tree removal, building site clean-up, prescribed fire, etc. as necessary to provide high-quality habitat. All restoration work will be completed to the highest possible standards with considerations towards budgets and grant timelines.

To address concerns related to county tax revenues due to acquiring public land, the UFWS and PF will notify counties prior to the acquisition of lands. Once acquired, the USFWS will make a one-time payment (Trust Fund payment) to the county where the property is located. In addition, the USFWS will make annual refuge revenue sharing payments for all fee lands within their respective counties.

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

PF actively engages in conservation priority discussions with state and government agencies, to determine what areas are the highest priority for adding permanently protected lands in the prairie, prairie/forest transition, and

metro planning areas. High priority is given to parcels whose restoration and protection benefit rare, threatened, & endangered species. Often the only locations where many threatened and endangered species are found is on existing habitat complexes. This proposal builds upon those complexes allowing for expansion and increased populations of those species.

When selecting projects for this proposal, PF uses the latest GIS data and works with DNR and USFWS staff to identify locations that benefit species of greatest conservation need. Additionally, species of greatest conservation need are considered and can influence restoration plans after the land is permanently protected. By increasing the amount, functionality, and productivity of grassland landscapes for these species, we aim to slow population decline. Restoration of wetland and grassland complexes will provide habitat for a myriad of species including waterfowl, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, ring-necked pheasants, pollinators, and monarchs. Other species of concern benefiting from this project include the greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk, and yellow rails.

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

These funds will not be available for use, from the time of writing this proposal, until July 2027. Because of this we cannot know what time sensitive projects we will pursue. Any potential seller in May 2026 will almost certainly have moved on by July 2027. Properties with incredible habitat value are coming on and off the market in weeks or months, not years. In order to seize these time sensitive opportunities it is critical that this funding be utilized in a programmatic way allowing older grant funds to be spent on the most appropriate and time sensitive opportunities. By the time funding for this proposed phase is available there will be incredibly important and time sensitive properties for sale and this funding will allow us to acquire those properties.

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

PF and the USFWS partner to identify and evaluate tracts to purchase. Tracts that are directly adjacent to existing complexes or contributing to corridors are ranked higher than stand-alone tracts. This phase will continue to evaluate tracts based on their ability to expand complexes and corridors as in the past, thus preventing future or reducing current habitat fragmentation.

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

Long Range Duck Recovery Plan

North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

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

Metro / Urban

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

Prairie

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

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Acquired parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl and SGCN. Lands will be transferred to the USFWS as a WPA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by the USFWS. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in each WMD Comprehensive Plan which rolls up to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *Strategic parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl. Lands will be transferred to the USFWS as a WPA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by the USFWS. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in each WMD Comprehensive Plan which rolls up to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.*

Programs in prairie region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *Strategic parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl. Lands will be transferred to the USFWS as a WPA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by the USFWS. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in each WMD Comprehensive Plan which rolls up to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.*

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 proposal supplements past investments and is focused on accelerating the protection and restoration of strategically selected parcels.

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

Pheasants Forever will transfer tracts purchased with grant funds to the USFWS to be enrolled into the Waterfowl Production Area program. The USFWS will hold these tracts in perpetuity and will be responsible for maintaining restoration and enhancement work that was completed using grant funds. USFWS have an annual budget and staff that are devoted to implementing management on WPA's and NWR's. Management strategies to maintain healthy grasslands and nesting habitat include prescribed fire (using their internal burn program), biological, mechanical, and chemical treatments to inhibit encroachment of woody species. In addition to the biological benefit of increasing complex size or expanding corridors, selecting acquisitions in areas with existing USFWS ownership reduced management and administrative costs as a function of proximity.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer	Federal	Monitoring	Maintenance	Habitat Management

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

The goal of this program is to protect and restore wildlife habitat and make these areas accessible to all Minnesotans, regardless of cultural background or fiscal standing. Properties acquired under this program will be free and open to access by all. These properties can be recreated on by all levels of income from free hiking/wildlife watching to expensive hunting practices. This program spans all of the Prairie, Forest-Prairie, and Metro regions. Some acquisitions will be nearby areas with diverse or low-income communities. This program engages with everyone who wants to participate in public lands and the outdoors.

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:
At minimum we will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the USFWS and follow up with questions prior to acquisition. In cases where there is interest, we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?
No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:
A small number of parcels may have an existing federal or state easement on a portion of the tract which permanently protect wetlands or grasslands. In cases where parcels with these protections are deemed high-priority to our agency partners we will follow Outdoor Heritage Fund guidelines to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the protected portion of the property.

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:
This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non-neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. There are no food plots on WPA acquisitions.

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:
All acquired lands will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

Federal

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WPA

National Wildlife Refuge

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

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?
Yes

The acquired parcels will be restored utilizing funds within the contracts and materials lines of the budget.

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
Identify priority acquisitions	7/1/2027
Complete restoration	6/30/2032
Close on tracts	1/1/2029
Contract appraisals ordered	4/1/2028
Re-evaluate tract priority	2/15/2028
Purchase agreements	2/1/2028
Contract appraisals ordered	9/1/2027

Date of Final Report Submission: 06/30/2032

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	$278,800	-	-	$278,800
Contracts	$636,000	-	-	$636,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	$3,177,100	$1,261,800	PF/State/Federal	$4,438,900
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$1,900	-	-	$1,900
Professional Services	$170,300	-	-	$170,300
Direct Support Services	$92,100	$7,900	PF	$100,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	$7,500	-	-	$7,500
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$136,300	-	-	$136,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$4,500,000**	**$1,269,700**	**-**	**$5,769,700**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF FIELD STAFF	1.85	5.0	$265,000	-	-	$265,000
PF GRANT STAFF	0.1	5.0	$13,800	-	-	$13,800

Amount of Request: $4,500,000
Amount of Leverage: $1,269,700
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 28.22%
DSS + Personnel: $370,900
As a % of the total request: 8.24%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?
Every line is exactly prorated EXCEPT the DNR Land Acquisition Costs which are stuck at $7,500/ appraisal review.

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, land value donations, contractor donations and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

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 this project is reduced by 50% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

Personnel

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

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for restoration, enhancement, and initial development of the protected acres. This could include but is not limited to wetland/grassland restoration, tree removal, prescribed fire, building removal, posts, signs, and other development.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Appraisals

Other : Acquisition Contractors hired by PF to obtain necessary documentation.

Surveys

Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?
4

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
na

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?

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost de minimis method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 15%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 7.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, supplies and materials and travel. We are donating the difference-in-kind.

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

7/1/2028

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	45	408	-	-	453
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**45**	**408**	**-**	**-**	**453**

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	$450,000	$4,050,000	-	-	$4,500,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**$450,000**	**$4,050,000**	**-**	**-**	**$4,500,000**

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	45	136	-	272	-	453
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**45**	**136**	**-**	**272**	**-**	**453**

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	$450,000	$1,350,000	-	$2,700,000	-	$4,500,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**$450,000**	**$1,350,000**	**-**	**$2,700,000**	**-**	**$4,500,000**

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	$10,000	$9,926	-	-
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	$10,000	$9,926	-	$9,926	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

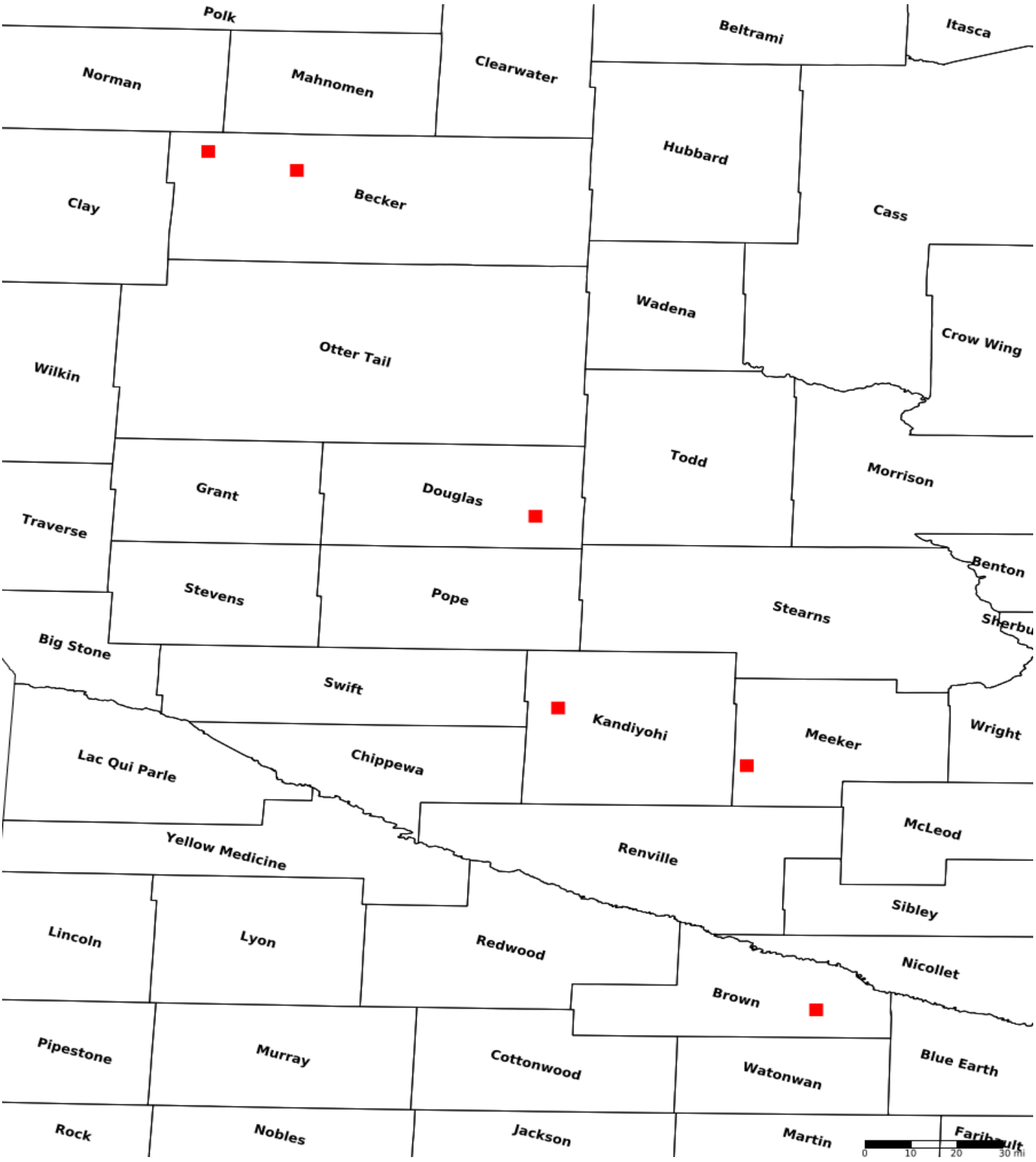
Sign-up Criteria?
No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Parcels are identified and strategically prioritized using the best science and decision support tools (e.g. HAPET Duck Breeding Density Maps) available. Preference is given to project sites that help deliver the goals of other recognized conservation initiatives and plans. Data layers (i.e. MN Biological Survey, Natural Heritage Database, MN Prairie Plan, Wellhead Protection Areas, Pheasant Action Plan, existing protected land, etc.) are used to help justify projects and focus areas as well as to inform decisions on top priorities for protection and restoration efforts.

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Hellicksen Prairie WPA Addn	Becker	14243226	160	$960,000	No
Kruger WPA Addn	Becker	14141216	80	$350,000	No
Middle Minnesota River WPA Addn	Brown	10931234	114	$912,000	No
Peterson WPA Addn	Douglas	12836230	77	$616,000	No
Swan Lake WPA Addn	Kandiyohi	12036210	80	$640,000	No
Rosendale WPA Addn	Meeker	11832217	152	$1,500,000	No

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- Restore
- Enhance
- Other

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase XIX

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2027 - Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program - Phase XIX
Organization: Pheasants Forever
Manager: Sabin Adams

Budget

Requested Amount: $14,264,800
Appropriated Amount: $4,500,000
Percentage: 31.55%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	$883,800	-	$278,800	-	31.55%	-
Contracts	$2,016,000	-	$636,000	-	31.55%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	$10,080,000	$4,000,000	$3,177,100	$1,261,800	31.52%	31.55%
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	$6,000	-	$1,900	-	31.67%	-
Professional Services	$540,000	-	$170,300	-	31.54%	-
Direct Support Services	$292,000	$292,000	$92,100	$7,900	31.54%	2.71%
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	$15,000	-	$7,500	-	50.0%	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$432,000	-	$136,300	-	31.55%	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$14,264,800**	**$4,292,000**	**$4,500,000**	**$1,269,700**	**31.55%**	**29.58%**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
If this project is reduced by 50% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
If this project is reduced by 70% we would scale down all acres/activities and dollar amounts proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and DSS will be scaled down proportionately.

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	1,440	453	31.46%
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	$14,264,800	$4,500,000	31.55%
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	1,440	453	31.46%
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	$14,264,800	$4,500,000	31.55%
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-