

## Sandy Smith

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**From:** Sandy Smith  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2011 8:53 AM  
**To:** Sandy Smith  
**Subject:** LSOHC Meeting Material

*This is being sent to you from LSOHC staff on behalf of Chair Hartwell. It is the intent that this will be discussed at the June 7<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting and be included in the meeting materials. No reply is requested and is provided as meeting information only. Also, with the exception of Les and Wayne if you are NOT planning to attend the meeting, please let me know.*

To: LSOHC members  
From: David Hartwell, Chair  
Date: May 25, 2011  
Re: Feedback from the legislative session for consideration.

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As I am certain you are aware, a number of issues were raised in the course of the legislative session. It would seem appropriate to consider these issues and determine if we should modify our priorities and Call for Requests based on this feedback to our package. I asked our staff to put together a list of the issues they heard raised during the session in what can be considered an important part of our public input proves. Here is a list of issues and brief descriptions of them. I will ask the members to discuss and consider this during our discussion on the 7<sup>th</sup> where we determine what our Call for Requests will be.

**Balance of investments in the Metropolitan Urbanizing section versus the remainder of the state:** The Metropolitan Urbanizing section contains more than half the population of Minnesota. Yet the OHF has invested an average of one twentieth (5%) of the money available in the fund in the Metropolitan Urbanizing area. There were some concerns that this is too little investment for this heavily populated section where there is more likelihood of a high level of demand for habitat and outdoor opportunities for residents of the state. Our framework points out that one twentieth of the state's publically and privately protected land is in this section so, maybe 5% of the investment in this section is a good balance. But at the same time land prices are falling in the Metropolitan Urbanizing area so there are more cost effective options available now than at any time in the recent past. Also there is a fair amount of resistance by some legislators and local officials to land purchases outside the Metropolitan Urbanizing area. This might be a good time to invest in land in the Urbanizing area. The council might want to consider placing an emphasis on acquisition, as well as restoration and enhancement programs in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section.

**Aquatic Invasive Species Protection Investments:** Invasive, exotic species from buckthorn to zebra mussels are threatening the ecosystems in Minnesota. Aquatic invasive species are especially problematic in the land of 10,000 lakes and 92,000 miles of rivers and streams. The House offered an amendment to M.S. 97A.056, Subd. 3 to direct the council to consider requests to address aquatic invasive species that threaten fish populations. The species are invading Minnesota for a reason: There is niche in the ecological fabric where they thrive without competition. They have moved progressively up the watersheds of the United States unstopped. Remedies to date delay but don't prevent their progress. Is it proper to spend Legacy money from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to temporarily protect resources from invasives or delay the inevitable costs of dealing with a full scale invasion? Perhaps, in the time provided by delaying the progression of these species, a sure cure will be found and the money will be well spent. On the other hand investing in programs where a permanent cure does not seem probable seems out of alignment with the purposes of the Legacy Funds. Where does one find a legacy in temporary measures? The council should consider what role we might want play or think about entertaining requests that are based on initiative that would permanently eliminate or block the movement of invasive species, especially aquatic invasive species.

**Level of Investment in Restoration and Enhancement:** Our recommendations to the 2011 legislature were heavily weighted toward protection. Nearly ninety percent (87.5%) of the funding recommendation was accounted for by fee and easement acquisition. The restoration addressed portion of our recommendations covered 40,000 acres of existing habitat land. According to our framework, there are over eleven million acres of publically owned and protected habitat in Minnesota, including over a million acres in the Prairie and Prairie Transition sections (Page 17, OHF 25 year framework.) At the same time a recent report by the DNR has identified a significant gap between habitat restoration and enhancement funding needs and levels of funding. The council might want to consider placing an emphasis on increasing the share of the recommendation going to restoration and enhancement of habitat.

**Native Prairie Emphasis:** The council has considered native prairie as part of its efforts to protect, restore and enhance prairies and other grasslands in general. There is limited native prairie remaining in the state. Much of the remaining native prairie is found in the midst of good quality reclaimed prairie or grasslands. Given the scarcity and ecological importance the council might single out protecting the remaining native prairie and making it a priority for funding

**Northern Land Acquisition:** Northeastern counties have an ample supply of public land. While the vast majority of protection in the northeast has been in conservation easement, the council might consider placing a moratorium on further protecting habitat in the northeastern counties with fee acquisition or some higher threshold for these types of projects than we have in the past.

**Funding Wildlife Benefits Associated with Water Retention Projects:** Watershed districts have annually requested OHF funding for water retention projects. It has been unclear whether the OHF funding was going to the flood control or wildlife habitat portions of these projects. The council might use the Call for Requests giving more direction to the proposers of these projects. The council could, for example, amend its criteria to emphasize that it wants to fund the habitat portions and nothing but the habitat portions of these projects and require a justification of why the request is "Direct only to and necessary only for habitat improvements."

Please think about these issues that have arisen in the debate over our current recommendations before our meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It is important that we listen to the feedback we have received and in the event we agree, modify our priorities and in the event we do not, be clear on the reasons so we cannot be accused of not having a thoughtful position on these issues.

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## Sandy Smith

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**From:** Viking Valley [viking@prtcl.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 31, 2011 3:01 PM  
**To:** David Hartwell; Sandy Smith; Bill Becker  
**Subject:** Comments on David Hartwell Memo to LSOHC

Subj: Comments on David Hartwell Memo to LSOHC

- Metro Urbanizing Area vs. Outstate OHF Investment We've heard the discussions about "lack of investment in the Metro area". We can look at it in different ways. The Metro area has an abundance of parks, trails and natural areas that probably better serve the needs of the Metro population. On opening day of fishing, duck and pheasant hunting or deer hunting there's a mass exodus from the urban areas to the rural areas where the habitat and opportunity is far more suitable for these activities. Yes, let's be aware of the OHF funding for urban vs. rural, but I think the balance is close to where it should be.

- Invasive Species

This is a horrendous problem in Minnesota and all of the United States, and we've had a tendency to throw money at the problem as the "politically correct" thing. For the most part, this accomplishes very little. I believe we can significantly alleviate the invasive plant problem by accelerating the restoration funds through the conservation grants program. The aquatic invaders are another matter as they spread across the state and beyond its boundaries, and funding research for a scientific solution is justified.

- Level of Investment

In my email letter to the LSOHC (copy to you), I've indirectly said that I share your concerns. I think permanent easements with access, especially when multiple benefits are derived, is the practical investment during this state budget crisis to better leverage our funds and avoid some future tax liability.

- Native Prairie and Northern Forest

I agree with your assessment.

- Funding Wildlife Benefits with Water Retention Projects This is one of the major areas that I believe we need to address. I've talked with the District Watershed Managers, Ducks Unlimited Management and Pheasants Forever Management, and requested that they identify the best of these retention projects. Recommended projects should establish habitat complexes with long-lasting benefit over a wide range of multiple benefits. The Manston Slough, Redpath, Moonshine Lake and Mustinka are all good, critical projects that we've jointly funded.

Thanks for communicating, David. I'll be on a Canadian fishing trip and won't be able to attend the June 7 meeting.

Les Bensch



## Sandy Smith

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**From:** Enger, Wayne - Perham, MN [Wayne.Enger@mn.usda.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 01, 2011 9:17 AM  
**To:** Sandy Smith  
**Subject:** FW: LSOHC Meeting Material

To: LSOHC members  
From: David Hartwell, Chair  
Date: May 25, 2011  
Re: Feedback from the legislative session for consideration.

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Here is a list of issues and brief descriptions of them. I will ask the members to discuss and consider this during our discussion on the 7<sup>th</sup> where we determine what our Call for Requests will be.

**Balance of investments in the Metropolitan Urbanizing section versus the remainder of the state:** The Metropolitan Urbanizing section contains more than half the population of Minnesota. Yet the OHF has invested an average of one twentieth (5%) of the money available in the fund in the Metropolitan Urbanizing area. There were some concerns that this is too little investment for this heavily populated section where there is more likelihood of a high level of demand for habitat and outdoor opportunities for residents of the state. Our framework points out that one twentieth of the state's publically and privately protected land is in this section so, maybe 5% of the investment in this section is a good balance. But at the same time land prices are falling in the Metropolitan Urbanizing area so there are more cost effective options available now than at any time in the recent past. Also there is a fair amount of resistance by some legislators and local officials to land purchases outside the Metropolitan Urbanizing area. This might be a good time to invest in land in the Urbanizing area. The council might want to consider placing an emphasis on acquisition, as well as restoration and enhancement programs in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section.

Every potential project must be able to stand alone and rise above the level of scrutiny that LSOHC seems to get. Choosing to fund more projects in any Planning Section that cannot be justified and pass this high level of scrutiny is really bad business. All good projects with public support and a reasonable price tag should be considered.

**Aquatic Invasive Species Protection Investments:** Invasive, exotic species from buckthorn to zebra mussels are threatening the ecosystems in Minnesota. Aquatic invasive species are especially problematic in the land of 10,000 lakes and 92,000 miles of rivers and streams. The House offered an amendment to M.S. 97A.056, Subd. 3 to direct the council to consider requests to address aquatic invasive species that threaten fish populations. The species are invading Minnesota for a reason: There is niche in the ecological fabric where they thrive without competition. They have moved progressively up the watersheds of the United States unstopped. Remedies to date delay but don't prevent their progress. Is it proper to spend Legacy money from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to temporarily protect resources from invasives or delay the inevitable costs of dealing with a full scale invasion? Perhaps, in the time provided by delaying the progression of these species, a sure cure will be found and the money will be well spent. On the other hand investing in programs where a permanent cure does not seem probable seems out of alignment with the purposes of the Legacy Funds. Where does one find a legacy in temporary measures? The council should consider what role we might want play or think about entertaining requests that are based on initiative that would permanently eliminate or block the movement of invasive species, especially aquatic invasive species.

I'll stick with the true definition of protect, enhance, and restore when it comes to LSOHC recommendations. Temporary measures is not protection unless there is some level of certainty that the temporary measures could become a permanent fix.

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and easement acquisition. The restoration addressed portion of our recommendations covered 40,000 acres of existing habitat land. According to our framework, there are over eleven million acres of publically owned and protected habitat in Minnesota, including over a million acres in the Prairie and Prairie Transition sections (Page 17, OHF 25 year framework.) At the same time a recent report by the DNR has identified a significant gap between habitat restoration and enhancement funding needs and levels of funding. The council might want to consider placing an emphasis on increasing the share of the recommendation going to restoration and enhancement of habitat.

I agree that restore and enhance of Public Lands should be a priority.

**Native Prairie Emphasis:** The council has considered native prairie as part of its efforts to protect, restore and enhance prairies and other grasslands in general. There is limited native prairie remaining in the state. Much of the remaining native prairie is found in the midst of good quality reclaimed prairie or grasslands. Given the scarcity and ecological importance the council might single out protecting the remaining native prairie and making it a priority for funding.

I believe that wetlands and prairies need should be priority.

**Northern Land Acquisition:** Northeastern counties have an ample supply of public land. While the vast majority of protection in the northeast has been in conservation easement, the council might consider placing a moratorium on further protecting habitat in the northeastern counties with fee acquisition or some higher threshold for these types of projects than we have in the past.

I agree. I would like to see acquisition most contained to areas of the state that is lacking public access opportunity.

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Please think about these issues that have arisen in the debate over our current recommendations before our meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It is important that we listen to the feedback we have received and in the event we agree, modify our priorities and in the event we do not, be clear on the reasons so we cannot be accused of not having a thoughtful position on these issues.

As long as water retention projects have a strong fish and wildlife component associated with them, I have no problem recommending funding multiple benefit projects.

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