

Comments from Members on Vision and Priorities

Jim Cox:

- General overall benefits to state: retain water to minimize flooding; carbon retention; economic return; increased recreation.
- Programs should be large enough in scope to ensure maximum benefits.

Wayne Enger:

- The Legacy Funds should not be challenged.
- All ecological sections should be given equal weight for restore, protect, enhance.
- All activities outside of design and management should be completed by private firms.
- Fund research into whether the private or public sector can do the work more effectively and efficiently.
- Public involvement should be a component of all work.
- DNR should provide an activity plan for all work.
- More restoration and enhancement work on private lands should be considered.

Ron Schara:

- Northern Forest section: Add improve degraded watersheds impacting areas mentioned. More specific vision needed for the “restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in aerial extent in recent decades.”
- Forest/Prairie section: Improve water quality via watershed improvements. Leverage Minnesota agricultural interest by funding farmer and wildlife projects that keep water on the land
- Metro-Urbanizing section: Include water quality measures under “protect habitat corridors with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers.
- Southeast Forest section: Create co-op management to protect forest habitat
- Prairie section: Include a priority action to increase participation of private landowners in habitat projects. Include measures for water quality. Explain how to protect expiring CRP lands.

Les Bensch:

- Prairie section: wetland/upland complexes should be given a priority so as to create multiple benefits. Precision agriculture allows the method of production to treat the environment as the most important factor

From: Viking Valley
To: Bill Becker; Sandy Smith; Heather Koop; David Hartwell
Subject: Present Status and Recommendations for Planning Document
Date: Tuesday, May 31, 2011 11:44:31 AM

Bill, would you please forward my inputs and recommendations to the rest of the LSOHC in accordance with the open meeting requirements.

I'm sorry I won't be able to attend the June 7th meeting due to prior commitments. I'm celebrating my Big 70th (along with Bob Dylan). Bette and I planned a Canadian fly-in fishing trip a year ago, and we leave on June 2nd for Snow Lake, Manitoba, 200 miles north of Winnipeg. From there we take a helicopter to McGhee Lake, where our party will be the lone inhabitants for 6 days. We're going with a couple of close friends, but Bob won't be with us.

It's been a busy spring at Viking Valley, with the weather as a big factor in our schedule. We did manage to complete controlled burning of native prairie fields on 60 acres and restoration plantings on another 80 acres of RIM, CRP and WRP land, planting on 40 acres of wildlife food plots and planting our fairly major vegetable garden. We helped the Fergus Falls DU Chapter with their annual Greenwing event which hosted nearly 600 youngsters. The Fergus Falls Chapter holds the world record for the largest Greenwing event which hosted 910 youngsters.

Viking Valley is also involved in planning for the coming fall, when we will host the Regional FFA meet. This event includes shooting, archery and orienteering, and we expect 200+ youngsters to participate. Later in the fall we're also hosting the Minnesota Waterfowl Assn. "Woody Camp", with an entire weekend of hunting and instruction aimed at getting young people interested in both the sporting and conservation aspects of hunting.

Later in October we also host the Fergus Falls Chapter's Pheasants Forever youth hunt, where local youngsters will participate in qualification on the sporting clays range and guided pheasant hunts with the help of Pheasants Forever volunteers. I'm not sure who gets more excited about the event, the youngsters or the Pheasants Forever guides!

I'm mentioning these activities because of the emphasis we place on getting young people actively involved in the outdoors and helping to create environmental activists needed for the present and the future of these activities. We also hosted a meeting this spring at Viking Valley with U of M President Bob Bruninks and U of M, Morris Chancellor Jacqui Johnson, who are very interested in the Legacy program and the conservation programs supported by the Legacy funding. We can expect very enthusiastic support from these Minnesota state leaders.

I've included this summary of activities, because we feel that they play an important role in the accomplishments we need to assure that the conservation legacy will be successful in reaching our short and long term goals. We have an opportunity to lead the state and the world in turning the tide for a sustainable environment.

Comments on the Plan

I believe the plan stands on its own as presently written. We could tweak some of the language, but I believe the important aspect is an implementation strategy that will help insure short and long term implementation of the visions presented.

Two major problem areas of the state are the Minnesota River Basin and the Red River Basin with their associated watersheds. These two areas encompass much of the ecological area of the Prairie Section, and both are major polluters...the Red River of Lake Winnipeg to the north and the Minnesota River to the south, all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. The environmental destruction in both directions is directly tied to our present water management policy...or lack thereof. Destruction of our wetlands has destroyed habitat, increased soil erosion, contributed to water pollution and created a myriad of associated problems from flooding to sediment movement.

These two problem areas are also major agricultural production areas, and we have placed economic gain as the first and highest priority without placing proper emphasis on environmental impact. John Foley, Director of the U of M Institute for the Environment, says that "The economy is the wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment", and anything we do economically that has a negative impact on the environment will have an unsustainable impact of negative consequences.

These two areas in the Prairie Region are plagued by extreme environmental problems, which provides us with abundant opportunities to target sensitive lands to restore and protect nature's balance. Item 1 in Priority Actions for the Prairie Section refers to the wetland/upland complexes. If we address these wetland complexes as a priority, we can create the multiple benefits further described in the section. It should not be the aim of this Council to recommend converting highly productive farm land to habitat areas, but to target sensitive lands that can provide the multiple benefits of erosion control, water retention and storage, sedimentation control and HABITAT!!! If we restore it, they will come!

When we achieve these goals the ecosystem created will provide the natural habitat necessary to sustain a diversity of wildlife and vegetation. As John Foley further states in a recent issue of the periodical "Momentum", precision agriculture is practiced all over the world as a method of production that treats the environment as the most important factor. Use of these methods allows the land to product more with an indefinite sustainability. Our present method of economically-based decisions is environmentally destructive and unsustainable.

As a hunter, fisherman, conservationist, farmer and business owner, I look at our state's "key indicators" every day. I see the ducks, deer, pheasants, grouse, hummingbirds, rose breasted grosbeaks. I check water clarity, crop production, soil erosion, air quality, tree health. I can see our place on the extinction ladder when I see a downward trend in any of these key indicators, and I can see our movement on that ladder. The facts are too numerous and indisputable to ignore.

If you have not had the opportunity to do so, I'd strongly recommend reading David Suzuki's book, "The Legacy". It is a summary of thousands of scientific opinions on our environmental disasters and the associated consequences. The projections from good scientific data and facts indicate that our bus is approaching a cliff, and that our present political process recognizes the speed of our approach but is only interested in arranging the seating in the bus before we go over the edge. It's a pretty good analogy.

Comments on the LSOHC

I believe that we have an excellent Council and staff, and that we have

a great opportunity to significantly affect the quality of life for all Minnesotans as well as the people, plants and wildlife well beyond our borders. This Legacy program has great potential but many detractors. Let's hold our course to honor the peoples' will and the constitutional law. Keep rolling!

Sincerely,

Les Bensch, LSOHC

Vision and Priorities

TO: Bill Becker
FROM: Wayne Enger
SUBJECT: Visions and Priorities

This paper has been prepared to express my thoughts concerning my vision for the next Call for Funding Request cycle.

Today, there remain many unknowns concerning restrictive measures that may or may not be placed upon the LSOHC. As such, it is difficult to provide much vision when that vision faces possible obstructions. So, I will only state what I believe.

1. **The intent, philosophy and the interpretation of the Constitution concerning the Outdoor Heritage Fund should not be challenged.** It seems that there was no misunderstanding of what the amendment stated prior to its passage. There is proof of this in that voters said, yes or no. Attempting to re-interpret the words of the amendment to satisfy one's own convictions slanders the words yes and no.
2. **There should be no attempt to discriminate between the needs of the Council Ecological Sections without science based ecological merit.** All Ecological Sections should be given equal consideration for any achievement that encompasses restoration, protection, or enhancement. Any exclusion of an Ecological Section from any of the 3 actions should result in no action in any Ecological Section.

EX: If there can be no acquisition in the Prairie Section there would be no acquisition in any section.

3. **State Agencies should contract all restoration and enhancement funded activities to non government private entities.** The Agencies of the State have stated that they are short of staff and money and are unable to meet the demands for management of its prairie, forest and wetland resources. LSOHC should lessen the burden on State Agency resources by requiring that all activities outside of *design and management* be allocated to the private sector.
4. **The LSOHC should invest an amount of money to determine the comparative total cost for enhancement, restoration, and protection activities for government versus private.** It would serve the Council well to know the overall cost of performing the same activity by government and private enterprise. It has been suggested that the Council should consider jobs and the economy when making funding recommendations. Funding such research may ultimately provide for substantial savings and the opportunity to do more conservation work.

5. **All funded projects should include public involvement as a component of the Accomplishment Plan.** As the LSOHC continues to diligently work to keep the public informed of its work, keeping the public involved may be the best practice. Only through public involvement do we allow the public to take ownership of Minnesota resources.
6. **The LSOHC should request an activity plan for all DNR managed lands.** This would help the Council to identify the public land concerns, and direct financial resources in a more deliberate fashion. It may be more cost effective and time efficient to recommend funding in areas of closer proximity than to attempt to provide restoration and enhancement funding across the entire state in the same year.