Outdoor Heritage Fund Outcomes Measurement DRAFT Process

Purpose: Report on the outcomes resulting from the expenditure of the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF).
Demonstrate public benefit and accountability for public money.
Reporting burden: on LSOHC staff and/or contractors rather than program managers, agencies.

Definitions:

*Output***:** What is produced. Specific products resulting from activities. Outputs can be described as the volume of work achieved, e.g., acres acquired, shore land protected, acres enhanced.
Outcome: What results. Benefits to people and natural resources resulting, directly or indirectly, from outputs. They typically relate to changes in behavior, attitudes, knowledge, skills, satisfaction or conditions and quality e.g., healthy lands and waters, higher angler satisfaction, desirable catch rates and fish sizes.

Step 1: Consider outcomes that can be reported by analyzing data we currently have from **completed** OHF projects, potentially hiring a contractor to do the analysis.

What are the existing models? How can those models be applied and who knows how to apply them effectively? What information are we getting from those models? What story are our data telling? Model the change in land use, quantify before vs. after.

Examples of existing models/resources: USF&W HAPET model – migratory birds
MN DNR's Watershed Health Assessment Framework
Xerces Society (pollinators)
State TMDL data (algae blooms reducing days of recreation)

Step 2: Define the reporting parameters and involve stakeholders/experts. What are the top 5-10 questions we want to address? Audience-dependent.

Primary OHF outcomes: Wildlife population increases, indicator species presence/abundance, known threatened/endangered species habitat protected, habitat quality improvement affecting fitness, species abundance, diversity, etc., food web quality, improved landscape features, e.g., connectivity, leverage of existing protected land (context).
Secondary outcomes: Economic benefits, including FTEs, water quality improvement, water holding capacity on the land, water clarity expressed in # of days/year, soil health, nutrient load reductions, other ecosystem services, public access benefits, improved public proximity to public lands, increased hunting lands

Step 3: Run analysis on OHF completed program data and examine the results generated.

Step 4: Determine what outcomes may be reported from the results of the analysis. Consider narratives submitted in Final Reports, for example:

1. From the Northern Tallgrass Prairie, Ph. IV Final Report (ML 2012 2(e)): *"Remnant native prairies and wetlands are permanently protected and are part of large complexes of restored prairie, grasslands, and large and small wetlands."* and "*329 acres were identified as having significant biodiversity significance, with 2/3 of these ranked as having high or outstanding biodiversity."*

→Possible outcome language: The Outdoor Heritage Fund is protecting high-value conservation lands like rare native prairie and connecting them to existing protected lands, preserving large complexes of habitat with outstanding biodiversity.

2. From Cold Water River and Stream Restoration Final Report (ML 2010 5(c)) *"The projects were designed and implemented to accomplish a number of these purposes: a) reduce stream bank erosion and associated sedimentation, b) reconnect streams to their flood plains to reduce negative impacts from severe flooding, c) increase natural reproduction of trout and other aquatic organisms, d) maintain or increase adult trout abundance, e) increase biodiversity for both in-stream and non-game species, f) be long lasting with minimal maintenance required, and g) improve angler access."*

   →Possible outcome language: The Outdoor Heritage Fund has improved water quality in the cold water streams and rivers of southeast Minnesota by reducing stream bank erosion.
   or
   The Outdoor Heritage Fund has helped Minnesota's trout and salmon fisheries rebound by improving water quality in cold water streams and rivers, increasing biodiversity and providing quality habitat for both game and non-game species.
   or
   The Outdoor Heritage Fund is increasing angler access to some of Minnesota's best cold water trout streams.

Step 5: Begin continuous improvement phase - Evaluate whether modeling and/or other analysis tools need modification. Consider models used by other states/research efforts that could be utilized/applied to the OHF data.

Step 6: Adapt additional models as needed to address the questions identified in Step 2 and additional outcomes/issues that come up over time.