



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
The State of Minnesota

State Office Building, Room G95 100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

August 2, 2019

Doug Erickson, Board Chair
Renville County Board of Commissioners
Renville County Government Services Center
105 South 5th Street, Suite 315
Olivia, MN 56277-1484

Re: 2020 Outdoor Heritage Fund Proposals

Dear Chair Erickson:

Thank you for your letter of July 23, 2019, conveying your position of non-favor of OHF fee-title acquisition project proposals that do not have PILT payments to the county. Also, thank you for expressing your interest in working with the LSOHC toward identifying lands that would make great project areas. I'll get back to that last part at the end of this letter.

In your letter, you state concern regarding three proposed projects that may have acquisition activity within Renville County;

- **DNR Grassland, Phase XII**
- **Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase XII**
- **Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, Phase XI.**

So you are fully aware, allow me to provide some insights of each of these proposals as submitted.

- **[DNR Grassland, Phase XII](#)** – This proposal does not include acquisitions of any type. The work proposed entails only restoration and enhancement on public lands, most open to public hunting. These public lands include DNR WMAs, SNAs, AMAs, Native Prairie Bank easements, State Forests, as well as federal WPAs and NWRs. For more information on any aspect of this proposal, please feel free to contact the proposal's program manager, Greg Hoch with DNR at 651-259-5230 or greg.hoch@state.mn.us.
- **[Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program, Phase XII](#)** – The primary activity of this proposal is fee-title acquisition with the stated intent for all acquired parcels to be placed into federal (USFWS) ownership as Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs). As federally held WPAs, PILT is not paid to the county by the State of Minnesota. However, there is a PILT-type federal payment of which the proposal states the following, *"To address concerns related to county tax revenues due to acquiring public land, the USFWS and PF will notify counties prior to the*

acquisition of lands. Once acquired, the USFWS will make a one-time payment (called a 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 the respective counties.”

For more information on any aspect of this proposal, please feel free to contact the proposal’s program manager, Eran Sandquist with Pheasants Forever at 320-236-7755 or esandquist@pheasantsforever.org. Further information regarding the federal payments is available online at <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/realty/rrs.html>.

- **Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, Phase XI** - The primary activity of this proposal is acquisition via conservation easement and fee-title with the stated intent for all fee-title and easement acquisitions to be transferred to the USFWS to become units of the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. As you know, parcels with conservation easements remain in fee ownership with the private citizen landowner who continues to pay property taxes on their parcels. Consequently, PILT is not applicable regarding conservation easements. In the case of fee-title acquisitions held by the USFWS, PILT is not paid to the county by the State of Minnesota. However, as with WPAs there is a PILT-type federal payment program that remits a one-time Trust Fund payment and annual refuge revenue sharing payments to the county for USFWS fee-title properties. Further information on this is available online at <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/realty/rrs.html>.
For more information on any aspect of the proposal, please feel free to contact the proposal’s program manager, Ruth Thornton with The Nature Conservancy at 612-331-0790 or ruth.thornton@tnc.org.

Lastly, in your letter you mention that “Renville County has lands that would make great project areas” and that you “would like to work with the LSOHC if a funding mechanism can be established.” On behalf of the Council and staff, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Whether your thoughts are to seek potential funding ideas to the County for acquisitions, to investigate potential funding ideas in cooperation with other conservation partners, or to discuss the county’s natural resource needs, I will be delighted to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the opportunities available.

Once again, thank you for your letter, your concerns, and for your interest in LSOHC proposals and potential funding mechanisms. I hope the above information is helpful and I look forward to meeting you to discuss potentials for Renville County.

Regards,

Mark Wm. Johnson
Executive Director
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
651-296-6397

Cc Sen. Andrew Lang, Rep. Tim Miller, Sen. Gary Dahms, Rep. Paul Torkelson,
LSOHC members, Greg Hoch, Eran Sandquist, Ruth Thornton, Kelly Wilder.



Renville
COUNTY
Service · Stewardship · Shared Responsibility

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Phone: 320-523-3710

July 23, 2019

Becky Enfield
Commission Assistant
Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Becky.enfield@lsohc.leg.mn

Dear Ms Enfield:

Renville County has received and reviewed the LSOHC's 2020 Outdoor Heritage Fund Proposals, which includes three proposed projects within Renville County.

- DNR Grassland Phase XII
- Accelerating the Waterfowl Production Area Program – Phase XII
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge – Phase XI

We are not in favor of projects that do not have PILT payments available for the county. As you are aware, this would place an additional financial burden on our constituents.

We do feel Renville County has lands that would make great project areas and would like to work with the LSOHC if a funding mechanism can be established.

Sincerely,

Doug Erickson
Board Chair

Cc: *Senator Andrew Lang*
Representative Tim Miller
Senator Gary Dahms
Representative Paul Torkelson