

Redwood County Board of Commissioners

403 South Mill Street

P.O Box 130

Redwood Falls, MN 56283

Phone: (507) 637-4016 Fax: (507) 637-4017

redwoodcounty-mn.us



August 20, 2019

Bob Anderson

Chairman

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

State Office Building, Room 95

St. Paul, MN 55155

Please note

This letter is regarding the following proposals:

PA 02: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Areas Program - Phase XII

PA 04: Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge - Phase X

WA 02: Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program - Phase IX

These proposals will be heard on Thursday, September 5, 2019.

Dear Mr. Anderson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on possible land acquisitions within Redwood County. Conservation and stewardship have deep roots in Redwood County both in private and governmental ownership. While we do not object in whole to the projects being proposed for funding in Redwood County, we do have several concerns.

Specifically we have concerns regarding the following proposals:

- Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program – Phase XII
- Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, Phase X
- Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection & Restoration Program – Phase IX

All of these projects would potentially remove lands within Redwood County from the tax rolls. While some purchases would result in Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) payments being made to the County, we do not believe these payments provide the same long term predictable level of funding as normal property taxes.

While these impacts are troublesome to the County, they can be extra burdensome to the several Townships where these types of acquisitions tend to focus. These Townships also are likely to see an increase in vehicle traffic on already overstressed roads due to the availability of public land. This increase in maintenance costs, does not come with an increase in assistance from the state, thus placing a larger tax burden on a smaller land base.

1st District

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Also, we have concerns over the potential that some highly productive and valuable agricultural land will be taken out of production and put under permanent protective easement. We agree that certain areas are beneficial to be taken out of production, however, history shows that some lands put under permanent protection were highly productive farms. As a farming economy with some of the most productive land in the state, we depend on the ongoing availability of large amounts of tillable acres for continued economic growth. Many of these lands also represent potential acres that young or returning farmers could utilize to join the farming economy.

With all of the unfunded mandates that the state places on Counties and other local units of government, we are very concerned with continuing land purchases affecting our tax base. These state funded acquisitions place a larger burden on a smaller land base without reductions in the County's obligations to its citizens or the mandates passed down from the state.

We respectfully ask that you carefully evaluate these proposals and their impact on Redwood County as noted above.

Regards,

Jim Salfer

Redwood County Board Chair

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