

## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

**MEMO:** Agenda Item #5  
**DATE:** September 2, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Information on Status Updates due August 2021  
**PRESENTER:** Sandy Smith, Project Analyst Manager

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### **Background:**

Status Updates were due for all programs in August 2021. This list is a *snapshot in time* with reporting thru June 2021. Attached are two lists that may be helpful:

- 1) by appropriation year with percentages spent to date
- 2) by phased program showing final report data and status update figures.

Although the percentage of funds spent to date can provide members with a basic idea of program progress, recognize that it does not tell the entire story. Each is unique with their own circumstances and details. Some managers reported a high level of accomplishments and low spending. This is the case where some managers included encumbrances and others did not. Overall, staff reviewed the updates to make sure that programs appeared to be making progress for timely completion and accomplishment of the stated outputs.

As a reminder, acquisition programs have 2 years to commit parcels, an additional 1 year to close, and up to 5 years after closing to restore and enhance that acquired parcel. Restoration/enhancement programs have 5 years to complete work.

As always, let me know if you have questions about a specific program's spending or if you want a copy of a status update.

### **DNR Initial Development Plan (IDP) Money:**

The spreadsheet reflects programs where the only remaining money is the IDP funds. These programs have turned over monies to the DNR for habitat and facility costs. Facility costs can include cultural resource review, boundary signing, posting/fencing, signage, access and parking lots, well sealing/site cleanup/engineering, fleet, and PT seasonal labor for facility costs only on partner led IDPs. These programs continue to stay open and report on status until the IDP monies are all spent.

The ability of NGOs to close appropriations in a timely manner has, at times, been hampered by outstanding DNR IDP monies. Recently, some NGOs have reduced this obstacle by completing IDP habitat/facility costs themselves. This may be a topic of discussion for Council consideration this fall if IDP expenditures appear persistent in delaying closing of appropriations beyond acceptable timelines.

**DNR State Forest Acquisition:**

- ML 17 - program will turn back \$1.0 million unspent
- ML 18 - program – no money spent to date – have had challenges with buyers backing out due to reconsidering financial futures – need to spend \$1.2 million in acquisition by June 2022

**BWSR Buffers and Wetlands:**

- Changes affecting ML 15, ML 16, ML 17, and ML 18 appropriation years
- Fewer acres will be realized than anticipated
- Reduction in leverage from what was anticipated
- Fewer easements achieved than anticipated
- Extensions of time granted for several appropriation years, possibly need additional extensions of time
- BWSR will be before the Council in October to request amendment changes to 6 program years

**Native Prairie Bank Program:**

- ML 16 - will turn back \$1.3 million
- ML 17 - \$1.8 m in acquisition unspent – several advancing thru the process
- ML 18 - finishing up previous phases, legislative extension to 2023

As discussed at the November 21, 2019 LSOHC meeting, Native Prairie Bank did a review and lowered payment rates to better reflect real estate market value in 2016. This has allowed Native Prairie Bank to acquire significantly more acres for less money. However, this opportunity also came with a large set of challenges. Some landowners previously interested are no longer interested, landowners are taking much more time to decide if they want to move forward with protection, and a higher number of landowners decline offers which in-return slows progress on funding appropriation. “As we continue to adjust our program to account for these successes and challenges, we hope to better align proposals and outcomes moving forward and hope that the Council understands these are temporary implications from a change meant to provide the state more conservation value for less financial burden.”

**Attachments:**

- Spreadsheet Status Update List – reflects status update reports spending and accomplishments
- Spreadsheet by Program Progress – reflects ALL open program spending and closed program accomplishments (yellow highlights are closed)
- Spreadsheet OHF Spending by Appropriation Yr – reflects overall program completion and spending by appropriation year