

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase XV Laws of Minnesota 2023 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 07/12/2023

Project Title: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase XV

Funds Recommended: \$5,216,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(f)

Appropriation Language: \$5,216,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire in fee and restore and enhance lands for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Subject to the evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquiring lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sabin Adams Title: MN Project Manager

Organization: Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Website: www.pheasantsforever.org

Location Information

County Location(s): Nobles, Mower, Meeker, Lyon, Brown, Rock, Jackson, Mahnomen, McLeod, Kandiyohi, Pennington, Murray, Lincoln, Watonwan and Carver.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

This proposal accelerates the protection and restoration of 679 acres of prairie grasslands, associated wetlands and other wildlife habitats as State Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) or Pheasants Forever Habitat Management Areas open to the public. Pheasants Forever (PF) will be permanently protecting parcels within the prairie, prairie/forest transition, and metro planning regions. These acquired properties will be restored to the highest quality wildlife habitat feasible.

Design and Scope of Work

This proposal represents the fifteenth phase in Pheasants Forever's Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area program. This program continues to build upon past investments in long-term upland and wetland conservation. New to this proposal is the addition of the Pheasants Forever HMA program funding. This addition will provide PF with maximum flexibility to ensure quality acquisition projects can be completed. The proposal will protect and restore 679 acres of lands that will be managed for wildlife. The goals of this program specifically address goals outlined in the foundational documents for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's recommendation process, including those outlined in the MN Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan 2008, the MN Duck Action Plan 2020-2023, the MN Pheasant Action Plan 2020-2023 and the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan 2010, among others.

Parcels will be acquired from willing sellers and will be prioritized using criteria including location on the landscape, breeding waterfowl density, restoration potential, native community protection (e.g. Minnesota Biological Survey site), proximity to other investments in perpetually protected habitats. WMA Acquisition projects are developed and selected in conjunction with local and regional DNR staff. Criteria used to develop the potential project list including: 1) Does the parcel contain habitat restoration potential that will result in an increase in wildlife populations? 2) Does the parcel build upon existing investments in public and private land habitat (landscape scale significance)? 3) Does the parcel contain significant natural communities, or will it protect or buffer significant natural communities? 4) Does the parcel have the potential and focus for habitat protection and restoration in the future? 5) Does the parcel provide multiple benefits (recreation, access, water control, water quality, wellhead protection, riparian protection, local community support, etc.)?

Providing quality habitat and keeping future management concerns in mind, all acquisitions will be restored to the highest quality wildlife habitat feasible. Completing high-quality, comprehensive restorations, utilizing native species and best management practices, results in fewer management concerns and lower long-term costs. Acquired lands will be restored to diverse grasslands and wetlands habitat, drained wetlands will be restored, and invasive trees will be removed when appropriate.

Project #: PA06

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

PF actively engages in conservation discussions with state and federal government agencies, to determine what areas are the highest priority for adding permanently protected lands in the prairie, prairie/forest transition, and metro planning areas. High priority is given to parcels whose restoration and protection benefit rare, threatened, & endangered species. Often the only locations where many threatened and endangered species are found is on existing habitat complexes. This program builds upon those complexes allowing for expansion and increased populations of those species.

When selecting projects for this proposal, PF uses the latest GIS data and works with DNR and USFWS staff to identify locations that benefit species of greatest conservation need. Additionally, species of greatest conservation need are considered and can influence restoration plans after the land is permanently protected. By increasing the amount, functionality and productivity of grassland landscapes for these species, we aim to slow population decline. Restoration of wetland and grassland complexes will provide habitat for a myriad of species including waterfowl, shorebirds, bobolinks, meadowlarks, ring-necked pheasants, pollinators, and monarchs. Other species of concern benefiting from this project include the greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk, and yellow rails.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This program uses numerous science-based conservation plans, all of which expand corridors and complexes, as well as conservation data to evaluate each potential acquisition and determine if it will provide significant habitat benefits. These plans and data sources include the MN County Biological Survey Biodiversity Significance data, MN Prairie Conservation Plan, MN Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan 2008, the MN Duck Action Plan 2020-2023, the MN Pheasant Action Plan 2020-2023, USFWS' Duck Breeding Density data and the MN DNR Natural Heritage Information Systems data. Preference is given to properties that help improve habitat for identified species as well as deliver the goals of these recognized conservation plans.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition The Next 50 Years

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen
parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Metro / Urban

• Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Prairie

 Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

• Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ Parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for pollinators, resident and migratory game and non-game species. Lands will be transferred to the state as a WMA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by Minnesota DNR. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in the "Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years" and the Minnesota Pheasant Action Plan 2020-2023.

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

• Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ Parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for pollinators, resident and migratory game and non-game species. Lands will be transferred to the state as a WMA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by Minnesota DNR. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in the "Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years" and the Minnesota Pheasant Action Plan 2020-2023.

Programs in prairie region:

• Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ Parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for pollinators, resident and migratory game and non-game species. Lands will be transferred to the state as a WMA to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by Minnesota DNR. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in the "Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years" and the Minnesota Pheasant Action Plan 2020-2023.

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

This proposal will bring \$1,175,000.00 of leverage funds to increase accomplishments of acquisition and restoration activities. This leverage will come from Pheasants Forever and Federal funds, as well as private sources.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This proposal supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the protection and restoration of strategic parcels.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
Annual	PF	\$150,000

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All lands purchased to be donated to the state Wildlife Management Area system will be managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR. All lands purchased as Pheasants Forever HMA's will have a deposit made into PF's Forever Stewardship Fund to pay for holding costs. All acquisitions will be restored to as high-quality habitat as practicable, with the knowledge that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result will lower management costs. In addition, our local PF chapter members and volunteers maintain a high interest in seeing the habitat and productivity of acquired parcels are at high-quality levels and have a long history of providing sweat equity on PF owned parcels PF and partners will develop an ecological restoration and management plan for each parcel. Grant and partner dollars will also be used for the initial site development and restoration/enhancement work.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer to	MN DNR - Game and	Monitoring	Maintenance	Management
MNDNR	Fish Funds			

Provide an assessment of how your program celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:

The goal of this program is to protect and restore wildlife habitat and make these areas accessible to all Minnesotans, regardless of cultural background or fiscal standing. Properties acquired under this program will be free and open to access by all. These properties can be recreated on by all levels of income from free hiking/wildlife watching to expensive hunting practices. This program spans all of the Prairie, Forest-Prairie, and Metro regions. Some acquisitions will be nearby areas with diverse or low-income communities. This program engages with everyone who wants to participate in public lands and the outdoors.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056? Yes

Will county board or other local government approval <u>be formally sought**</u> prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

At a minimum PF and/or MN DNR will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the state and follow up with questions prior to acquisition. In cases where there is interest, we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

A limited number of the parcels may have a federal or state easement on a portion of the tract which provides permanent protection for wetlands or grasslands. If a parcel has one of these encumbrances, and is still deemed a high priority by the partnership, we will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the residual value of the protected portion of the property.

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program? Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- WPA
- Refuge Lands

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program? Yes

Explain what will be planted:

This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. On a small percentage of WMAs and HMAs, farming may be utilized to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. There are no immediate plans to use farming for winter food on any of the parcels in this proposal.

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

No variation from State of Minnesota regulations.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- NGO

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA

Other

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

5-7

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

Yes

All properties will have wetlands and upland habitats restored to the greatest extend possible with consideration to the timeline and budgets.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?

Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Restorations completed	06/30/2028
Close on tracts	01/01/2027
Purchase agreements	09/01/2024
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2023
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2023
Purchase agreements	02/01/2024
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2023
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 06/30/2031

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

- (a) Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. Money appropriated to acquire land in fee may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.
- (b) Money appropriated in this section is available as follows:
- (1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2027;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this act is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2031;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2028;
- (4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft

accomplishment plan; and

(5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$69,300	-	-	\$69,300
Contracts	\$540,700	\$19,200	PF, Federal, Private	\$559,900
Fee Acquisition w/	\$3,958,300	\$1,095,300	PF, Federal, Private	\$5,053,600
PILT				
Fee Acquisition w/o	\$384,400	-	-	\$384,400
PILT				
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement	-	\$48,000	PF, Private	\$48,000
Stewardship				
Travel	\$6,800	-	-	\$6,800
Professional Services	\$104,500	-	-	\$104,500
Direct Support	\$21,300	\$12,500	PF	\$33,800
Services				
DNR Land Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Costs				
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-
Equipment/Tools				
Supplies/Materials	\$130,700	-	-	\$130,700
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$5,216,000	\$1,175,000	-	\$6,391,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grants Staff	0.37	3.0	\$28,900	-	-	\$28,900
Field Staff	0.55	3.0	\$28,900	-	-	\$28,900
State	0.15	3.0	\$11,500	-	-	\$11,500
Coordinator						

Amount of Request: \$5,216,000 **Amount of Leverage:** \$1,175,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 22.53%

DSS + Personnel: \$90,600

As a % of the total request: 1.74%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

All budget items in this program have been reduced by the recommended percentage in the councils allocations.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, land value donations, contractor donations and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

In general PF staffing is existing and only partially funded by OHF and specifically this request. Billing to any appropriation would only be for time spent on direct and necessary costs incurred as outlined in an Accomplishment Plan.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all contract funding will be used for restoration, enhancement, and initial development of the protected acres and \$11,500 for adjacent protected lands. This could include but is not limited to wetland/grassland restoration, tree removal, prescribed fire, building removal, posts, signs, and other development needs.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

5-7

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging n/a

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

Yes

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 3.97%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 2.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel. We are donating the difference-in-kind.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds? 07/01/2025

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	11	-	ı	11
Protect in Fee with State PILT	122	487	-	-	609
Liability					
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT	11	48	-	-	59
Liability					
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	ı
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	133	546	-	-	679

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$11,500	-	-	\$11,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$948,500	\$3,794,200	-	-	\$4,742,700
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$92,300	\$369,500	-	-	\$461,800
Protect in Easement	-	1	-	-	1
Enhance	-	ı	-	-	•
Total	\$1,040,800	\$4,175,200	-	-	\$5,216,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Туре	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	11	-	11
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	91	183	-	335	-	609
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	9	18	-	32	-	59
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100	201	-	378	-	679

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Туре	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$11,500	-	\$11,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$711,800	\$1,423,800	-	\$2,607,100	-	\$4,742,700
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$69,800	\$139,400	-	\$252,600	-	\$461,800
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	ı
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$781,600	\$1,563,200	-	\$2,871,200	-	\$5,216,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$1,045	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$7,774	\$7,790	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$8,390	\$7,697	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	•	-	\$1,045	-
Protect in Fee with State	\$7,821	\$7,780	-	\$7,782	-
PILT Liability					
Protect in Fee w/o State	\$7,755	\$7,744	-	\$7,893	-
PILT Liability					
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	•	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Parcels are identified and strategically prioritized using the best science and decision support tools (e.g. HAPET Thunderstorm Maps) available. Preference is given to project sites that help deliver the goals of other recognized conservation initiatives and plans. Data layers (i.e. MN Biological Survey, Natural Heritage Database, MN Prairie Plan, Wellhead Protection Areas, Pheasant Action Plan, existing protected land, etc.) are used to help justify projects and focus areas as well as to inform decisions on top priorities for protection and restoration efforts.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Tiger Lake WMA Addition	Carver	11526208	0	\$4,000	Yes

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing
					Protection
Rosenau-Lambrecht WMA Addn	Brown	11031216	100	\$1,000,000	No
Lambrecht WMA Addn	Brown	11031215	39	\$357,210	No
Rosenau-Lambrecht WMA Addn	Brown	11031215	40	\$357,210	No
Heron Lake WMA	Jackson	10437221	95	\$954,000	No
Rau Prairie Pothole WMA Addn	Kandiyohi	11935206	178	\$1,150,000	Yes
Weeks Lake WMA Addn	Lincoln	11146232	80	\$320,000	No
Weeks Lake WMA Addn	Lincoln	11146234	60	\$238,200	No
Prairie Marshes WMA Addition	Lyon	11143236	40	\$440,000	No
Wambach WMA Addn	Mahnomen	14541207	80	\$280,000	No
Ras-Lynn WMA Addn	McLeod	11630233	155	\$816,000	No
Prairie -Big Woods WMA Addn	Meeker	11830218	128	\$832,260	No
Murphy Lake WMA	Mower	10318228	143	\$900,000	No
Buttermilk Run WMA Addn	Murray	10840233	113	\$1,023,300	No
Bigelow WMA Addn	Nobles	10141225	150	\$900,000	No
Lone Tree WMA Addition	Nobles	10440221	58	\$640,000	No
Pembina WMA Addn	Pennington	15345219	330	\$825,000	No
Little Beaver Creek	Rock	10345220	27	\$75,000	Yes
Case Lake WMA Addn	Watonwan	10630203	108	\$810,000	No

Parcel Map

