

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: **Agenda Item #7**
DATE: November 16, 2023
SUBJECT: Legislative Extension of Time - Big Rice Lake Wild Rice Enhancement
 ML 2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd, 4(g)
PRESENTER: Ricky Lien, DNR

Suggested Motion:

Motion by Member XX to approve / deny the legislative extension request for inclusion in the ML 2024 recommendations bill.

Staff Notes:

- August 2023 Status Update showed 21% spent to date.
- This is a 2-year extension request to June 2026. Appropriation currently ending June 2024.
- No additional acres are being realized as part of the extension, but allows for the completion of work originally proposed in the accomplishment plan.

Background (provided by the manager):

“Habitat work to improve Big Rice Lake (M.L.19) involves three components: improvement of the access to allow passage of equipment, cutting of pickerel weed with an airboat and by other means, and modifying the lake outlet to improve water levels for wild rice.

We have made excellent progress on the first two components at considerable cost savings. We have exceeded the acre goals for the pickerel weed cutting and the access work was completed early in the project. The wild rice seems to be responding as well. All good news. However, the outlet work has been more challenging in large part due to the remoteness and forested nature of the areas surrounding the channel.

The purchase of new survey equipment under a separate OHF funding has been utilized by our newly hired State Wetland Project Coordinator, Matt Olson. This new equipment enabled staff to gather more specific information to develop plans for the third component of Big Rice Lake, the outlet modification. This new equipment had the capacity to work better in forested areas than earlier models of the Trimble units enabling us to collect more accurate elevation data to move forward with the outlet modification work. The remaining funding appears to be adequate, but the appropriation ends this coming summer, and the project manager is uncertain about our ability to do final engineering and construction in the time remaining.

The remaining funds would also allow us to continue using the airboat for cutting pickerel weeds if the time for this appropriation was extended, as funding appears to be sufficient for this as well. An estimated 900 additional acres of cutting could be accomplished during a 2-year extension.”

Attachments:

- Big Rice Lake Accomplishment Plan
- DNR Email Request