

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

From: Kristina Smitten, Executive Director

Date: May 26, 2026

Re: Legislative Session Outdoor Heritage Fund Bill Outcomes

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) recommendations were incorporated into SF 2077 and passed on May 17, 2026 by the House and the Senate as an Omnibus Outdoor Heritage Fund, Legacy and Lands bill. As of May 26, 2026, the Governor has not signed the bill into MN law.

The ML2026/FY2027 LSOHC Outdoor Heritage Fund recommendations to the MN Legislature included 53 programs totaling \$188,922,000.

On February 27, 2026, the updated forecast provided an additional \$2,180,000 available to appropriate from the OHF in FY27, for a total of \$191,106,000. Eligible recommended programs were proportionately increased, per direction from the LSOHC recommendation package.

In the approved version of SF2077 all the Council recommendations were incorporated with two exceptions: the appropriation language for subd. 4(d): “Roseau Lake Rehabilitation, Phase 3” and subd. 5 (aa): “Conservation Legacy Grant Program” were amended (see below). In addition, the governing Statute 97A.056 has two changes (see excerpt below).

The ML2024 appropriation Protecting Upper Mississippi River from Invasive Carp was amended to extend the carp deterrent design completion date to June 30, 2027.

Subd. 4. Wetlands

Line 10.21: (g) Roseau Lake Rehabilitation, Phase 3

\$3,553,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Roseau River Watershed District to restore and enhance the Roseau Lake and Roseau River habitat complex in Roseau County. The approved accomplishment plan must include an operational and management plan for the Roseau Lake Rehabilitation Project. The Roseau River Watershed District must submit to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council progress reports and a final report that include monitoring data related to water

quantity and information about how flooding to adjacent and downstream agricultural lands has been addressed.

No money from this appropriation may be expended:

(1) before January 1, 2027; or

(2) during any period in which a court order enjoining the project from moving forward is in effect.

Subd. 5. Habitats

Line 20.9: (aa) Conservation Partners Legacy Grant

Program: ~~Statewide and Metro Habitat, Phase 18~~

\$13,797,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for a program to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$500,000 to local, regional, state, and national organizations for enhancing, restoring, or protecting forests, wetlands, prairies, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in ~~Minnesota the seven-county metropolitan area and cities with a population of 50,000 or more. Unless there are not enough eligible grant applications received, of this amount, at least \$3,500,000 is for grants in the seven-county metropolitan area and cities with a population of 50,000 or more and at least \$3,000,000 is for grants to applicants that have not previously applied for money from the outdoor heritage fund.~~ Grants must not be made for activities required to fulfill the duties of owners of lands subject to conservation easements. Grants must not be made from the appropriation in this paragraph for projects that have a total project cost exceeding \$1,000,000. Of the total appropriation, \$600,000 may be spent for personnel costs, outreach, and support to first-time applicants and other direct and necessary administrative costs. Grantees may acquire land or interests in land. Easements must be permanent. Grants may not be used to establish easement stewardship accounts. The program must require a match of at least ten percent from nonstate sources for all grants. The match may be cash or in-kind. For grant applications of \$25,000 or less, the commissioner must provide a separate, simplified application process. Notwithstanding Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 19, land acquired by fee with money appropriated in this paragraph is not required to be open to public taking of game. ~~Subject to Minnesota Statutes, the commissioner of natural resources must, when evaluating projects of equal value, give priority to organizations that have a history of receiving, or a charter to receive, private contributions for local conservation or habitat projects.~~ All restoration or enhancement projects must be on land permanently protected by a permanent covenant ensuring perpetual maintenance and protection of restored and enhanced habitat, by a conservation easement, or by public ownership or in public waters as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 103G.005, subdivision 15. Priority must be given

to restoration and enhancement projects on public lands. Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 13, applies to grants awarded under this paragraph. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2029. No less than five percent of the amount of each grant must be held back from reimbursement until the grant recipient completes a grant accomplishment report by the deadline and in the form prescribed by and satisfactory to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. ~~The commissioner must provide notice of the grant program in the summary of game and fish law prepared under Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.051, subdivision 2.~~

EFFECTIVE DATE. Subdivision 10 is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97A.056, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

...

(f) Terms, compensation, and removal of public members are as provided in section [15.0575](#), except that a public member may be compensated at the rate of up to \$125 a day. A vacancy on the council may be filled by the appointing authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. A public member of the council may not serve more than eight years, except a public member may serve an additional six months as necessary to fill a vacancy.

(g) Members shall elect a chair, vice-chair, secretary, and other officers as determined by the council. The chair may convene meetings as necessary to conduct the duties prescribed by this section.

~~(h) The Legislative Coordinating Commission may appoint nonpartisan staff and contract with consultants as necessary to support the functions of the council. The council has final approval authority for the hiring of a candidate for executive director. Up to one percent of the money appropriated from the fund may be used to pay for administrative expenses of the council and for compensation and expense reimbursement of council members.~~
~~deleted text end~~

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97A.056, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 2a. Administration; executive director.

(a) The Legislative Coordinating Commission may appoint nonpartisan staff and contract with consultants as necessary to support the functions of the council.

b) The council has final approval authority for hiring a candidate for executive director. Notwithstanding subdivision 5, a quorum of the council may discuss, interview, and select candidates for executive director in a meeting closed to the public.

(c) Up to one percent of the money appropriated from the fund may be used to pay for administrative expenses of the council and for compensation and expense reimbursement of council members.

Sec. 6. LESSARD-SAMS OUTDOOR HERITAGE COUNCIL; TRANSITION.

Section 3 is effective July 1, 2026, and applies to appointments of public members of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council made on or after that date. Years served on the council before July 1, 2026, count toward the limits imposed by section 3. Members appointed before July 1, 2026, may serve out the remainder of their terms if their service has exceeded the term limits imposed by section 3.

EFFECTIVE DATE. Subdivision 10 is effective the day following final enactment.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 97A.056, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

(aa) Protecting Upper Mississippi River from Invasive Carp

\$12,000,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to fund activities to protect the upper Mississippi River from invasive carp. Activities within this appropriation include agreements with federal partners, such as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to design, construct, and begin operating and maintaining a structural deterrent for invasive carp at Lock and Dam No. 5 on the Mississippi River to protect Minnesota's aquatic habitat through an adaptive management approach. Deterrent design must be fully completed ~~within two years of the date of this appropriation by June 30, 2027.~~ Deterrent installation must be completed by June 30, 2029. Money not spent or obligated for design installation and operation of the deterrent may be used for testing technologies to support the future effectiveness of the deterrent. A detailed accomplishment plan must be submitted to and approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council before money is released. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2029.