

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: **Agenda Item #7**

DATE: July 22, 2026

FROM: Chair Hartwell and Vice Chair Schara

SUBJECT: DNR Roving Crew Proposal Classification

Proposed Action:

Designate the DNR Roving Crew program (five crews with a maximum of eight people per crew) as an ongoing Outdoor Heritage Fund program that is considered biennially through the Council's "Other" funding category, while remaining subject to Council review and recommendation in each applicable funding cycle.

Background:

Through the Outdoor Heritage Fund, hundreds of thousands of acres of land have been protected across the state adding to the acreage already protected. Permanent protection alone does not ensure that high-quality habitat is maintained. Many protected lands require recurring restoration and enhancement to achieve and sustain habitat outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife.

Roving Crews are fully equipped to conduct a range of habitat projects. The staff on these crews are solely dedicated to habitat enhancement and restoration. Roving crew projects are selected based upon opportunity to strategically enhance priority habitats, where needed.

The majority of enhancement and restoration activities by the roving crews occur on WMAs, but crews also work when needed on DNR SNAs, AMAs, NPB easements, and State Forests, as well as National Forests, WPAs and NWRs to meet specific wildlife habitat goals and further develop habitat complexes.

Starting in FY2012 roving crews were embedded within proposals. At the request of the Council, the roving crews from each region were combined into one standalone program with five roving crews beginning in FY2022. The Council has recommended funding and the Legislature has appropriated funding through a standalone biennial request in FY2022, FY2024, and FY2026.

Rationale:

Roving crews provide statewide workforce to implement habitat enhancement across permanently protected lands. Their work is recurring, geographically flexible, and responsive to emerging habitat management needs, making the program analogous to other ongoing implementation functions currently considered within the "Other" proposal category.

Expectations and Requirements:

- Biennially, a DNR Roving Crew program is expected to request funding for five roving crews to sustain enhancement and restoration efforts.
- Because the Roving Crew program provides statewide implementation capacity supporting multiple habitat activity categories, the request would be included in the "Other" category of programs, similar to Contract Management, Restoration Evaluations, and DNR Core Functions, and would ensure the necessary funding level is allocated.
- The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council would continue to review the DNR Roving Crew program biennial proposal as it does with all programs, and consider appropriateness for funding, as with all proposal requests.
- Reporting requirements and accountability would not change.