

**Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council (LOHC)
Conservation Partners Grants Committee Meeting Minutes
Sunday, February 8, 2009
5:00 p.m.
Ramsey Board Room
Kelly Inn, St. Paul, MN**

Members Present: Chair Scott Rall, Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, Darby Nelson, David Hartwell, Bob Schroeder, Wayne Enger, Jim Cox, and Temporary Staff Bill Becker

Call to Order

Chair Rall called the meeting of the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council Conservation Partners Grants Committee to order at 5:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

Review and Approve Agenda

Darby Nelson moved approval of the agenda for the evening. **Motion approved**

Public Comments

The committee heard public comments from Kevin Auslund, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Brad Nylin, Minnesota Waterfowl Association, and Gary Leaf, Sportsmen for Change.

Presentation on Who Can Administer Grant Programs

Mr. Greg Knopff, Senate Council provided the committee with a presentation of four possible ways the Conservation Partners Grants program could be administered. Mr. Knopff outlined: 1) The LOHC recommends specific projects to an administrative agency in the executive branch by law. In this model the council would evaluate grant applicants prior to making its recommendations and write recipients and purposes into the recommended appropriations law. 2) Using a state agency to administer the program. 3) Using a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to administer. 4) Establishing a nonprofit organization in law for the purposes of administration.

Mr. Knopff also highlighted the separation of powers feature of the Minnesota Constitution, and pointed out that separation of powers prevents the LOHC from directly administering grant programs or any other programs.

During questioning, Mr. Knopff testified that administrative costs for the grant program may come out of the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), but that they need not be counted within the one percent statutory limit for council administrative expenses. Bob Schroeder and Darby Nelson pointed out that the grants program needs to have access to expertise to evaluate project quality. Mr. Knopff pointed out that the council can effect the selection of projects by an administrative body by specifying criteria in the law appropriating funds to the grants program. The more specific the council's criteria are the more control the council will exercise. Darby Nelson supported council determination of the critical criteria. Wayne Enger pointed out that if the council goes through an existing organization and program the

criteria will already be worked out. Greg Knopff said the LOHC could propose multiple grant programs through a variety of administrative bodies.

The council discussed geographic distribution of grants.

Review of Draft Grant Program Language

Staff reviewed recent LCCMR grant program appropriation laws. Staff then reviewed a mock-up of an appropriation law for the LOHC's Conservation Partners Grants program.

Discussion of Grant Program

The committee concurred as follows. The Conservation Grant Program should be two-tiered. The lower tier would be for grants between \$5,000 and \$125,000. The upper tier would be for grants of \$125,001 to \$400,000. The upper tier is designed to allow organizations access to enough capital to purchase land to round out management units. Each tier would start with three million dollars of a six million-dollar appropriation. Dollars should be distributed across projects restoring, protecting and enhancing prairies, forests, wetlands, and fish, game and wildlife habitat. Research grants are not allowed. Artificial nesting habitat enhancements like wood duck and bluebird houses would be allowed. After six months of operation the two-tiered grant program with accounts for the various constitutional purposes should be evaluated on the basis of remaining funds. Funds would be reallocated to ensure maximum awards in both tiers and all categories. The match should be a minimum of \$1 contributed by the recipient for every \$10 provided by the state. The program should be open to application year-around with quarterly evaluations of applications submitted the last three months. The application process and form should be simple. Grants funds should be distributed on a reimbursement basis and grant accounting by the grantee should be reimbursable. Small groups should identify a fiscal agent with capacity to manage the grant program.

Next Committee Meeting

The group agreed to meet at 5 p.m., Sunday, February 22, 2009

Adjourn

Chair Rall adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

APPROVAL:

Scott Rall, Chair

Date