

LESSARD OUTDOOR HERITAGE COUNCIL (LOHC)
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009
ROOM 10, STATE OFFICE BUILDING
8:00 A.M. – 9:05 A.M.

Members Present: Senator Ellen Anderson, Lester Bensch, James Cox, Wayne Enger, Representative Bob Gunther, Representative Rick Hansen, David Hartwell, Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen, Michael Kilgore – Chair, Darby Nelson, Scott Rall, Bob Schroeder. Staff: Acting Executive Director – Bill Becker, Greg Knopff, Janelle Taylor, Lynda Zoet.

1. Call to Order

Chair Kilgore called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

2. Review and Approve Agenda

Motion to approve the March 16, 2009 agenda. **Motion prevailed.**

3. Approve Minutes of March 9, 2009

A couple of minor changes were requested and will be reflected in the minutes. Motion made to approve the March 9, 2009 meeting minutes as drafted. **Motion prevailed.**

4. Legislative Update

HF 0018 / SF 0119 “Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council support provided” will be heard today in the Ways and Means Committee.

5. Discussion and Approval of 2009 Recommendations Spreadsheet

Last week, Bill Becker contacted the Program Managers from the 19 proposed projects to request additional information prior to the LOHC adopting the 2009 Recommendations Spreadsheet.

Bill Becker was asked to walk through the documents with the LOHC. Mr. Becker thanked the program managers for reporting back to him in such a timely manner. He also thanked our volunteer intern Benjamin Bagdon for his assistance in compiling the data received from the program managers. Due to the short turnaround, there may be some errors and inconsistencies provided by the program managers. Overall, the summary is a reasonable approximation of the contents of the package.

In the “2009 Recommendation Accomplishment Plan”, project managers described how they were going to spend the money over the next three fiscal years – through FY 2012.

The largest amount is for easement acquisition followed by fee acquisition and contracts. If the package is passed by the legislature, the outcomes are broken down as follows (approximate amounts):

1. Protection – 210,000 acres
 Recommended Fund Allocation = \$60,000,000
 Non-State Leveraged Funds = \$31,100,000

2. Enhancement – 11,000 acres
Recommended Fund Allocation = \$4,000,000
Non-State Leveraged Funds = \$789,500
3. Restoration – 10,500 acres
Recommended Fund Allocation = \$4,950,000
Non-State Leveraged Funds = \$3,400,000

Most of the acquisition dollars are in permanent easements (\$33,192,000). The PILT estimate cost per year = \$134,890.

A list was also compiled that indicate which counties are impacted by the Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars. Another list showed projects affecting the seven county metro area.

A state map entitled “LOHC Project Distribution” identifying potential projects was developed. Senator Anderson expressed that projects identified are “potential” projects. Projects from W3-RIM/WRP and P13 Accelerated Prairie Grassland Restoration and Management are not included on this map.

Administration costs and Federal PILT costs are not included in the PILT estimated cost per year.

Senator Anderson raised the question that at some point, the LOHC may want to discuss absorbing the PILT costs. Bob Schroeder asked if PILT payments are considered constitutional. Chair Kilgore asked how we can get this determination. Representative Hansen indicated that this question has been discussed in other committees. Senator Ingebrigtsen asked if LCCMR has covered PILT costs in the past. Senator Anderson stated that the LCCMR had not covered these costs. Senator Ingebrigtsen asked if Greg Knopff could draft a letter to the Attorney General’s office requesting a determination. Representative Hansen stated that he felt a senate or house council member should take the lead on this. David Hartwell expressed that we should not undertake long-term easements where we don’t have funding for enforcement monitoring.

Darby Nelson made the motion to adopt the 2009 Recommendations Spreadsheet.

Senator Anderson supports good science based projects around the State. Her calculations indicate that only 7.6% of the proposed projects are in the seven county metro area. She is concerned that legislators and the general public will react negatively to this. We need to have connections (wildlife corridors) throughout the State.

Senator Anderson had a discussion with constituent Howard Anderson regarding a project that wasn’t recommended. The project is located in Columbus, MN (near Forest Lake) and is a Rice Creek Acquisition Project. Mr. Anderson is concerned that this 300 acre piece of wilderness near the metro area that is currently open to hunting, fishing, canoeing and bird watching, will be bought up and not available for public access in the future. Senator Anderson promised him that if this project is not funded this year, the council will visit the site next year. Senator Anderson will vote yes for the package today, but has some misgivings on what isn’t included in the 2009 recommendations. Some have suggested adjusting other funds to make up for the lack of metro balance. Senator Anderson stated that this will be very difficult to do.

Howard Anderson - Stated to the council that young people need a place to hunt in the metro area. They don’t have the means to go to Northern MN to hunt. Senator Anderson stated for the record that she is not related to Howard Anderson. Howard Anderson also stated for the record that he wasn’t related to Senator Anderson, but might be a nice thing.

David Hartwell stated that the package is fine, especially with the short timeline to make recommendations. The council needs to work on a strategic plan for each of the zones – determine long-term goals for the next 24 years.

Chairman Kilgore listened to the tape from the first meeting (less than 4 months ago). Comments from that meeting are being echoed at the meeting today to develop a strategic plan as we move forward. We will have time after April 1, 2009 to begin that process. It is Chairman Kilgore's commitment to have that plan in place to provide process and guidance as the 2010 LOHC projects are being considered.

Wayne Enger stated that the system set up by the LOHC to determine the 2009 recommendations eliminated many of the projects in the metro area. It was not the intent of the council to leave areas of the state out of the 2009 recommendations.

Representative Hansen expressed his concern that the package is heavy on acquisition. A greater emphasis on restoration would be a better choice. In hard economic times, it is important to take care of what we have. Representative Hansen sent out (through Bill Becker) the DNR Bonding obligations for acquisition over the last few years to the council. He questioned achieving many of the acquisitions due to the number of unobligated purchase that has been done in the past several bonding years. Many of the shovel ready projects will be limited.

Darby Nelson stated that land prices are low, this is a limited opportunity.

Lester Bensch stated that we need to be patient. We are in the first four months of a 25 year plan. We are at a bargain point with land acquisitions. Restoration will come.

Senator Anderson stated for the record that it is not fair to say that the metro conservation corridors proposals the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge projects are not about conservation and good science. They are. It is wrong to say that they are not.

Motion is on the table to adopt the 2009 Recommended Spreadsheet. **Motion prevailed.**

ROLL CALL ON THE MOTION

Bill Becker stated that we need a Roll Call vote. Senator Ellen Anderson - Yes, Lester Bensch - Yes, James Cox - Yes, Wayne Enger - Yes, Representative Bob Gunther - Yes, Representative Rick Hansen - No, David Hartwell - Yes, Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen - Yes, Darby Nelson - Yes, Scott Rall - Yes, Bob Schroeder - Yes. Chairman Michael Kilgore – Yes. 11-1.

On Monday, March 23, 2009, the council will have a bill that incorporates this spreadsheet with the recommended appropriations. The day will be spent going through the bill and talking about the conservation partner's program language in that bill.

Bill Schroeder requested that Chair Kilgore draft a letter to the legislature with other recommendations to consider along with the 2009 recommendations. Chair Kilgore agreed to draft the letter.

6. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the LOHC meeting at 9:05 a.m. **Motion prevailed.**

APPROVED:

Mike Kilgore, Chair

Date

Darby Nelson, Secretary

Date