



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase VII

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/11/2025

Project Title: Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase VII

Funds Recommended: \$7,452,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 2(b)

Appropriation Language: \$7,452,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire land in fee for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

Title: MN State Coordinator

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Location Information

County Location(s): Martin, Nobles, Carver, Pope, Wright, Meeker, Kandiyohi, Douglas, Stearns, McLeod, Grant, Yellow Medicine and Rock.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Forest

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

This phase of WMA acquisition protected 2,100.19 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting. With these 16 acquisition we have exceeded our planned acres of 900 by more than 1,200 acres. Breaking down acres by ecological section we acquired 765.06 acres in the metro and 1,335.13 acres in the prairie.

Process & Methods

Conversion of grassland and wetlands for other uses have not only contributed to many native species population declines, but also impacted water quality, groundwater recharge cycles, and natural flood cycles. Permanent acquisition and restoration of grasslands and wetlands is one of the major tools we have for reversing this trend. This seventh phase of the WMA acceleration program acquired and restored a total of 2,100.19 acres of grasslands and wetland habitat as permanently protected WMA's. Due to our ability to partner with other conservation groups and agencies such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, we are able to bring leverage to the program and far exceed the goals of this phase.

Pheasants Forever and MN DNR staff collaborated to generate a list of parcels with landowners who had the desire to sell. The parcel's ecological impact was evaluated using landscape level planning tools such as USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), The MN Prairie Conservation Plan and The Pheasant Action Plan among others. By utilizing these tools, we were able to focus efforts in areas where acquisitions and restorations will make the greatest impact on the landscape and thus these additional acres of WMA are very beneficial to wildlife and public recreation.

Once acquired, wetlands on each parcel were restored by installing surface ditch "plugs" and or breaking subsurface tile. Some wetlands may also have had sediment removed to create proper substrates for wetland function and vegetative growth. Grasslands were restored by planting a high-diversity native seed mix of grasses and forbs that are regionally appropriate to the area. As with all restoration work, there are challenges that come from weather and working with private contractors, but we did not face any major issues.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

The majority of the acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA habitat complex's. Many of these complex's are the strongholds for many species of wildlife including SGCN and T/E species. By increasing the size and connectivity of these complexes many species are benefited. Additionally many of the parcels are located in the Prairie Pothole Region which is not only the richest wetland system on earth but also produces approximately one-third of the continents waterfowl population. The parcels acquired and restored as part of this phase add to the quantity and quality of grasslands and wetlands that are available to species such as mallards, black terns, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and the ring-necked pheasant. Additionally SGCN and T/E were considered when the parcels were evaluated for acquisition. Parcels with these species were ranked more favorably than parcels

without. Species of concern that will benefit from these projects include the greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, marsh hawk and yellow rail.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

These potential additions to the WMA system are developed, reviewed, and selected in conjunction with the MN DNR area managers and acquisition staff. Partners employ numerous planning and evaluation tools including the SWAAT scoring tool and USFWS HAPET modeling (thunderstorm maps) to identify quality habitat tracts that also meet recreational requirements. Additionally conservation plans such as the MN Prairie Conservation Plan and the Pheasant Action Plan, take corridors and complexes into account when creating focus areas. These focus areas are part of the evaluation process used to evaluate parcels for acquisition.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

We worked closely with the MN DNR to find and evaluate the best properties based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a Wildlife Management Area.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

There were no exceptional failures or challenges that were encountered. This is due in part to our high level of collaboration and efficiency. We also strive to be respectful and accommodating in helping to facilitate landowners wishes when working with willing sellers as many see this as leaving their own habitat legacy.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

N/A

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All acquisition's in this appropriation have been transferred to the MN DNR for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area program, additionally all WMA's have been fully restored. The long-term management and maintenance of these WMA's will be the responsibility of the MN DNR.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 and beyond	Federal/Local/PF Chapters	PF will continue to work with our partners and look for funds, where appropriate, to help maintain quality wildlife habitat on acquisitions.	-	-

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$64,600	-	-	-	\$60,000	\$64,600
Contracts	\$360,800	\$408,200	\$404,000	-	\$58,700	Federal/Private/PF	\$360,800	\$462,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$6,800,000	\$6,770,000	\$6,736,900	-	\$1,455,300	Federal/Private/PF	\$6,800,000	\$8,192,200
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$1,500	-	-	-	\$2,000	\$1,500
Professional Services	\$56,000	\$56,000	\$58,900	-	\$4,500	Federal/Private/PF	\$56,000	\$63,400
Direct Support Services	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,400	-	-	-	\$12,000	\$12,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$60,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$131,200	-	-	-	-	-	\$131,200	-
Supplies/Materials	-	\$42,200	\$41,500	-	-	-	-	\$41,500
DNR IDP	-	\$41,600	\$41,600	-	-	-	-	\$41,600
Grand Total	\$7,452,000	\$7,452,000	\$7,421,400	-	\$1,518,500	-	\$7,452,000	\$8,939,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator	0.06	3.0	\$21,600	-	-	\$21,600
PF Regional Staff	0.06	3.0	\$21,500	-	-	\$21,500
PF Grants Staff	0.16	3.0	\$21,500	-	-	\$21,500

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

Shared support services cost 20.22% of the total payroll. Every hour an employee spends working directly on the grant, we recover 20% of the cost toward the overall shared support services pool.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Due to our efficiency and ability to partner with groups such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act we were able to over achieve all of our stated goals and return \$30,626 to the OHF.

Total Revenue: \$69,535

Revenue Spent: \$67,757

Revenue Balance: \$1,778

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

B. This revenue, or a portion of it, was used for other purposes as approved in the AP by the LSOHC.

C. This revenue, or a portion of it, was transferred back to the OHF.

Itemize out how the revenues were spent:

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	225	749	675	1,318	0	40	0	0	900	2,107
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	225	749	675	1,318	0	40	0	0	900	2,107

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$1,863,000	\$1,853,800	\$5,589,000	\$5,567,600	-	-	-	-	\$7,452,000	\$7,421,400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$1,863,000	\$1,853,800	\$5,589,000	\$5,567,600	-	-	-	-	\$7,452,000	\$7,421,400

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	36	765	150	0	0	0	714	1,335	0	0	900	2,100
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	36	765	150	0	0	0	714	1,335	0	0	900	2,100

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$290,000	\$2,703,500	\$960,000	-	-	-	\$6,202,000	\$4,717,900	-	-	\$7,452,000	\$7,421,400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$290,000	\$2,703,500	\$960,000	-	-	-	\$6,202,000	\$4,717,900	-	-	\$7,452,000	\$7,421,400

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

24,693

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

By utilizing federal match dollars and working on strategic land acquisitions Pheasants Forever was able to exceed our acre goals in all categories.

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *We did not purchase any tracts in the forest-prairie transition zone.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *We acquired three tracts in the metropolitan urbanizing region totaling 765.06, including 381.43 acres of wetlands. These tracts create greater connected habitat corridors for wildlife. All acres were restored to the greatest extent possible and are open to public recreation and hunting.*

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Pheasants Forever acquired 13 tracts in the Prairie region of Minnesota. These acquisitions add 1335.13 acres of quality prairie and wetland habitat for wildlife as well as public land access for hunting and other outdoor recreation.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

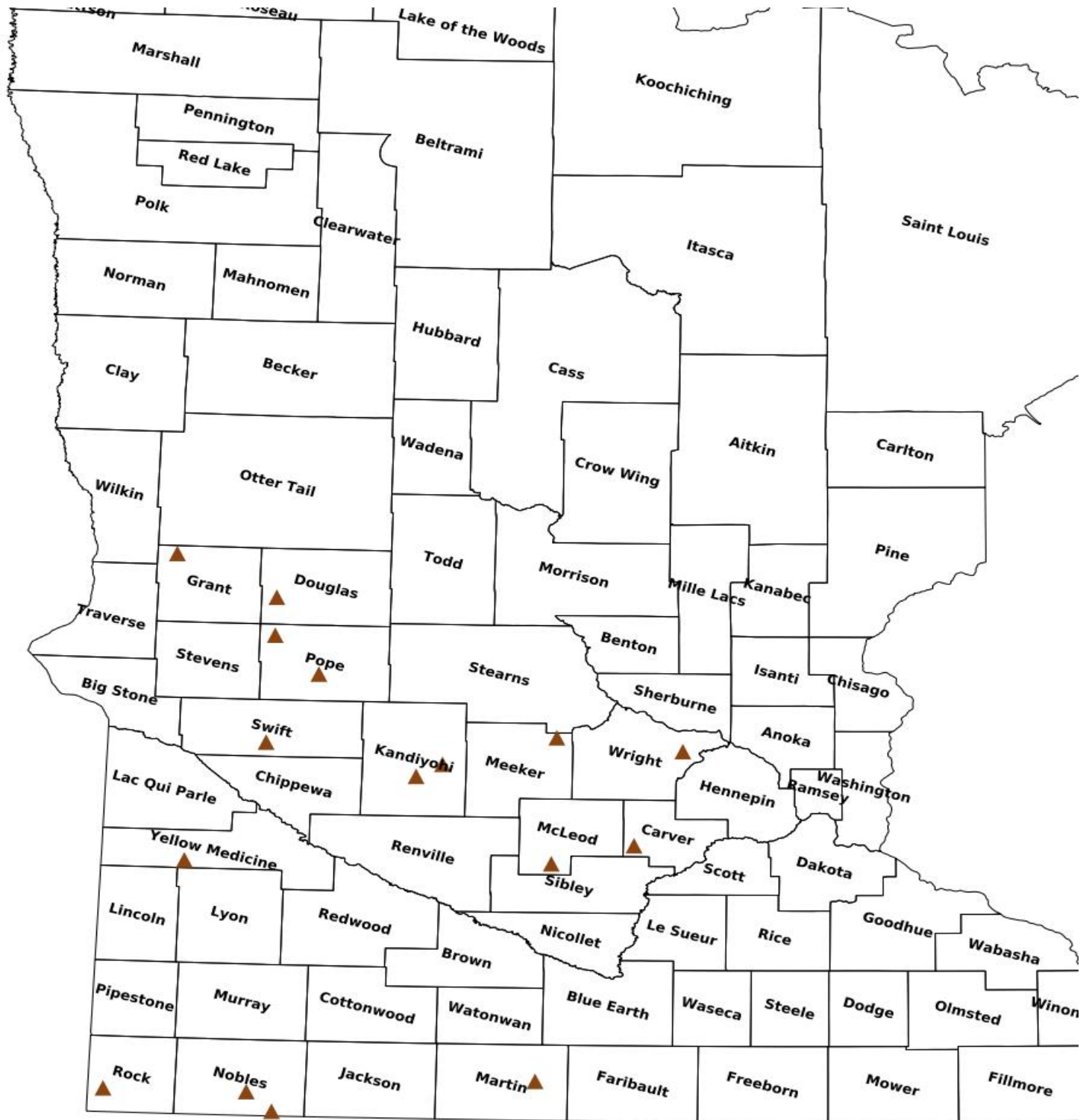
Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Tiger Lake WMA Addition T1	Carver	11526216	29	\$180,000	No
Lake Venus WMA	Douglas	12840222	92	\$650,000	No
Atwater WMA	Kandiyohi	11933207	109	\$325,000	No
Lake Eleanor WMA	Kandiyohi	11934231	72	\$540,000	No
Gruven WMA Addition Tr. 2	Martin	10330235	195	\$1,250,000	No
Bakers Lake WMA Addition	McLeod	11429217	9	\$25,000	No
Kingston WMA	Meeker	12129228	626	\$1,680,000	No
Herlein Boote WMA Addition	Nobles	12040208	36	\$250,000	No
Lake Bella WMA Addition	Nobles	10140226	36	\$235,000	No
Lambert Prairie WMA Addition	Nobles	10241226	80	\$500,000	No
Federal Lank Bank WMA	Rock	10246229	92	\$800,000	No
Sauk WMA Addition	Stearns	12640222	29	\$100,000	No
Meager WMA T2	Yellow Medicine	11443220	155	\$850,000	No

Fee Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Marple WMA Addition	Grant	13044214	140	\$720,000	No	5	\$0
Vegoe WMA	Pope	12438220	297	\$1,000,000	Yes	5	\$0
Pelican Lake WMA Addition	Wright	12024217	110	\$1,400,000	No	5	\$0

Parcel Map



0 15 30 45 mi

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- ▲ Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✱ Enhance
- ✱ Other