



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Accelerating the Wildlife Management Area Program - Phase IX
Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 01/11/2023

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

Funds Recommended: \$5,603,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(b)

Appropriation Language: \$5,603,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever to acquire in fee and restore lands for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules 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: Sabin Adams

Title: MN Project Manager

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Location Information

County Location(s): Stearns, Lyon, McLeod, Cottonwood, Kandiyohi, Sibley, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle and Nobles.

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

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

This phase of WMA acquisition protected 1,182.25 acres of prairie grassland, wetland, and other wildlife habitat as State Wildlife Management Areas open to public hunting. With these 9 acquisition we have exceeded our planned acres of 1012 by more than 170 acres. All of the acquired properties had wildlife habitat restored to the highest quality possible.

Process & Methods

Loss of wetland and grassland habitat has contributed to the decline of native populations of flora and fauna, negatively impacted water quality, groundwater recharge and natural flood cycles. To reverse this trend, PF works to permanently protect and restore these wetland-grassland complexes. This eighth phase of the WMA acceleration program acquired and restored a total of 1,182.25 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?

A majority of the acquisitions in this program add to existing WMA habitat complexes which are strongholds for many species of wildlife including SGCN and T/E species. Increasing the size of these complexes improve the landscapes ability to support larger populations and provide connectivity between patches of habitat. All parcels are located in the Prairie Pothole Region which boasts the richest wetland system on earth and 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.

All 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

Due to the outstanding collaboration between PF and our partners, no exceptional challenges or failures were experienced. These programs provide PF the opportunity to work with landowners wishing to sell their property as a way of leaving their own habitat legacy. We do this in the most accommodating and respectful way possible.

What other fund may 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 of the acquisitions have been fully restored and transferred to the MN DNR to be enrolled in the Wildlife Management Area program. The DNR is responsible for long-term maintenance of these WMA's.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022 and beyond	Federal/Local/PF Chapters	PF will continue to work with partners to seek funding, where appropriate, to help maintain habitat quality on these acquisitions.	-	-

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$23,900	\$34,700	\$32,700	-	-	-	\$23,900	\$32,700
Contracts	\$405,000	\$490,700	\$463,300	\$22,400	\$3,600	Federal, Private, PF	\$427,400	\$466,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$5,062,600	\$4,913,600	\$4,926,100	\$275,500	\$956,100	Federal, Private, PF	\$5,338,100	\$5,882,200
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$900	\$900	\$1,000	-	-	-	\$900	\$1,000
Professional Services	\$67,300	\$60,300	\$52,100	-	\$12,500	Federal, Private, PF	\$67,300	\$64,600
Direct Support Services	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$8,200	-	-	-	\$7,500	\$8,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$35,800	\$55,000	\$58,600	-	-	-	\$35,800	\$58,600
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	\$40,300	\$40,300	-	-	-	-	\$40,300
Grand Total	\$5,603,000	\$5,603,000	\$5,582,300	\$297,900	\$972,200	-	\$5,900,900	\$6,554,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator - MN	0.03	3.0	\$10,900	-	-	\$10,900
PF Field Staff	0.05	3.0	\$10,900	-	-	\$10,900
PF Grant Staff	0.05	3.0	\$10,900	-	-	\$10,900

Direct Support Services

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

1.5% rate on Personnel, Contracts, Travel, Professional Services

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

DNR was unable to complete all of the IDP projects that were planned. PF submitted an amendment to allow us to spend those funds, however due to an issue with DNR's accounting system those \$20,700 were sent back to OHF and PF could not access them. This resulted in us spending our own funds to complete the remaining work.

Total Revenue: \$71,561

Revenue Spent: \$71,561

Revenue Balance: \$0

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.

Itemize out how the revenues were spent:
See attached spreadsheet for Program Income

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	178	140	834	1,042	0	0	0	0	1,012	1,182
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	178	140	834	1,042	0	0	0	0	1,012	1,182

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	12	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
Total	12	0

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	\$985,500	\$662,900	\$4,617,500	\$4,919,400	-	-	-	-	\$5,603,000	\$5,582,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$985,500	\$662,900	\$4,617,500	\$4,919,400	-	-	-	-	\$5,603,000	\$5,582,300

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	44	0	119	240	0	0	849	942	0	0	1,012	1,182
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Fee w/o State PILT Liability												
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	44	0	119	240	0	0	849	942	0	0	1,012	1,182

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro / Urba n (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Fore st (AP)	SE Fores t (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Fore st (AP)	N. Fores t (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$243,600	-	\$658,900	\$1,133,700	-	-	\$4,700,500	\$4,448,600	-	-	\$5,603,000	\$5,582,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easeme nt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$243,600	-	\$658,900	\$1,133,700	-	-	\$4,700,500	\$4,448,600	-	-	\$5,603,000	\$5,582,300

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

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 purchased 240 acres of WMAs in the forest-prairie transition. These acres were restored and enhanced to the highest quality wildlife habitat feasible, this includes nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds and species of greatest conservation need.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting ~ *We did not acquire any tracts in this region.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Nine tracts acquired by Pheasants Forever under this appropriation were within the Prairie Region. These acquisitions added an additional 942.15 acres of quality wildlife habitat that is open to public land access for hunting and other approved outdoor recreational uses.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

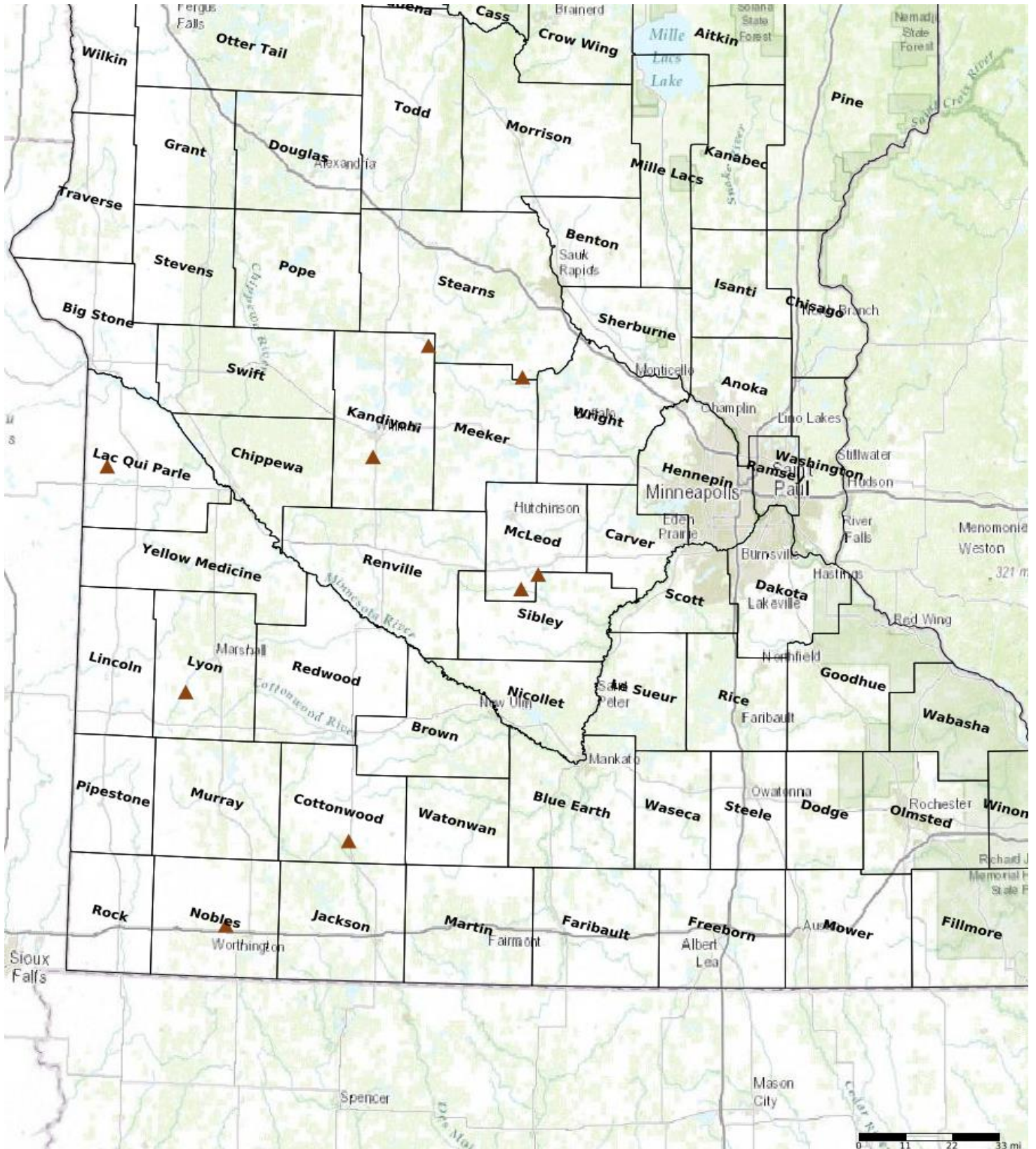
Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Byholt Marsh WMA Addition	Chippewa	11835210	145	\$1,000,000	No
Farhagen WMA Addition Tr. 2	Cottonwood	10536211	79	\$330,000	No
Regal Flats WMA Addition	Kandiyohi	12233214	226	\$750,000	No
NE Four Corners WMA Addition	Lac qui Parle	11845231	88	\$340,000	No
Brawner Lake WMA Addition	Lyon	11042217	121	\$365,000	No
Herlein Boote WMA Addition	Nobles	10241212	155	\$1,100,000	No
Bob Gehlen WMA Addition	Sibley	11428206	20	\$75,000	No
L. Daniel and Virginia Freenzel WMA	Stearns	12129216	240	\$1,500,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Spiering WMA Addition	McLeod	11429221	107	\$925,000	No	2	\$0

Parcel Map



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

0 11 22 33 mi