

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
FY 2011 Strategic Planning and Recommendation Development
Process**

**6-10-2009
2:30 p.m.**

BACKGROUND

This document describes the process the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC) will use to achieve these statutory requirements. The result will be:

1. A framework for 25 years of funding consistent with the statutory and constitutional requirements,
2. Plans for the first ten years of funding, and
3. Recommendations to the legislature on appropriations for fiscal year 2011 from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF).

This process relies principally on existing species/habitat/resource plans to build a strategic framework for achieving priority habitat goals and objectives. It also relies on the state's conservation community and public input to validate and refine the habitat objectives that are contained in these plans.

OHF Mission

The mission of the OHF as specified in the state Constitution is to: "protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife."

L-SOHC Recommendation Goal

The L-SOHC, by January 15, 2010, will recommend to the Minnesota Legislature appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund that are:

- Consistent with the Minnesota Constitution and state law;
- Supported by the Legislature, the Governor and the public; and
- Sure to attain the immediate objectives of the strategic framework and plan for the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Principles Guiding the L-SOHC Process for Developing OHF Expenditure Recommendations

Through this process, the L-SOHC will:

1. Be transparent to and accessible by the public;
2. Protect and advance the public interest;
3. Recommend expenditures for protection, enhancement, and restoration projects that are grounded in science and reflect "best practices" for resource management.
4. Provide opportunities for, and consider, public input;

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5. Take into account existing conservation planning efforts and delivery systems;
6. Encourage efficient and effective conservation solutions;
7. Be understandable by the public; and
8. Ensure conservation benefits are broadly distributed around the state, consistent with scientific principles and priorities identified in the state's species-, habitat-, and resource-specific plans as well as its statewide conservation plans.

Process in Brief

This process will consist of the following steps.

1. In accordance with M.S. 97A.045, subd. 3(h), the L-SOHC will establish regions of the state based upon the ecological regions and subregions developed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
2. The long-term goals contained in the various MN species/habitat/resource plans (e.g., Long-Range Duck Recovery Plan) will be identified and disaggregated into the L-SOHC's five substate regions (L-SOHC Sections). These goals will be described in terms of outcomes that are consistent with the constitutional mission of the OHF.
3. The state's conservation professionals (as represented by local, state, federal, private, and non-profit organizations) will be invited to review these goals for each L-SOHC Section to ensure their completeness and accuracy, identify realistic species/habitat/resource goals for FY 2011 consistent with these goals and identify priority actions.
4. The public will be invited to review and provide input on the long-term species/habitat/resource goals and priority actions identified for each L-SOHC Section.
5. The L-SOHC will develop and distribute a Call for Requests to address the FY 2011 species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC section.
6. The L-SOHC will review and evaluate requests using the criteria specified in this document, and identify those requests deemed to most effectively achieve the FY 2011 species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC section.

EXISTING PLANS

Minnesota Law informs the process for developing L-SOHC recommendations. By law, the L-SOHC must make recommendations that "... will achieve the outcomes of existing natural resource plans, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Statewide Conservation Plan, that directly relate to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for fish, game and wildlife, and that prevent forest fragmentation, encourage forest consolidation, and expand restored native prairies." (M. S. 2009, section 97A.056, subd. 3(a))

Additionally, M.S. 2009, section 97A.056, subd. 3(h) instructs the Council to "...use the regions of the state based upon the ecological regions and subregions developed by the Department of Natural Resources and establish objectives for each region and subregion to achieve the purposes of the fund outlined in the state constitution."

This guidance needs to be considered in the context of two additional planning requirements facing the Council. M.L. 2009, Chapter 172, Article 5, Section 9 requires the legislative committees designated by the House and Senate leadership to, alongside the Council, develop a legislative guide stating the principles for the use and expected outcomes of all funds from the three-eighths – Legacy Amendment. This task needs to be completed by January 15, 2010. Section 9 of the same law requires the same institutions to develop a 25-year strategic plan, by January 15 2011, to be updated every five years. Presumably, this plan is linked to the ten year plan and 25-year framework M.S. 2009, section 97A.056, subd. 3(h) requires the Council to develop. To accomplish all the planning requirements facing the Council the Council must use processes that serve more than one planning objective.

In developing its OHF expenditure recommendations to the 2009 Legislature, the Council reviewed all known Minnesota plans directly relating to the mission as described above. Among the statewide species-, habitat-, and resource-specific plans reviewed are:

- Minnesota Forest Planning
- Minnesota Forests for the Future
- USFWS Wetland Plan
- USFWS Biological Planning
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- Aquatic Management Area Plan
- Wildlife Management Area 50-Year Plan
- National Fish Habitat Plan
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Neck Pheasant in Minnesota
- Long Range Plan for Wild Turkey in Minnesota
- Managing Minnesota's Shallow Lakes for Wildlife and Waterfowl

These and other relevant plans will be source documents for habitat goals objectives and actions.

The Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan and the Outdoor Heritage Fund

The State of Minnesota, through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund financed the University of Minnesota and Bonestroo and CR Planning to assess the state's natural resources, identify resource related issues affecting Minnesota natural resources, and make recommendations for restoring, enhancing and protecting those resources. Under the leadership of this effort, conservation professionals were brought together to assess available information, identify important issues, and develop recommendations for action to address these issues. Those recommendations form the substance of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan.

The Minnesota Statewide Comprehensive Conservation and Preservation Plan identifies the following actions that specifically address the Outdoor Heritage Fund's mission of restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for fish, game and wildlife, and preventing forest fragmentation, encouraging forest consolidation, and expanding restored native prairies.

Habitat Action

Act. Num.	Action	Page
H 1	Protect priority land habitats	pp. 63-67
H 2	Protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes	pp. 67-74
H 4	Restore and protect shallow lakes	pp. 78-79
H 5	Restore land, wetlands, and wetland-associated watersheds	pp. 80-81
H 6	Protect and restore critical in-water habitats of lakes and streams	pp. 81-84
H 13	Habitat and landscape conservation and training programs for all citizens	pp. 94-96

Land Use Action

Act. Num.	Action	Page
LU 8	Protect large blocks of forested land	pp. 130-131

These Actions will be used as a guide for developing the L-SOHC planning framework and evaluating the species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC Section. For example, each area of the state will be assessed under Action H-1, Protect priority land habitats, to determine the area’s key habitat types and how best to protect them. These priority land protection actions will be evaluated for urgency and opportunity for each region, relative to all other priorities.

SUBSTATE REGIONS PLANNING AND RECOMMENDATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

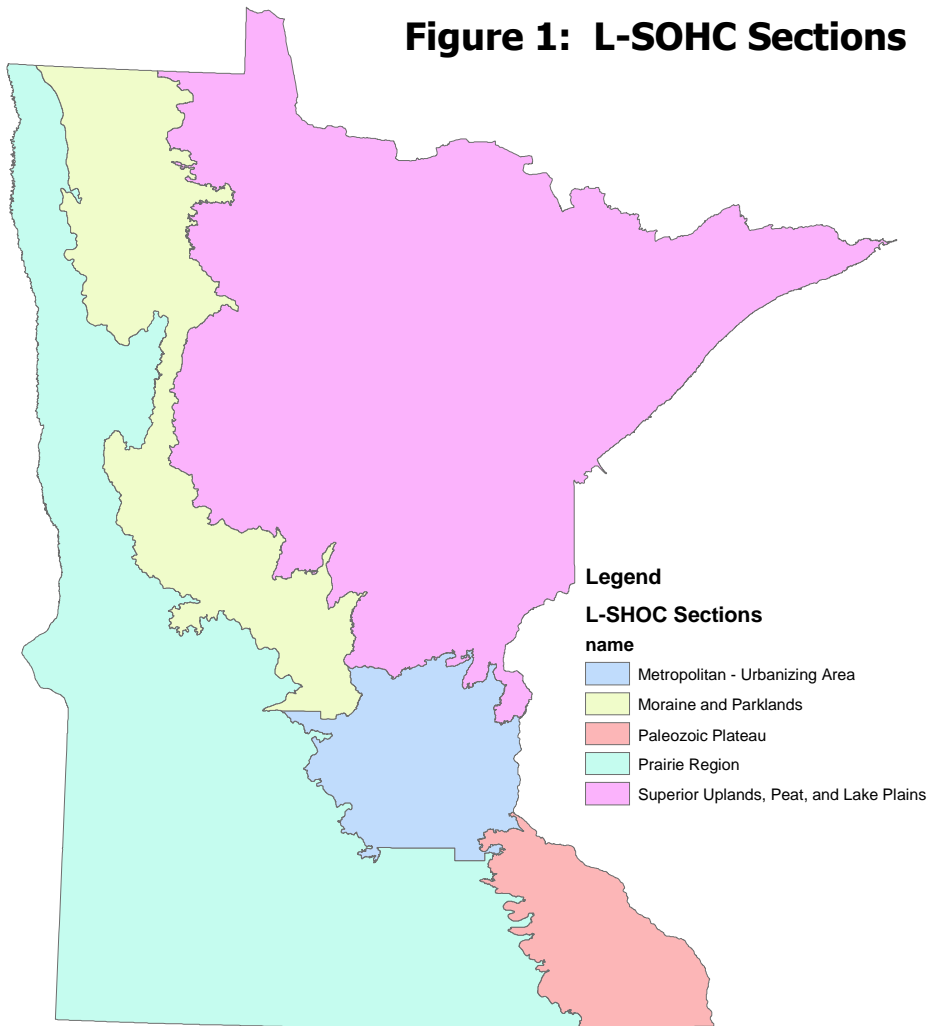
L-SOHC Sections

Minnesota Law specifies “The council shall use the regions of the state based upon the ecological regions and subregions developed by the Department of Natural Resources and establish objectives for each region and subregion to achieve the purposes of the fund outlined in the state constitution.” For purposes of developing its framework that will be used to guide expenditures from the OHF over the next 25 years, the Council has identified five Outdoor Heritage Council sections(L-SOHC Sections) that are an aggregation of the state’s ten Ecological Sections (see Figure 1, page 5). These Sections (and their corresponding Ecological Sections) are:

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- **Northern Forest** (Southern, Western and Northern Superior Uplands, No. Minnesota and Ontario Peatlands, and No. Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains sections)
- **Forest/Prairie Transition** (Lake Agassiz, Aspen Parklands, and Minnesota and NE Iowa Morainal Sections)
- **Southeast Forest** (Paleozoic Plateau sections)
- **Prairie** (Red River Valley and North Central Glaciated Plains sections)
- **Metropolitan Urbanizing Area** (That portion of the Minnesota and NE Iowa Morainal section within the counties centered on Hennepin County plus the portions in the tier of counties to the north and west)

Figure 1: L-SOHC Sections



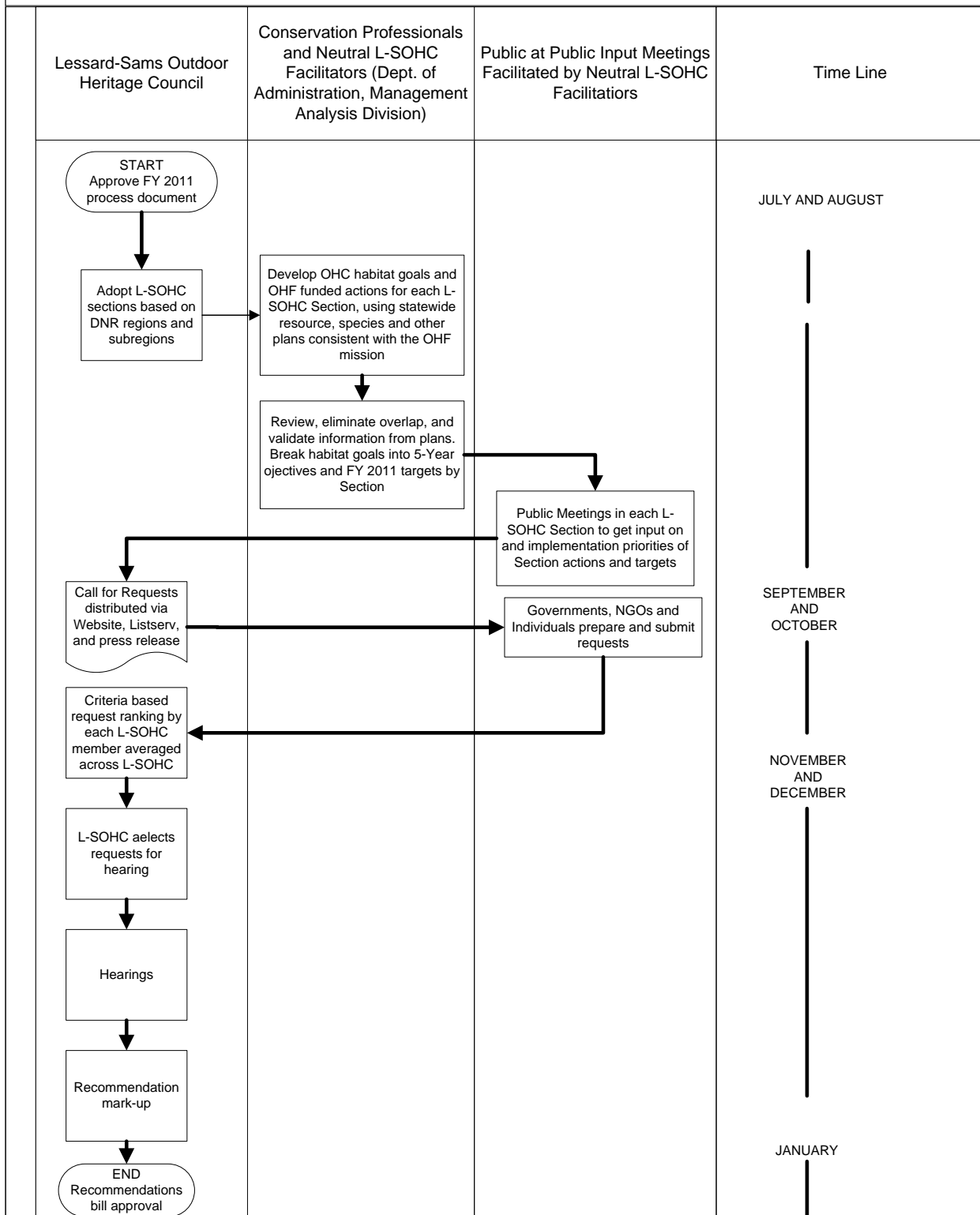
The Planning Process

Within each L-SOHC Section, the L-SOHC will undertake the following planning process that will guide its Call for Proposals and its subsequent development of FY 2011 recommendations for expenditures from the OHF.

The cross-functional flow chart (Figure 2, page 6) describes how the MSCCPP and the species/habitat/resource specific plans will be integrated into the L-SOHC's strategic plan and guide the FY 2011 recommendations of the Council.

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Figure 2: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council FY 2011 Recommendation Development Process



Step 1. Review the DNR ecological regions and subregions and configure a set of L-SOHC sections for the purposes of planning and describing the goals of the OHF. In so doing,

maintain the integrity of the ecological regions in as much as possible given the constraints of budget and time.

Step 2. Identify the long-term goals contained in the various MN species/habitat/resource plans and collate these goals within each of the five L-SOHC Sections. In meetings in each L-SOHC Section local conservation organization staff, through a contract with the MN Department of Administration's Management Analysis Division (MAD), will identify the relevant Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan Actions for each of the five substate regions delineated by the L-SOHC, known as L-SOHC Section, giving consideration to each Section's habitat and resource conditions and issues. The local conservation professionals will also identify each Section's long-term goals contained in the various MN species/habitat/resource plans (e.g., Long-Range Duck Recovery Plan), and collate these goals within each L-SOHC Section. These goals will be described in terms of outcomes that are consistent with the constitutional mission of the OHF.

Step 3. Review the goals for each L-SOHC Section and identify FY 2011 accomplishment targets and priority actions. The species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC Section will be reviewed for overlap, completeness and accuracy by a conservation professionals within each region (local, state, federal, private, non-profit). Specifically, the accumulated goals will be reviewed and validated to be the outcomes of the species-, habitat-, and resource-specific plans and are based on science and reflect best conservation and resource management practices. Once this review is complete, the conservation professionals in each L-SOHC region will identify realistic species/habitat/resource accomplishment targets for FY 2011 and identify priority action, using these long-term species/habitat/resource goals as a foundation for these outcomes. Neutral facilitators hired by the L-SOHC will facilitate this process.

Step 4: Seek public review and input on the long-term habitat/resource goals, FY 2011 species/habitat/resource accomplishment targets and priority actions for each L-SOHC Section. The L-SOHC will organize and facilitate public meetings in each L-SOHC Section led by L-SOHC-contracted neutral facilitators. The purpose of these public meetings is to obtain public input on the long-term species/habitat/resource goals, FY 2011 species/habitat/resource accomplishment targets, and identify priority actions identified. The public comments provided in each L-SOHC Section will be forwarded to the L-SOHC.

Step 5. Develop and distribute a Call for Requests to address the FY 2011 species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC section. The L-SOHC will develop and distribute a Call for Requests for achieving the FY 2011 species/habitat/resource goals, consistent with the priority actions that have been identified for each L-SOHC Section.

Step 6. Review and evaluate proposals using the criteria specified in this document. The L-SOHC will review and evaluate the proposal submitted in response to its Call using the request criteria specified in this document. Subsequently, it will identify those proposals deemed to most effectively achieve the FY 2011 species/habitat/resource goals identified for each L-SOHC Section. The L-SOHC will forward these requests to the 2010 Legislature as its recommendations for FY 2011 expenditures from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

CALL FOR REQUESTS AND FORMING COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The L-SOHC will prepare and publish a call for requests based on the consensus habitat/conservation targets and priority actions necessary to meet these targets. The public will be made aware of the Call via the L-SOHC Website, the L-SOHC Listserv, and the press. This call will limit requests to those addressing priority actions and targets developed above. It will carry these screening criteria.

The L-SOHC will only consider funding requests that:

1. are consistent with the uses of the OHF as specified in Article XI of the Minnesota Constitution and Minnesota Statutes 97A.056,
2. show the ability to produce significant, measurable, and enduring resource and/or habitat outcomes.
3. clearly identify specific resource and/or habitat outcomes, performance measures, and a plan for measuring, evaluating and publicly reporting these outcomes over time.
4. reflect the best available science regarding resource and/or habitat enhancement, restoration, and protection.
5. where possible and appropriate use native plant material.
6. restore or enhance resources only on property under permanent protection of fee ownership or conservation easement.
7. have a plan to sustain the resource and/or habitat outcomes specified, including a plan to finance the necessary activities.
8. identify funding necessary to fully implement the project/programs(s).
9. limit the state's exposure for additional funding for the project.
10. have a process for ensuring transparency and accessibility in all stages of project/program implementation.
11. Show the ability to produce significant, measurable, and enduring habitat outcomes.
12. seek funding to supplement (not replace) customary or usual funding sources.
13. only acquire permanent easements, if proposing less than fee simple acquisition in real property.
14. ensure that land acquired by fee with money from the OHF is open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season unless otherwise provided by law.
15. commit to erect and maintain signage, to a standard to be adopted by the L-SOHC, crediting the OHF with support for protected, restored, or improved sites.
16. commit to replace OHF protected resources converted to a use other than that intended in the OHF appropriation on a ten replacement acres for one converted acre basis.
17. agree to not transfer the public interest in OHF fee and/or easement protected land without the written approval.
18. are proposed by established land acquisition programs, if the request is to acquire fee simple title or a permanent conservation easement of real property.
19. Are proposed by established land acquisition programs that use explicit criteria for evaluating the parcel's habitat potential, if the request is to acquire an interest in real property
20. Propose restoration or enhancement exclusively on land permanently protected by conservation easement or public ownership.

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The Call will also contain these screening criteria to be met by requesting organizations. In developing its recommendations to the Legislature for expenditures from the OHF, the L-SOHC will only consider requests from organization(s) that:

- have a record of successful management and implementation of project/program(s) similar in scale, scope, and complexity to the project/program(s) being requested.
- have demonstrated the ability to identify and establish the financial and managerial controls needed to successfully and fully implement the proposed project/program.
- Have an up-to-date external financial audit with no serious negative findings.

In addition to the action items and targets from statewide conservation plans developed in the L-SOHC's planning process, the L-SOHC will give priority consideration to requests that:

1. call for funding ongoing programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the L-SOHC Planning Section or the state as a whole.
2. produce multiple conservation benefits.
3. produce conservation benefits across a large geographic area.
4. are collaboratively developed by multiple stakeholders and interests.
5. are able to leverage funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
6. identify the status of public access in the case of easement acquisition.
7. address one-time conservation opportunities that will be lost if not immediately funded.
8. are not eligible for the Outdoor Heritage Fund Conservation Partners Grant Program.
9. restore and/or enhance habitat on existing state-owned Wildlife or Aquatic Management Areas.

These criteria will be used by L-SOHC members to rank proposals. This will be a numeric ranking averaged across all members and available to use as a basis for bringing request managers in to present and stand for questions. Recommendations will be made by motions by members, and may be informed by a mock individual member allocation process averaged across all members responding. All L-SOHC member rankings and mock allocations will be treated as public data and published on the L-SOHC Website prior to any L-SOHC meetings where those rankings or allocations are used.

DEFINITIONS

The L-SOHC will use the following definitions in the call for requests for the recommendations to the 2010 Legislature.

Restore: action to bring a habitat back to a former state of sustaining fish, game or wildlife, with an ultimate goal of restoring habitat to a desired conservation condition.

Protect: action to maintain the ability of habitat and related natural systems to sustain fish, game or wildlife through acquisition of fee title or conservation easements.

Enhance: action to increase the ability of habitat and related natural systems to sustain and improve fish, game or wildlife in an ecologically sound manner.

Lead House and Senate conferees affirmed that the above definitions could be used by the Council in developing the round of recommendations destined to go before the 2010 Legislature