



February 17, 2009

Acting Executive Director
Mr. Bill Becker
Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province
Woodland and Oak Savannah Restoration Program

Dear Mr. Becker and Council,

Please find the attached proposal to the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council regarding our program which encompasses the Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province.

This is a draft of the final proposal and there are just a few items that we are negotiating. However, we would like to present next Monday, at which time, any changes will be provided to the council.

Sincerely,

Kyle Herring
President
Herring Exterior Design, LLC.

Lessard Outdoor Heritage Fund Proposal
Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province
Woodland and Oak Savannah Restoration Program



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PROGRAM TITLE:	Rochester Plateau Restoration and Enhancement Program
TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET:	\$1,220,000
PROPOSED PROGRAM TIME,	
PERIOD FOR FUNDING REQUEST:	18 months. July 1, 2009 through January 1, 2011
FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTs (FTEs) :	14.25

PROGRAM STATEMENT

REGION:	Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province
COUNTY(S) NAME:	Dakota, Goodhue, Wabasha, Dodge, Olmsted, Winona, Mower, Fillmore, Houston
TOTAL GEOGRAPHIC ACRES:	1,359,429

This program will restore and enhance the publicly owned land contained within the Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province. This program specifically addresses affected acres that meet the criterion to restore and enhance publicly accessible acreage that allows for hunting and/or fishing directly on property or contiguous thereof (unless otherwise mandated by law).

This region contains popular areas for hunting deer, squirrels, grouse, wild turkey, geese and other game animals. The area also provides good habitat for non-game birds and mammals. Additional fishing opportunities, for trout, small and large mouth bass and other game fish, are provided in this region.

This region contains 94 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) known or predicted to occur. These SGCNs include 36 species that are federal or state endangered, threatened or of special concern. Wildlife present includes a variety of reptiles, such as timber rattlesnakes, western foxsnakes, racers, loggerheaded shrike, Blanding's turtles and wood turtles; birds, including Louisiana waterthrushes, prothonotary warblers, peregrine falcons, fish; including American brook lampreys and suckermouth minnows and mussels, such as ellipse mussels.

This program is consistent with the use of the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Fund (LOHF) as specified in Article XI of the Minnesota Constitution and Minnesota Statutes 97A.056. This program embraces and advances the Critical Land Protection and Sustainability recommendations of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan. The outcomes contained within this proposal restore and enhance prairie, savanna and forests within the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province of the Paleozoic Plateau, specifically the Rochester Plateau. These outcomes directly affect the habitat for fish, game and wildlife.

The results of the program to be expected are the removal and reduction of invasive species to insignificant levels. The outcomes include the protection and/or reintroduction of native species to their natural habitat. These

goals are attainable for each targeted site and can be verified and inspected by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and/or landowner. Insofar as publicly reporting the above stated outcomes, this program allows for the creation of an informative website to be developed and maintained for public use to educate and orientate the public with goals, outcomes and progress of the program. Further reports to the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council (LOHC) and legislature will be provided as mandated by the LOHC or others.

The Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be utilized throughout the execution of this program. Examples include, forestry mowing of buckthorn on frozen ground, herbiciding first year garlic mustard rosettes and hand pulling second-year flowering plants. Returning areas to fire dependent ecosystems is the primary ecological goal of this program. Signage and enforcement of invasives spread and reintroduction is imperative. Particular concern is heeded towards the re-introduction and re-enforcement of an indigenous array of more than 65 individual native plant species. The protection of remnant plants will also be a priority concern.

This program deals solely with properties under public domain or under permanent protection of fee ownership.

This program will encourage City, State, County and/or Federal landowners to maintain further maintenance after completion of the programs outcomes for each related site. The land owners will be educated and encouraged to maintain their properties through the use of controlled fire and vigilance against the reintroduction of invasives by swift action against said issues.

The funding for this program will come from the LOHF, however, the authorization may bring matching funds. At this time, the funding is planned to only come from LOHF. However, should funding in subsequent years of this program not be available, no sustainable damage will be accrued because all activity done will be done completely within the scope of the initial approved funding. Which is to say, the proposal offers a scalable program that considers current and future economic realities. Funding under this proposal is in addition to and will not supplant any existing funding for other similar projects in this region. Otherwise, this proposal seeks to supplement customary or usual funding sources, not replace them.

As implied above, there will not be any further state exposure for funding for this program as any approved funding will complete a specific whole area on a project basis. This proposal suggests that the guidelines and reporting procedures determined by the LOHC will be followed in addition to any other method of transparency as required by law. Whereas there is no fee simple or easement acquisitions being proposed, signage will be erected to acknowledge the LOHF and according to the recommendations of the LOHC.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM RESULTS

This program aims to restore and enhance the Rochester Plateau of the Paleozoic Plateau of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province. Currently, this region contains a significant area of land that is publicly owned and that is not being maintained, nor actively managed; and therefore, would benefit immediately from this restoration and enhancement program. As a result of invasive species proliferation and persistence, the region is not reaching its full potential for a natural habitat conducive to hunting and non-hunted game, fishing, plant species and the preservation of SGCNs. The dangers in not adopting the recommendations of this program are a continued degradation of the habitat and water quality within the region. Of significant importance is the consideration of the cost of delayed action, which most certainly will cost more.

A higher density of hunted and non-hunted game can be expected, as well as an increase in water infiltration and filtration for plant species and nearby surface waters.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

Due to the size and scope of the region the program will focus on the following criteria to determine where the

efforts should be concentrated: 1. the site(s) in greatest need of restoration or rehabilitation, 2. the site(s) of public accessibility and/or human impact, 3. Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan recommendations, and 4. seasonal considerations related to weather and work that can be completed in keeping with BMPs.

This program has isolated and determined that the first “shovel-ready” project to be addressed is the Quarry Hill Woodland and Oak Savannah project. This site is contained within the region addressed by this program and is overgrown with invasives and in dire need of restoration. The site encompasses 329.8 acres, of which 315.7 acres are to be addressed through this program. The site has approximately 100,000 yearly visitors, of which 38,000 are students of surrounding schools.

This programmatic approach will continue to select whole area sites that meet the above criteria.

Part of the strategy involves an emphasis on continued management by providing a five year “warranty”. The landowner or other fiscally responsible agent (as deemed by the LOHC) retains a 10% contract sum until year five and/or site acceptance by landowner and/or DNR. The warranty is to ensure a long-term commitment to quality and workmanship for this type of work. Understanding the responsibility of the LOHC, this mechanism was created specifically to address the inherent risk associated with utilizing funds in this capacity. This warranty serves to provide the best possible value for the Peoples of Minnesota, while maintaining realistic goals and expectations. Further specifics of the warranty will be provided at the appropriate time.

Program Partners

Rochester MN Buckthorn Busters and Rochester Amateur Sports Commission (RASC) have both signaled an interest to support with their volunteers to assist the program with the removal of buckthorn, invasives or other needed actions. RneighborWoods Volunteers will also assist through the citizen foresters. Prairie Moon Nursery is a partner in the seed source and selection. The Zumbro Watershed Partnership and Friends of Quarry Hill have also endorsed and support the program and its efforts.

Furthermore, we fully anticipate the following organizations and entities to support and/or endorse this program as it directly affects their spheres of interest. The City of Rochester Mayor Office, specific Rochester City Council Members and Rochester Chamber of Commerce are endorsing this program as it benefits the Citizens of Rochester and their recreational activities, as well as, the creation of additional FTEs in or around Rochester. The DNR, and the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Rochester will be providing technical assistance with mapping, forestry issues and plant species input, etc.

Employment Considerations

This program creates additional employment opportunity in Southeast Minnesota. The FTEs created are approximately per year, 14.25. This includes 7 FTEs for the manual invasives removal and seeding, 6 created FTEs for the seed harvesting and 1.25 FTEs for administration and other related activity.

Fiscal Agent and Oversight

Herring Exterior Design, LLC., will be the acting fiscal agent for this primary year funding, but is exploring the possibility of the DNR to be the fiscal agent for this program in subsequent years.

PROGRAM BUDGET

A realistic and fair approach to costing can only be done by on the ground “current situation” analysis at the time of project selection. Keeping in mind that the State expects a certain standard to be upheld as it relates to the end results.

Due to the range of the various conditions of the acreage in the region, the cost per acre is determined by what needs to be done on a per acre basis. There is no “one size fits all” cost per acre. Rather than spending tax payer money to “re-survey” and “re-analyze” a region for a few years and then provide a report, to which the situation could have already changed, we propose the following as the manner in which to proceed; the program realizes that some acres will require little or no work other than a prescribed burn. In such a case, the cost per acre is approximately \$20. However, as the region and this site in particular is heavily overgrown, the cost per acre average is higher. There are acres which require an inordinate amount of work and the work required necessitates a per acre cost of \$5,080. These higher cost acres need a full rehabilitation including invasive species removal by hand, full spectrum reseeding and multi-year attention (as covered by the warranty) in order to be fully restored. The vast majority of acres contained within this region that need attention are in between the very minimum cost and maximum cost as outlined above. It is noted that the cost per acre may appear to be high, however, included in the contract is the continued attention and work required to accomplish the goals over a five year period (as covered by the contractor warranty).

Depending on the needs of the individual acres, the following is a potential breakdown of costs associated based at a per acre level: \$1,800 seed per acre, \$380 herbicide applied by manual application, \$65 hand seeding, \$230 invasives hand pulling, \$160 seed preparation, \$960 manual woody vegetation reduction, \$1020 for woody biomass removal, \$945 forestry mower machine woody vegetation reduction. These costs per item are the high range, for example, some acres will need no seeding in which case the cost for seeding would be \$0. At the same time, some acres will need restoration involving less biodiversity in the seeding, resulting in the cost being less than the cost above.

Item	Budget Request
Work Contracts	\$607,800.00
Permanent Signage	\$2,500.00
Minnesota Grown Local Eco-type Seed	\$497,000.00
Administration Costs (3.5%)	\$42,700.00
Additional Management Planning, outcome reporting and evaluations	\$55,000.00
Website w/maintenance 5 years	\$9,000.00
Promotional Costs	\$6,000.00
Total	\$1,220,000.00

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT QUALIFICATIONS

Herring Exterior Design, LLC., is owned and managed by Mr. Kyle Herring. He has over twelve years experience with Minnesota native plant restoration and invasives control. He has been a local business owner for over seven years. He owns and manages a nursery which grows over 110 native species for use in Southeast Minnesota. He is also certified as a “Burn Boss” and has extensive experience in this area. He has worked with the DNR, Minnesota Conservation Corps, various city and county parks and agencies, the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nature Conservancy, Federal Aviation Administration, Army Corps of Engineers and many other municipalities and organizations.