



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 07/06/2021

Project Title: Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program Phase 13: Statewide and Metro Habitat

Funds Recommended: \$10,450,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(q)

Appropriation Language: \$10,450,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for a program to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national organizations for enhancing, restoring, or protecting forests, wetlands, prairies, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. Of this amount, at least \$2,400,000 is for grants in the seven-county metropolitan area and cities with a population of 50,000 or greater. Grants must not be made for activities required to fulfill the duties of owners of lands subject to conservation easements. Grants must not be made from the appropriation in this paragraph for projects that have a total project cost exceeding \$575,000. Of the total appropriation, \$475,000 may be spent for personnel costs and other direct and necessary administrative costs. Grantees may acquire land or interests in land. Easements must be permanent. Grants may not be used to establish easement stewardship accounts. Land acquired in fee must be open to hunting and fishing during the open season unless otherwise provided by law. The program must require a match of at least ten percent from nonstate sources for all grants. The match may be cash or in-kind resources. For grant applications of \$25,000 or less, the commissioner must provide a separate, simplified application process. Subject to Minnesota Statutes, the commissioner must, when evaluating projects of equal value, give priority to organizations that have a history of receiving, or a charter to receive, private contributions for local conservation or habitat projects. For grant requests to acquire land in fee or a conservation easement, the commissioner must give priority to projects associated with or within one mile of existing wildlife management areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8; scientific and natural areas under Minnesota Statutes, sections 84.033 and 86A.05, subdivision 5; or aquatic management areas under Minnesota Statutes, sections 86A.05, subdivision 14, and 97C.02. All restoration or enhancement projects must be on land permanently protected by a permanent covenant ensuring perpetual maintenance and protection of restored and enhanced habitat, by a conservation easement or public ownership, or in public waters as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 103G.005, subdivision 15. Priority must be given to restoration and enhancement projects on public lands. Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 13, applies to grants awarded under this paragraph. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2025. No less than five percent of the amount of each grant must be held back from reimbursement until the grant recipient has completed a grant accomplishment report by the deadline and in the form prescribed by and satisfactory to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. The commissioner must provide notice of the grant program in the summary of game and fish law prepared under Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.051, subdivision 2.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Kathy Varble

Title: CPL Grants Coordinator

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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie
- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program is managed by the Department of Natural Resources to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities. In its first 10 years of funding, the CPL program provided 760 grants, totaling \$74.5 million to over 200 different grantee organizations, enhancing, restoring, or protecting over 350,000 acres of habitat. Project site monitoring has confirmed that grantees are achieving project goals, and demand continues to grow as word spreads to new applicants and successful applicants return for additional grants for local habitat improvement.

Design and Scope of Work

The CPL Program fulfills MS 97a.056 Subd. 3a, directing LSOHC to establish a conservation partner's grant program encouraging/supporting local conservation efforts. \$10,000,000 of the requested \$10.450.000 will be available for grants. Of this amount, at least \$3,000,000 will be used for projects in the 7-county metro area and in cities with a population of 50,000 people or greater. If funds remain from this \$3,000,000 after two grant rounds, they may be used for projects statewide. Statewide funds may be used in the metro area. This is a stand-alone program, but depends on support/technical advice from public land managers and habitat and acquisition specialists.

Grant activities include enhancement, restoration, and protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% match from non-state sources is required for all grants and may be in-kind or cash. Applicants must describe the project goals, methods, location, activity, habitat, urgency, and overall benefit. For acquisition projects, applicants describe the parcel selection process. CPL staff develops an RFP incorporating LSOHC priorities. Staff works with applicants to submit applications, oversee grant selection, prepare/execute grant documents, review expenditures, approves payments/reports, monitor work, and assist recipients with close-out. Staff complies with Office of Grants Management policies. Grantees are required to submit annual and final accomplishment reports.

The CPL program has 3 annual grant cycles- Traditional, Metro, and Expedited Conservation Projects (ECP) The Traditional and Metro cycles will have one grant round beginning August 2021 and a second round if funds remain. Projects under \$25,000 will have a simplified application. The ECP grant cycle will be open continuously for eligible projects under \$50,000 beginning August 2021, and applications will be awarded up to 5 times through May 2022, depending on available funds. DNR may choose to make additional awards, consistent with DNR and OHF policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available.

CPL staff provides an administrative review of all applications. Technical Review Committees, comprised of habitat experts across the state, then review and score Traditional and Metro applications based on evaluation criteria (see attached). The DNR Directors of Fish and Wildlife, Eco Waters, and Forestry review the committee's recommendations and provide a ranking to the Commissioner. Final funding decisions are made by the Commissioner's office. ECP grants are reviewed by CPL staff and DNR habitat experts using established criteria. The Director of Fish and Wildlife makes final funding decisions for ECP. CPL staff conducts site visits for most projects over \$50,000 and smaller projects if needed. For projects over \$250,000, staff may conduct site visits annually for the duration of the grant to ensure that project objectives are being met.

Administration costs of \$450,000 include salary/fringe, direct support services, travel, outreach, ongoing application system/database maintenance, and other professional services. 2 FTEs are needed to manage and promote the program, monitor grants, and meet state requirements.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

All CPL projects include a Natural Heritage Database Review, which addresses wildlife species of greatest conservation need, the MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories. These results are incorporated into the requests, along with mitigation measures if needed. Habitat value/species benefits is also one of the evaluation criterion used to score applications. When the projects are reviewed by the technical habitat experts, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, targeted species, and threatened/endangered species are all discussed, and add to the overall habitat quality and urgency of applications which is reflected in the scoring and funding recommendations.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

The CPL program has a Technical Review Committee that reviews and scores projects based on evaluation criteria. One of the evaluation criterion addresses the overall project value, and includes the habitat quality and quantity of the site, whether or not it is part of a habitat corridor, and the use of currently accepted practices based on sound conservation science. A second evaluation criterion addresses the habitat benefits of the proposal, such as protecting areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey. A third evaluation criterion addresses public use and access, and the project's proximity to other protected lands. The technical experts ensure that CPL proposals recommended for funding are using current conservation science and best management practices.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Northern Forest

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Prairie

- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

Southeast Forest

- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Leverage will be provided through local match of a minimum of 10%

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This request is for the continuation of a program that did not exist prior to the legacy fund and would not continue to exist without an OHF appropriation.

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

Applicants are asked to describe or submit their long-term management plans when submitting a project proposal, and the Technical Review Committee considers these plans when scoring proposals and making funding recommendations. The sustainability of the project is also addressed through one of the evaluation criterion. Long-term maintenance commitment from the applicant is crucial to a successful proposal. The CPL program has a monitoring process to ensure that funds are being used to complete work as described in the grantee's work plans. The CPL program manager and natural resource specialist conducts site visits for projects that are over \$50,000 and smaller projects as needed. When conducting site visits, CPL staff meets with the project manager and land manager to discuss and evaluate the work, and to address any issues that may have come up during the grant period, as well as discuss long-term management goals.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?

Yes

Who will manage the easement?

Who will be the easement holder?

What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- WPA
- SNA
- AMA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal
- Refuge Lands
- Public Waters
- State Wilderness Areas
- State Recreation Areas
- State Forests

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

No

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

The land may be open for hunting and fishing, depending on individual project applications. For acquisitions, the land will be open to hunting and fishing unless otherwise provided by law

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

All lands acquired with CPL funds will be open for hunting and fishing unless otherwise required by law.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

Will the eased land be open for public use?

Yes

Describe the expected public use:

Public use will depend on the conditions of the easement. Most but not all CPL projects are on public lands/waters open for public use.

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

Yes

If an acquired parcel requires restoration or enhancement in order to be conveyed to the DNR, the applicant is required to budget for that in their grant. Work can be done with either grant funding or match.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?

Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Solicit Applications: RFP posted online	August 2021
First round applications due (ECP applications accepted continuously)	September 2021
First round grantees announced	December 2021
First round grants encumbered, grantees begin work	January 2022
Solicit round 2 applications, if needed	January 2022
Round 2 applications due	April 2022
Round 2 applications encumbered, grantees begin work	May 2022
Ongoing monitoring, per OGM policy	June 2022, 2023, 2024
Annual reports to the Council	August 2022, 2023, 2024
Grantees complete projects and submit final reports	June 2025
Final reports to the council	October 2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 10/31/2025

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$345,000	-	-	\$345,000
Contracts	\$10,000,000	\$1,000,000	required 10% match from grantees/community partnerships	\$11,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000
Professional Services	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Direct Support Services	\$32,000	-	-	\$32,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$10,450,000	\$1,000,000	-	\$11,450,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Natural Resources Specialist	0.5	2.0	\$90,000	-	-	\$90,000
Grants Specialist	0.5	2.0	\$75,000	-	-	\$75,000
Grants Coordinator	1.0	2.0	\$180,000	-	-	\$180,000

Amount of Request: \$10,450,000

Amount of Leverage: \$1,000,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 9.57%

DSS + Personnel: \$377,000

As a % of the total request: 3.61%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

The reduced appropriation will allow for less funding for grants

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

There is a mandatory 10% match for all grants from non-state funds.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

There is typically no overlap of funding for staffing. One appropriation is used for one year of staffing. Two years is always requested just in case CPL doesn't receive funding for a year, there will be funding for staff to continue to administer the program.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

The entire contract line is for grants to organizations for restoration, enhancement, and protection.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

Yes

Direct Support Services

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

DNR's Direct and Necessary calculator

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

No

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability					
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Other ~

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Other ~

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Other ~

Programs in prairie region:

- Other ~

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Other ~

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Acquisition applications will be ranked using the CPL evaluation criteria.