Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Restoration Evaluations - ML 2025

ML 2025 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 05/29/2024

Proposal Title: Restoration Evaluations - ML 2025

Funds Requested: $200,000

Confirmed Leverage Funds: -

Is this proposal Scalable?: No

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Wade Johnson
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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Activity types:

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Narrative

Abstract

This program annually evaluates a sample of up to twenty Outdoor Heritage Fund habitat restoration and enhancement projects and provides a report on the evaluations in accordance with state law. Additional program communications focus on project outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations for improving restoration practice.

Design and Scope of Work

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) are jointly responsible for convening a Restoration Evaluation Panel (Panel) of technical experts to annually evaluate a sample of habitat restoration and enhancement projects completed with Outdoor Heritage funding, as provided in M.S. 97A.056, Subd. 10. Primary goals of the restoration evaluation program are to provide on the ground accountability for the use of Legacy funds and to improve future habitat restorations in the State. Per statute, the Panel will evaluate the selected habitat restoration projects relative to the law, current science, and the stated goals in the restoration plan. Program staff will identify projects to be evaluated, coordinate field assessments and provide a report to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and the legislature determining if the restorations are meeting planned goals, any problems with implementation, and, if necessary, recommendations on improving restorations.

The anticipated long-term outcomes of this program are increased success of habitat restorations, increased awareness among practitioners and decision-makers of common challenges associated with restorations and recommended management options to improve future projects.

Up to twenty initial Outdoor Heritage Fund project evaluations will be reported in the 2025 annual report, up to three follow up evaluations of previously assessed sites will also be reported. Follow up assessments will provide valuable insight in tracking progress and estimating trajectory towards planned goals.

This request supports a portion of the inter-agency Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluations Program, which provides for the evaluation of habitat restoration projects completed with funds from the Parks and Trails Fund (M.S. 85.53 Subd. 5), Outdoor Heritage Fund (M.S.97A.056 Subd.10), and Clean Water Fund (M.S. 114D.50 Subd. 6) as required by state law.

The most recent Restoration Evaluation report, appendix of project evaluations and an overview of ongoing recommendations for improving practices are available on the MN DNR website
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/legacy/restoration-evaluation.html

A permanent record of all Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation reports beginning in 2012 are available from the Legislative Library: http://www.leg.state.mn.us/edocs/edocs.aspx?oclcnumber=823766285

Explain how the proposal addresses habitat protection, restoration, and/or enhancement for fish, game & wildlife, including threatened or endangered species conservation

What are the elements of this proposal that are critical from a timing perspective?

Describe how the proposal expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:

Which top 2 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

Explain how this proposal will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:

Outcomes

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

- Clean Water Fund
- Parks and Trails Fund

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 program is entirely dedicated to Legacy Fund work and does not supplant or substitute for previous funding.

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

It is anticipated that the evaluation program outputs will help to create a framework for continuous improvement in restoration practice. Direct work of the Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Program will be sustained for the period of funding.

Provide an assessment of how your program may celebrate cultural diversity or reach diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:

Activity Details

Requirements

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?
No

Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this proposal either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?
No

Other OHF Appropriation Awards

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?

Yes

> **Are any of these past appropriations still OPEN?**
>
> Yes

Approp Year	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
2023	$190,000	$9,000	$181,000	4.74%
2022	$200,000	$200,000	-	100.0%
2021	$150,000	$150,000	-	100.0%
2020	$150,000	$150,000	-	100.0%
2019	$150,000	$150,000	-	100.0%
2018	$150,000	$150,000	-	100.0%
2017	$150,000	$150,000	-	100.0%
2016	$125,000	$125,000	-	100.0%
2015	$100,000	$100,000	-	100.0%
2014	$100,000	$100,000	-	100.0%
2013	$45,000	$45,000	-	100.0%
2012	$45,000	$45,000	-	100.0%
2011	$42,000	$42,000	-	100.0%
Totals	$1,597,000	$1,416,000	$181,000	88.67%

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Evaluation Panel establishes annual priorities	July 1, 2025
Program staff select up to twenty-five project sites for evaluation	July 1, 2025
Site assessors (State staff and contractors) conduct field surveys of selected sites	October 1, 2025
2025 Restoration Evaluation report submitted to Legislature and LSOHC	April 28, 2026

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$162,000	-	-	$162,000
Contracts	$20,000	-	-	$20,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$2,000	-	-	$2,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$14,000	-	-	$14,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	$2,000	-	-	$2,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$200,000**	**-**	**-**	**$200,000**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Coordinator	0.66	1.0	$80,000	-	-	$80,000
Evaluation Specialist	0.66	1.0	$75,000	-	-	$75,000
Site Assessors (State Agency Staff)	0.07	1.0	$7,000	-	-	$7,000

Amount of Request: $200,000
Amount of Leverage: -
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%
DSS + Personnel: $176,000
As a % of the total request: 88.0%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?
No

Please explain why this project can NOT be scaled:

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?**
> Program staff positions, Coordinator and Specialist, have have remained the same for the past six appropriations.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
Technical evaluation of completed restorations and enhancements.

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 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	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

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

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?
No

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

Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Program
Outdoor Heritage Fund ML25 Request

The Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Program supports accountability and continuous improvement in the use of State funds and provides a framework to evaluate and learn from investments to restore habitat in Minnesota. Every year we work with project managers and visit restorations around the state. Highlights from the projects and lessons learned are communicated back to the restoration community to improve the quality of restorations in Minnesota. As directed by statute, we evaluate projects relative to *current science* and *stated goals*.

We convene a panel of restoration experts to review these evaluations, identify any problems with implementation, and form recommendations to improve future restorations. Recommendations include actions for Project Managers, State Agencies and Funding Organizations.

Photo 1. Site visits are an important part of restoration evaluations. Gathering knowledge from project managers, inspecting site conditions, and surveying vegetation contribute to our understanding of restoration outcomes.
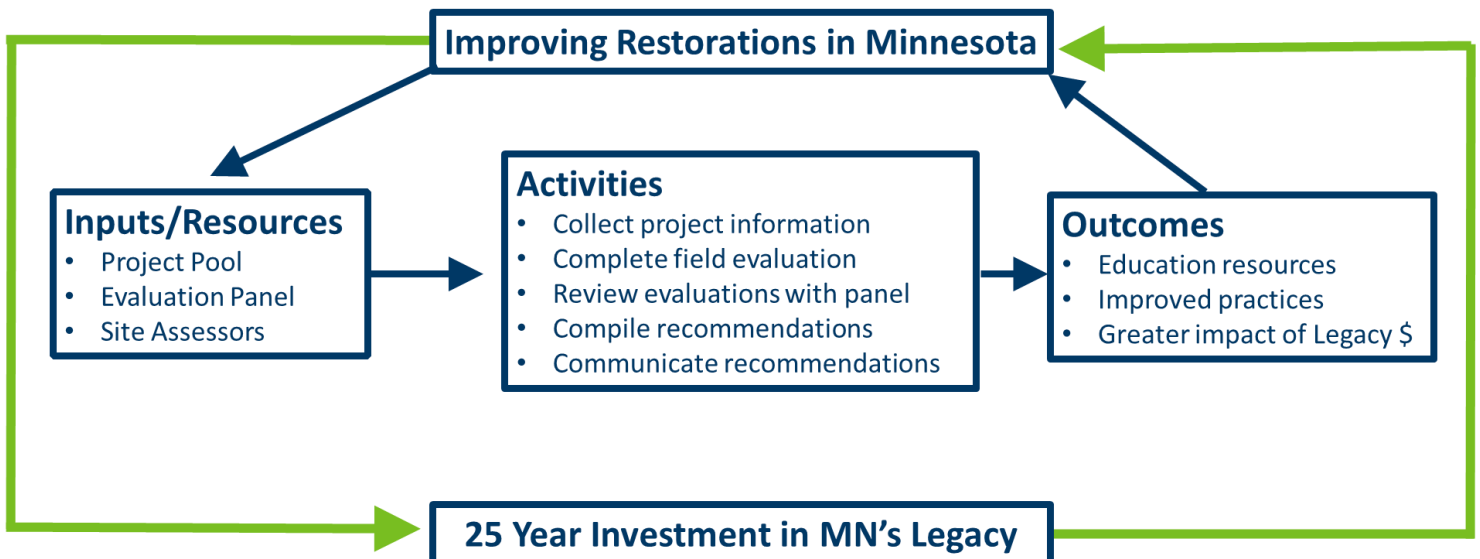

Figure 1 Restoration Evaluation Program Model.

ML 2025 Activities

In 2025, up to 20 OHF projects will be evaluated and up to 3 revisited for follow-up evaluations.

Considerations for OHF Project Selections:

- Geographic location and project managers - To serve all Minnesotans, we evaluate projects in all regions of the state and prioritize unvisited counties and managing organizations.
- Habitat type. Evaluations encompass the diverse habitats and activities funded by OHF.
- Evaluation theme/focus. Evaluating a suite of similar projects can yield deeper insights into specific restoration practices. For example, in 2022, several OHF buckthorn control projects were visited which resulted in a specific recommendation to improve this work: Phased Approach for Buckthorn Management.

With the 10-year renewal of DNR's State Wildlife Action Plan in 2025, there is a timely opportunity to have wildlife experts apply current science and evaluate specific restoration goals and actions for wildlife benefit.
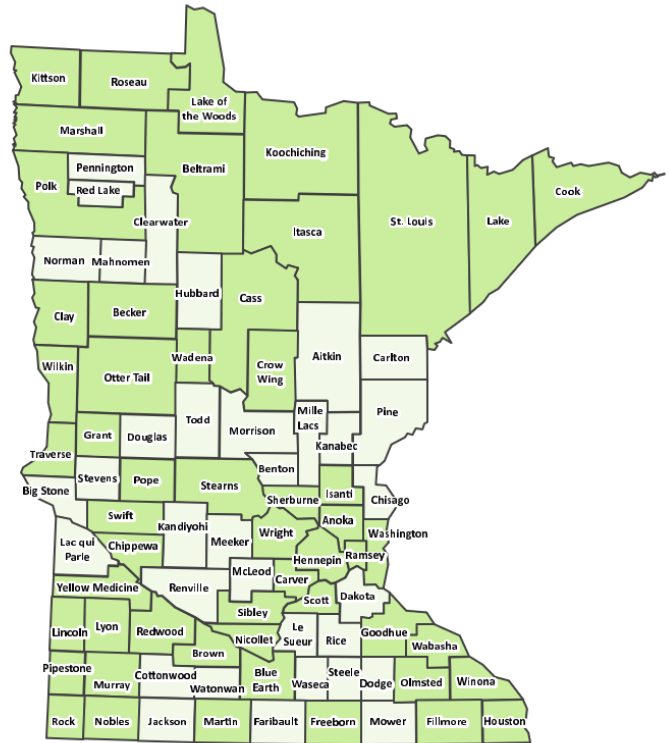

Figure 2. OHF funded projects across much of the state have been evaluated by the Restoration Evaluation Program. Counties with OHF project evaluations shown in green.

What do we gain from evaluating restorations?

Tracking Success and Identifying Areas for Improvement

Of 275 projects evaluated to date:
- 77% on track to meet/exceed stated goals
- 84% utilized current science
- 74% were implemented without problems

These numbers are encouraging but there is still opportunity to do better for Minnesotans. Our evaluation process supports continuous improvement of Legacy funded restorations.

Recommendations to Improve Restorations

These range from general best practices that apply to all restorations:
- Improved Documentation, Multidisciplinary Project Teams, Restoration Training,

To targeted for specific, often challenging projects:
- Planning and Vegetation for Stream Projects
- Implementation of Common Carp Barriers

Our communication and outreach efforts focus on connecting practitioners and policymakers with this information and promoting use of best practices.