



June 24, 2022

Scott Johnson
Ruffed Grouse Society – American Woodcock Society
100 High Tower Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Via e-mail only
scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org

**Re: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
2023 Proposal, Protection of Public Land Forest Habitats**

Dear Mr. Johnson:

As Minnesota's School Trust Lands Director, I am statutorily charged with developing and recommending strategic land exchanges to both the Commissioner of Natural Resources and the legislative Permanent School Fund Commission. The Permanent School Fund has a statutory goal of securing long-term maximum revenues while maintaining sound natural resource conservation and management principles (Minn. Stat. sec. 127A.31).

I endeavor to demonstrate that strategies like this RGS-AWS proposal are indeed in the long-term economic best interest of the Permanent School Fund and meet our sustainable forest management goals. As such, this letter is intended to communicate support from the Office of School Trust Lands regarding the grant request recently submitted to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council ("LSOHC").

My understanding is the above-referenced RGS-AWS grant proposal seeks to utilize LSOHC funding to acquire private inholdings within Minnesota's state forest system and subsequently exchange the private inholdings for school trust lands within existing Wildlife Management Areas (in addition to private land inholdings acquisition and direct transfer to other adjacent public land agencies). This proposal aligns with the mission of the School Trust in that it would consolidate school trust lands within productive forests, reduce ongoing management costs, reduce boundary lines, and would maintain and enhance wildlife habitat management by removing the school trust economic considerations within Wildlife Management Areas.

Presuming LSOHC funds this proposal, the Office of School Trust Lands would still need to complete an in-depth analysis on the proposed acquisition parcels to determine the potential benefit to the School Trust. That is, there may be proposed acquisition parcels that could be managed by another public entity – county forest departments or the USDA Forest Service. Nevertheless, this proposal does seem to strike the appropriate balance between economic considerations, sustainable forest management and enhancing wildlife habitat. I look forward to working with you and your staff in the future.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns at 651-279-2393 or aaron.vande-linde@state.mn.us.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Vandelinde', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Vandelinde, Director
Office of School Trust Lands