

Operating Procedures of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (“COUNCIL”)

Adopted: December 17, 2008

Revised ~~May 24, 2023~~ July 30, 2025.

Section I. “COUNCIL” Established

A. Powers

The COUNCIL is in the legislative branch of government. The COUNCIL exercises the authorities and powers designated in [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056](#). The COUNCIL also exercises powers granted through periodic state laws usually relating to appropriations and the associated programs or issues.

B. Membership and Organization

Membership and terms are defined in [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 2](#). A vacancy on the COUNCIL may be filled by the appointing authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. ([Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 2 \(f\)](#)).

Compensation and removal of public members are as provided in [Minnesota Statutes, section 15.0575](#). (Minnesota Statutes, section [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 2 \(f\)](#)).

C. Duties

1. Recommendations

The COUNCIL shall recommend an annual legislative bill for appropriations from the outdoor heritage fund established pursuant to [Article XI, Section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution](#), of the Minnesota Constitution and [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 1](#):

Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, Subd. 1. Outdoor heritage fund. *“An outdoor heritage fund, under article XI, section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution, is established as an account in the state treasury. All money earned by the outdoor heritage fund must be credited to the fund. At least 99 percent of the money appropriated from the fund must be expended to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.”*

In so doing, the COUNCIL shall consider:

“... the outcomes of existing natural resource plans, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation 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 prairie.” ([Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3\(a\)](#))

The COUNCIL is directed to establish a conservation partners program, to encourage local conservation efforts, open to local, regional, state, and national organizations. ([Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3\(b\)](#))

Approval of the recommended legislative bill requires an affirmative vote of nine members of the COUNCIL. ([Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 3\(e\)](#))

2. Periodic Organization

Officers, election of officers (how often), nominations for officers.

a. Election of Officers

- i.** Nominations for officer positions - by written sign-up by member or nomination by another member. Officer positions shall be nominated and elected in the following order: chair (1); vice chair (1); secretary (1); treasurer (1); legislative member (1).
- ii.** Officers serve 2 year terms that run through the first Monday in January of the odd numbered year or until the date of the next election. Elections are to be held in January of the odd numbered year, or at the first meeting of the COUNCIL after all appointments have been confirmed. The chair, vice chair, secretary, and treasurer serve until a successor has been elected.
- iii.** Distribution of officers among appointing authorities:
 - 1)** Whenever practicable, executive officer positions should be representative of all three appointing authorities.
 - 2)** The legislative member will be from either House or the Senate. If prior elections of officers yield an odd number of legislators as officers, then the legislative member's legislative affiliation will balance representation of the legislative bodies.
- iv.** Nomination and election of officers will be by the entire COUNCIL membership.
- v.** A majority vote of the members present for each position is required.
- vi.** Elections will be by written ballot and must indicate the voting member's name.
- vii.** Proxy: Members may vote by proxy for election of Executive Committee members only. If a member wishes to vote by proxy, that member shall provide their proxy to the COUNCIL staff and indicate the member they wish to have the signed proxy given to.
- viii.** In order to allow the use of the proxy vote, all participating members of the COUNCIL must be in the meeting room, not attending via electronic means.
- ix.** If a member is participating via electronic means, the elections will take place via a roll call vote and proxies will not be allowed.
- x.** Vacancies in COUNCIL officer positions due to resignation, removal, or death will be filled by election within 90 days of receipt by the COUNCIL of notification of the vacancy. If notice of vacancy is received during the legislative session, the COUNCIL may hold the election to fill the vacancy at its next regularly scheduled meeting, even if a period of greater than 90 days has elapsed prior to that meeting. Until an election is held, the officer vacancy will be temporarily filled by an ascending officer as outlined in Section II, "Duties of Council Officers."

D. Operations

1. Duties

- a.** The COUNCIL shall recommend appropriations for expenditures from the outdoor heritage fund.

- b. Additional duties prescribed in law.

2. Reportability

- a. In addition, and in pursuit of D. 1, above, the COUNCIL reviews and acts upon information provided from the following sources: chair, COUNCIL members, subcommittees, staff, Legislature, state, federal and local agencies, citizens and private sector.
- b. The recommendations, findings, and observations of the COUNCIL are forwarded to the appropriate agencies or entities under the signature of the chair or executive director. This includes approving proposed amendments to project accomplishment plans.

3. Conflict of Interest Prohibitions and Procedures

a. Governing Conflict of Interest

The COUNCIL is bound by [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 4](#), "Conflict of Interest" as follows:

- i. A COUNCIL member may not be an advocate for or against a COUNCIL action or vote on any action that may be a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest includes direct or indirect personal financial benefit from a request for funding or funded project. A conflict of interest must be disclosed as soon as it is discovered. The COUNCIL shall follow the policies and requirements related to conflicts of interest developed by the Minnesota Department of Administration Office of Grants Management under [Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.98](#). (See Procedures Regarding Conflict of Interest below.)
- ii. For the purposes of this section, a "conflict of interest" exists when a person has an organizational conflict of interest or direct financial interests, and those interests present the appearance that it will be difficult for the person to impartially fulfill the person's duty. An "organizational conflict of interest" exists when a person has an affiliation with an organization that is subject to COUNCIL activities, which presents the appearance of a conflict between organizational interests and COUNCIL member duties. An "organizational conflict of interest" does not exist if the person's only affiliation with an organization is being a member of the organization.
- iii. In addition to the above a COUNCIL member may not serve as a project manager for a request for funding pending before the COUNCIL.

b. Conflict of Interest to be Managed Through Procedures

Members of the COUNCIL have been appointed because of their legislative duties, interest, expertise, or knowledge of the science, policy, or practice of restoring, protecting, and enhancing wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for fish, game and wildlife. Therefore, certain affiliations may constitute a conflict of interest that must be managed by the COUNCIL, including:

- i. Receipt of personal financial benefit from a proposing organization or request for funding being reviewed.

- ii. Serving as an employee or governing board member of a proposing organization whose request for funding is being reviewed.
- iii. Having a family relationship with someone requesting funds or a staff or board member of a requesting organization.

c. Procedures Regarding Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest must be identified before or during the initial request for funding review process. The member must complete the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form and file it in the COUNCIL office. If a conflict of interest is recognized during the course of a meeting the member must declare the conflict at the first opportunity. Declaring a conflict of interest means that a member may not advocate for or against the request for funding, or vote on the request for funding. In addition, existing law and institutional policies on conflict of interest cover the COUNCIL members and staff and other legislative staff.

4. Meetings

a. Open Meetings

The COUNCIL will conduct open meetings as described in [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 5](#), summarized as follows:

- i. Meetings of the COUNCIL and other groups the COUNCIL may establish are subject to [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D](#) "Open Meeting Law," including provision of public copies of members' materials.
- ii. Meetings shall be recorded. Meeting records shall be made available to the public in text or other accessible formats.
- iii. Meeting schedules, agendas, and materials shall be made available to the public in advance on-line and via Listserv. The COUNCIL shall establish a Listserv and a website for the purpose of communicating with the public.
- iv. The COUNCIL may make use of videoconferencing to facilitate participation by its members and by those asked to present information to the COUNCIL.

b. Quorum Requirements

The quorum requirement for the COUNCIL is half of the qualified members plus one. ([Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 5 \(a\)](#)). A majority of the qualified members of any COUNCIL_committee constitutes a quorum. ([Minnesota Statutes, section 645.08](#))

c. Rules of Order

The COUNCIL will use Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure as the rules of order for the COUNCIL.

d. Meetings During the Legislative Session

Meetings of the COUNCIL and any committees that include legislative members may not occur during a scheduled floor session of the House or Senate unless approved by the LCC chair and vicechair.

5. Travel Procedures

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council supports its members' and staffs' need to acquire additional information regarding habitat issues outside of official council meetings. The Council has developed policies in this regard.

In response to a request from a COUNCIL member, the COUNCIL's Chair and/or the designated legislative member may authorize travel.

a. Allowable Travel

- i. Attendance and fees for meetings, conferences, or workshops on topics directly related to prairies, wetlands, forests, and other habitats for fish, game, and wildlife habitat conservation.
- ii. Participation at an event that marks the acquisition, restoration, and/or enhancement of projects funded with Outdoor Heritage Funds.
- iii. Non-LSOHC sponsored tours of habitat sites.
- iv. A tour of a prospective project site to gain information helpful in the evaluation of a request for funding.

All events which COUNCIL members attend must be, at a minimum, open to a wide variety of legislative branch members and staff who are responsible for Environment and Outdoor Heritage Fund recommendations and appropriations.

Members and staff attending non-COUNCIL sponsored events must comply with [Minnesota Statutes, section 10A.071](#) CERTAIN GIFTS BY LOBBYISTS AND PRINCIPALS PROHIBITED. Guidance on how to comply is available in the [Advisory Opinions](#) issued by the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board.

All travel requests must complete the authorization process prior to travel date unless exempted by the Chair and/or the designated legislative member. The member traveling, or a representative of multiple members, will provide a verbal summary of the learning experience to be shared with COUNCIL members at the next COUNCIL meeting following completion of their approved travel.

Out-of-State travel requires the concurrence of LCC policies.

b. Expense Reports

Submitted after authorized travel. Will be reimbursed as follows:

- i. Legislative members follow the per diem guidelines of their respective bodies.
- ii. Citizen members receive per diem as provided in [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 2\(f\)](#) and expenses as outlined in the most recent Legislative Coordination Commission Member Expense Reimbursement & Per Diem Policy.
- iii. COUNCIL staff will be reimbursed as outlined in the most recently approved [Legislative Coordinating Commission Legislative Plan for Employee Benefits and Policies](#).

Barring future change in policy by legislative leadership, per diem will be paid to public or legislative commission members who participate in a meeting by electronic means instead of in person. (LCC Fiscal Services Office Policy, updated January 10, 2022).

6. Audits

The COUNCIL will cooperate with the Office of the Legislative Auditor to conduct financial and program audits of the expenditure of appropriations from the Outdoor Heritage Fund and the uses to which they are put to ensure consistency with the Constitutional mission of the Fund, consistent with [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, Subd. 6](#).

7. Land Acquisition Restrictions

In accordance with [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd. 15](#).

a. Duties of Land Holders

Holders of an interest in real property must submit a written application to alter land at least 60 days prior to a proposed change occurring. The application will describe the land being altered, the parties involved and any replacement plans.

b. Council Process

- i. **Minor conversions or conveyances.** The executive director of the LSOHC is granted the discretion to approve applications for minor conversions or conveyances and report minor approvals to the COUNCIL and the proposed replacement plans. COUNCIL members and the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees with jurisdiction over the Outdoor Heritage Fund must be notified at least 15 business days before issuing such approval.
- ii. **Condemnations.** The executive director will notify COUNCIL members and the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees with jurisdiction over the Outdoor Heritage Fund upon learning of condemnation of Outdoor Heritage Fund property. In the case of condemnation, the condemnation process will proceed without COUNCIL consideration. Following the completion of the condemnation proceedings, the condemned party will notify the COUNCIL of the settlement terms and replacement plans. The COUNCIL may:
 - 1) accept the replacement plans; or
 - 2) instruct the condemned party to deposit the state's share of the proceeds of condemnation in the Outdoor Heritage Fund.
- iii. **All Other Conversions or Alterations.** In the case of major conversions or conveyances, the executive director will forward the application to the COUNCIL for review and approval and notify the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees with jurisdiction over the Outdoor Heritage Fund that the COUNCIL will consider the alteration and any replacement plans at the next meeting of the COUNCIL at least 15 business days from the date of notification.

8. Replacement Plans and Recordation

The COUNCIL must consider and approve the alteration or conveyance and any replacement as a whole. The replacement plan must include an appraisal of the land to be altered or conveyed and if appropriate, an appraisal of the land to be replaced for the altered or conveyed land. The replacement plan must meet the following criteria:

- i. The interest is at least equal in fair market value, as certified by the commissioner of natural resources, to the interest being replaced; and
- ii. The interest is in a reasonably equivalent location and has a reasonably equivalent useful conservation purpose compared to the interest being replaced, taking into consideration all effects from fragmentation of the whole habitat. The applicant must complete the replacement plan and make notice of funding restriction to the appropriate local government office or repay the Outdoor Heritage Fund within one calendar year of decision.

9. Non-Approval

If the action is not approved, the COUNCIL will provide the applicant an explanation for the decision including: incomplete information, inappropriate exchange, lack of timely notification, and/or improper land use alteration.

Section II. Duties of COUNCIL Officers

A. Chair

1. Presides at COUNCIL meetings.
2. Serves as primary spokesperson for the COUNCIL.
3. Provides direction to staff.
4. Annually reviews performance of Executive Director.
5. Authorizes travel requests and signs expense forms for citizen members.
6. Authorizes travel requests and signs expense forms for legislative members in the absence of an elected legislative member.
7. Along with Secretary, approves and signs meeting minutes.

B. Vice Chair

1. Performs duties of chair in absence of chair.

C. Secretary

1. Performs the duties of the vice chair in absence of vice chair.
2. Along with Chair, approves and signs meeting minutes.

D. Treasurer

1. Performs the duties of the secretary in absence of secretary.
2. Works with staff to develop and track annual operating budgets.

E. Legislative Member

1. Performs the duties of the secretary in absence of secretary and treasurer.
2. Authorizes travel requests and signs expense forms for legislative members.
3. Provides primary communication link with the legislative bodies.

F. Minutes

Any COUNCIL member, except the chair, may move approval of the minutes. The acting secretary and chair of the meeting at which minutes were approved will sign the minutes.

Section III. Committees

A. Personnel Committee

Recommends candidates for the position of executive director and participates in the search and hiring process.

B. Other Committees of the Lessard Council

The chair may appoint other COUNCIL members to committees established by the COUNCIL.

Section IV. Staff

A. Executive Director

1. The executive director serves at the pleasure of the COUNCIL. The COUNCIL selects and recommends the individual who will serve as the COUNCIL's Executive Director to the Legislative Coordinating Commission (LCC). The LCC, in consultation with the COUNCIL or chair, coordinates and manages the application and screening process of individuals to be considered by the COUNCIL. The LCC appoints nonpartisan staff to serve as the Executive Director of the COUNCIL.
2. Duties of the executive director are to:
 - a. Hire, fire, organize, supervise, and otherwise administer the regular staff, within the budget and staffing limit authorized by the COUNCIL and in collaboration with LCC per [Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subd.2.](#)
 - b. Hire temporary staff and interns outside the limits above, subject to budget availability and in collaboration with LCC.
 - c. Administer all COUNCIL affairs.
 - d. Interact with the Minnesota Legislature and legislative staff.
 - e. Bring to attention of chair and/or COUNCIL, matters relevant to COUNCIL programs.
 - f. Administer the COUNCIL budget. Reviews for approval all non-member expenses.
 - g. Make corrections consistent with an approved accomplishment plan.
 - h. Review current COUNCIL programs.
 - i. Develop new programs at the direction of the chair.
 - j. Maintain communications with the legislature, private sector, non-governmental, federal, state and local government agencies.
 - k. Make preparations required for all COUNCIL meetings.
 - l. Provide staff needed by COUNCIL and COUNCIL subcommittees.
 - m. Serve as exclusive liaison between consultants and chair, COUNCIL and committees thereof.
 - n. Approve accomplishment plan changes, which will help achieve the intended effect of any appropriation. Significant accomplishment plan amendments judged by relative size of the proposed amendment or by the significance of the impact on the intended effect of the program, must be reported to COUNCIL for information.

- o. Manage auditors responsible for auditing the uses of the Fund.
- p. Assign responsibility and delegate authority to other staff as appropriate.
- q. Direct preparation of annual reports on COUNCIL activities and accomplishments.

Section V. Respect in the Workplace/Discrimination and Harassment
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A. Jurisdiction of the Legislative Coordinating Commission (LCC)

1. Discrimination and Harassment

- a. LCC and COUNCIL are committed to provide employees and COUNCIL members a work environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment. Non-legislative Members and staff of the COUNCIL are under the jurisdiction of the LCC and should refer to [LCC's Policy Against Discrimination And Harassment](#).
- b. To report unlawful discrimination and harassment, members and staff of COUNCIL may contact the Chair and/or Executive Director, or refer to the [LCC Discrimination and Harassment Reporting Contact List](#).