

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

**MEMO:**       **Agenda Item #7**

**DATE:**       Wednesday, September 24, 2025

**SUBJECT:**    LSOHC Staffing – Discussion of growing needs

**PRESENTER:** Executive Director Johnson

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**Suggested Motion:**

Motion by Member XX to approve seeking LCC approval to hire one additional LSOHC full-time equivalent employee.

**Background:**

Initial staffing for LSOHC in 2009 was 3 FTEs (Full-time Equivalent) – Executive Director, Program Analyst Manager, Commission Assistant. In late 2013, LSOHC added the position of Assistant Director, creating a staff of 4 which has continued to this day.

Since that time, LSOHC's staff workload has increased steadily. With periodic increases in the capacity of our online reporting system, staff have been able to adjust. However, our efficiency is being stretched and this memo requests the Council consider the addition of one new staff person, potentially in the role of Project Analyst (or similar).

Since 2013, the workload of LSOHC staff has increased proportionally to the number of open appropriations along with other factors:

- Annual OHF Appropriation Funding has increased from \$100m in ML2013 to a high of \$192m ML2024.
- The number of OHF programs funded each year has increased significantly from 38 in ML2014 to 47 in ML2025.
- Open appropriations have increased 62%, from 166 in 2014 to 270 in 2025. This is due to more appropriations being funded each year as well as necessary extensions granted to current appropriations.
- Partnership Programs have tripled from 8 in ML2014 to 24 in ML2025. While partnership programs are advantageous, they provide increased difficulty for monitoring and tracking.
- Annual Real Property Interest Reports have increased 2.5 times (1013 to 2730) and continue to grow. Each report requires annual review by staff.
- The number of required Status Updates for Accomplishment Plans has increased by 53% (150 in ML203 to 280 in ML2025)

- The number of Accomplishment Plan Amendments submitted for review each year has nearly doubled from 161 in FY2019 to 352 in FY2025. LSOHC staff has consistently provided expeditious review and approval/disapproval of requested amendments. However, with the increasing numbers it is more difficult to provide timeliness and exceptional customer service along with the necessary scrutiny of detail to ensure compliance and transparency.
- The number of split appropriation parcels (parcels that are paid for with funds of 2 or more appropriations) continues to grow. Split appropriation parcels provide added difficulty in tracking for accuracy of data and compliance to statutory requirements.

While all necessary OHF work is being accomplished by LSOHC's current staff of four, as workloads continue to grow, our ability to accomplish diagnostic, preventative, and/or improvement activities diminishes. The addition of one additional FTE, potentially in the position of Project Analyst (or similar), will greatly enhance LSOHC's staff effectiveness and ability to meet growing demands.

#### **Financial considerations:**

Currently, LSOHC is about one third into its FY26 budget year. The FY26 administrative budget is \$732,000 and the FY27 budget is \$772,000. These were approved by the legislature as part of the Council's funding recommendations within the ML25 Legacy Omnibus bill.

LSOHC also has a "carry forward" account (LCF) consisting of previously appropriated but unspent administrative budget dollars. At the end of each fiscal year's hard close, LCC fiscal staff rolls unspent LSOHC administrative budget dollars into this account. The current balance of the LCF is \$984,916.53 and is available for administrative expenses as necessary.

LSOHC's LCF exists for two basic and important reasons:

1. To provide administrative budget monies should a Legacy Bill fail to pass the legislature in the first year of a biennium or fail to pass prior to the fiscal year end of June 30<sup>th</sup>. In such case the LCF monies would be available to seamlessly pay for LSOHC board needs, staff salaries, and general expenses in the interim.
2. To provide funds beyond the capacity of the formal fiscal year's administrative budget to address unforeseen or unplanned needs of the Council and its administrative functions.

If LSOHC approves hiring one additional staff member, and if the administrative budget is inadequate to cover the annual administrative expenses (including salaries), the LCF is available to assist with those fiscal needs.

However, the Council could also request in this year's funding recommendations to the legislature a supplemental administrative budget amount to help cover the cost of an additional staff member. The cost of an additional staff person can easily be handled by

drawing some of the funds from the current budget and requesting a budget supplement in the next fiscal year.

Statutorily, relative to LSOHC's budget, MN97A.056, Subd.1 directs, "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." Currently the Council budget is about 1/2 of 1%, well under what could be requested.