

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2011 Accomplishment Plan



Date: September 08, 2014

Program or Project Title: Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership, Phase 2

Funds Recommended: \$ 988,000

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

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Legislative Citation: ML 2011, Ch. 6, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(d)

Appropriation Language: \$988,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever in cooperation with the Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society to acquire and enhance lands for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

County Locations: Aitkin, and Kanabec.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Habitat

Abstract:

This Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership will protect and enhance up to 745 acres, primarily brushland, in Aitkin and Kanabec Counties for addition to the WMA system, providing multiple environmental benefits.

Design and scope of work:

Problem and Scope:

Until the 1880s, most of Minnesota was inhabited by sharp-tailed grouse where suitable open and brushland habitat, such as prairies, savannas, sedge meadows and open bogs, occurred. This indigenous grouse was once one of Minnesota's most abundant game birds, with over 100,000 harvested annually in the 1940's. Loss, degradation and fragmentation of open and brushland habitat within Minnesota due to natural succession and conversion to other land uses (cropland and tree plantations) has led to a long term decline in this unique grouse's population (estimated harvest of 14,000 in 2008), causing its listing as a species in greatest conservation need. Today its remaining range in northern Minnesota, which is less than one-third of its historic range, is in jeopardy of additional fragmentation and degradation.

In east central Minnesota, recent preliminary research results have shown that genetic diversity of the sharp-tailed grouse population may be declining due to increasing isolation of subpopulations. In nearby Wisconsin, genetic diversity (allelic diversity and heterozygosity) has declined so greatly that Wisconsin DNR has begun translocating sharp-tailed grouse to create a genetic infusion to increase the likelihood that populations will persist. Increasing the amount of protected brushland habitat in northeastern Minnesota will be critical to the sustainability of the

local sharp-tailed grouse population and gene exchange between Minnesota and Wisconsin populations.

habitat that will be affected and how actions will directly restore, enhance, and/or protect them: Specific habitats to be affected will include up to 745 acres of open, brushland, and forest habitat. Acquisition of the habitats and their transfer to MDNR for management under the state WMA will protect them. Natural habitats will include wet meadow, sedge meadow, shrub wetland, bog, grassland, and aspen forest. They will be enhanced with prescribed burning, mowing, shearing, timber harvest, and possibly grazing, biomass harvest and occasional haying to maintain open and brushland landscape. Other habitats include hay and pasture land that will be encouraged to revert back to natural open and brushland habitat through prescribed burning and natural succession.

Multiple benefits:

Multiple benefits of the above protection and enhancement actions will include increased plant and animal diversity, carbon sequestration, water retention and filtration, opportunities for biomass harvest, access to public lands for recreation, increases eco-tourism opportunities, economic benefits, and secure habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and other open and brushland species in greatest conservation need.

Wildlife species that will benefit:

In addition to sharp-tailed grouse, several other species that use or depend upon open and brushland habitats are also in decline, listed as species in greatest conservation need, and will benefit from this project, including bobolinks, loggerhead shrikes, short-eared owls, yellow rails, eastern meadowlarks, American bittern, northern harrier, golden-winged warblers, Henslow's sparrow, Le Conte's sparrow, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, and American woodcock. Six of these species are state listed as endangered, threatened or special concern.

Game species that will benefit include white-tailed deer, waterfowl (mallards, blue-winged teal, Canada geese, and more species during migration), wild turkey, American woodcock, common snipe, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, fox, raccoon, and bobcat. Many nongame species such as the Eastern bluebird, American kestrel, brown thrasher, gray catbird, common yellowthroat, sora rail, sedge wren, and spring peeper will benefit, as well as the sandhill crane which is expanding its range.

Urgency and opportunity:

If not acquired while the opportunities exist (i.e., willing sellers and funding opportunities), the chance to protect these priority tracts permanently from land practices incompatible as open and brushland wildlife habitat, and from fragmentation, parcelization and development may be lost.

How priorities were set / Parcel selection and scoring process:

For consideration of protection and enhancement efforts by the partnership, open and brushland tracts must be located within an ECS landtype association identified as a priority open landscape through DNR's SFRMP landscape planning process. Further criteria to prioritize which tracts are most critical include a ranking system based upon county location, distance to active sharp-tailed grouse lek, tract size, and distance to protected brushland.

of stakeholder opposition and involvement: No stakeholder opposition to proposed acquisitions has been encountered. Proposals to protect land and manage them as public conservation lands are locally-driven by conservation groups, hunters, conservation agency staff, and willing sellers due to the multiple benefits such land protection and management can provide. Local government has been or will be contacted and their support sought.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare

Which LSOHC state-wide priorities are addressed in this proposal:

- Not Listed

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Northern Forest:

- Not Listed

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

How does this proposal accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

MSGs and PF do not have a specific, existing budget for protection of critical brushland tracts within the sharp-tailed grouse range of Minnesota, other than a FY11 LSOH grant. Availability of acquisition funds has been limited and often directed toward other areas of the state, such as for grassland and wetland protection in the western and southern portions of Minnesota.

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

After the period of grant funding has ended, the proposed parcels will become part of the state WMA system, being sustained and managed by local DNR Wildlife Area staff involved in the partnership. Maintenance will be funded through the DNR budget and funds provided by partners. Partner funds will come from conservation organization's general membership and grants, such as LSOH and Heritage Enhancement grants.

Stewardship plans for these tracts entail maintenance as integral portions of priority open landscapes. After initial protection and enhancement is completed, the primary habitat management technique will be prescribed burning. It will be used as needed, roughly once every three to seven years, to maintain their open structure and stimulate native vegetation. Brushland prescribed burn costs average approximately \$30/acre, depending upon burn unit size and equipment and personnel needed. Other habitat management techniques may involve prescribed grazing or haying through cooperative agreements (no cost) or mechanical treatment of woody vegetation such as mowing (\$150/acre), shearing (\$100/acre), timber harvest (no cost), or biomass harvest (\$100/acre or less).

Activity Details:

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition - **Not Listed**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Not Listed**

Is this land open for hunting and fishing - **Not Listed**

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Funding available - Order appraisals	July 2011
Protection completed - All tracts acquired and transferred to MDNR for WMA system	March 2012
Enhancement underway - Initial site development completed	September 2012
Enhancement underway - Firebreaks cleared, winter mechanical brushland treatments completed	March 2013
Enhancement underway - Prescribed burns completed	June 2013
Enhancement underway - Summer mechanical brushland treatments completed	September 2013
Enhancement underway - Additional firebreaks cleared	March 2014
Enhancement completed - Additional prescribed burns completed	June 2014

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Not Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

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

Total Amount of Request: \$ 988000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000
Contracts	\$32,600	\$0		\$32,600
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$890,500	\$0		\$890,500
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$32,400	\$0		\$32,400
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$7,500	\$0		\$7,500
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$988,000	\$0		\$988,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN State Coordinator	0.10	2.00	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
PF Director of Public Finance	0.05	2.00	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Total	0.15	4.00	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	745	745
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	745	745

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$988,000	\$988,000
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	\$988,000	\$988,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	Forest Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	745	745
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	745	745

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	Forest Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$988,000	\$988,000
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	\$988,000	\$988,000

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Parcel List

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.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Aitkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Aitkin WMA (addition) (Rezac tract)	04726209	159	\$143,650	No	Yes	Yes
Grayling Marsh WMA (addition)(Thompson tract)	04822206	395	\$322,100	No	Yes	Yes
Grayling Marsh WMA (addition)(Thompson tract)	04822207	395	\$322,100	No	Yes	Yes
Gun Lake WMA (addition) (Thompson tract)	04825205	280	\$72,500	No	Yes	Yes
Kuehn WMA (new) (Jost tract)	04826229	397	\$294,000	No	Yes	Yes
Kuehn WMA (new) (Jost tract)	04826231	397	\$294,000	No	Yes	Yes
Kuehn WMA (new) (Jost tract)	04826232	397	\$294,000	No	Yes	Yes

Kanabec

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Kroschel WMA (addition) (Tumler tract)	04222220	1,285	\$432,500	No	Yes	Yes
Kroschel WMA (addition) (Tumler tract)	04222228	1,285	\$432,500	No	Yes	Yes
Kroschel WMA (addition) (Tumler tract)	04222229	1,285	\$432,500	No	Yes	Yes
Kroschel WMA (addition) (Tumler tract)	04222231	1,285	\$432,500	No	Yes	Yes
Kroschel WMA (addition) (Tumler tract)	04222232	1,285	\$432,500	No	Yes	Yes
Pomroy Pastures WMA (new)(Alm Tract)	04122201	960	\$1,540,000	No	Yes	Yes
Pomroy Pastures WMA (new)(Alm Tract)	04122204	960	\$1,540,000	No	Yes	Yes
Pomroy Pastures WMA (new)(Alm Tract)	04122211	960	\$1,540,000	No	Yes	Yes
Pomroy Pastures WMA (new)(Alm Tract)	04122213	960	\$1,540,000	No	Yes	Yes

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

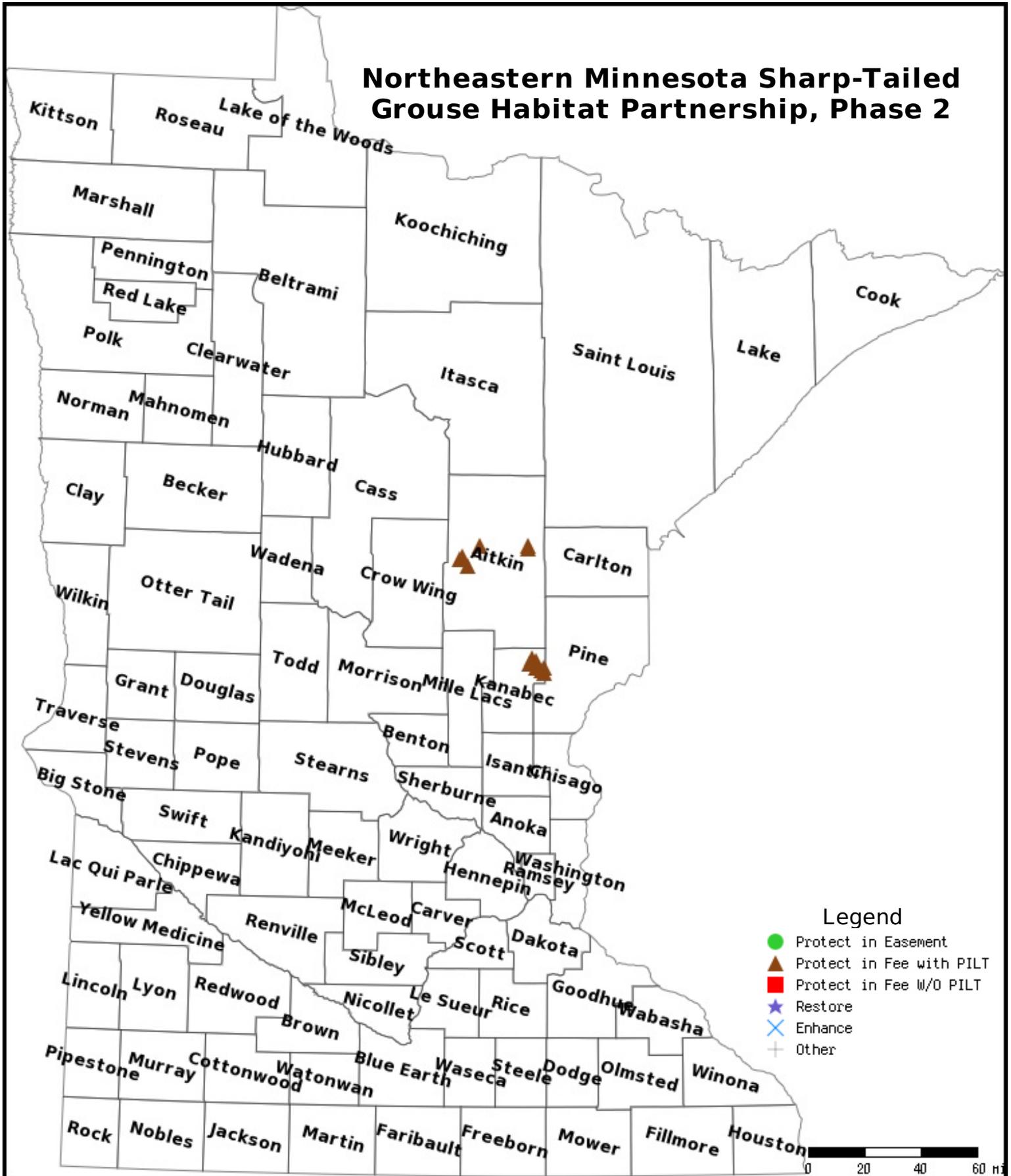
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership, Phase 2



Data Generated From Parcel List