

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

2012 Accomplishment Plan

Program Title: La Salle Lake: Protecting Critical Mississippi Headwaters Habitat (F-03)

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Funds Recommended: \$4,632,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2011, Ch. X, Art. X, Sec. X, Subd. X (x): *(to be completed when signed by Governor)*

Abstract:

Protecting 980-acre LaSalle Lake property adjacent to the Upper Mississippi River, with biologically-significant forest habitat and miles of deep-lake and coldwater stream shoreline, to be managed by multiple DNR divisions.

Program Narrative

Design and Scope of Work

La Salle Lake is a rare opportunity to protect a large area of habitat of regional and statewide significance that includes the entirety of Minnesota's second deepest lake, a coldwater stream, high-quality forest and wetlands, and over a half mile of Mississippi River shoreline. The property has been ranked as having Outstanding Biodiversity Significance by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS). This unique and important habitat is currently at risk of development and was listed for sale until The Trust for Public Land (TPL) recently obtained an option to purchase the property. Protection of the La Salle Lake property is the number one priority for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northwest Region, and has strong support from multiple DNR divisions and interested stakeholders.

La Salle Lake is one of the most pristine and deepest lakes in Minnesota. It is 221 acres in size, 213 feet deep, and lush with MCBS ranked 'Outstanding Quality' aquatic plant habitat. It is a quality fishery that regularly produces trophy walleye, as well as supporting healthy populations of northern pike, largemouth bass, black crappie, and bluegill sunfish. Currently, however, there is no public access to the lake. The DNR and the County have unsuccessfully attempted to obtain public access to this fishery for a number of years.

The property also contains over half a mile of La Salle Creek and key access to its upper stretches. The crystal clear creek originates in Itasca State Park approximately 8 miles to the southwest and meanders north along the narrow floor of a glacial tunnel valley with many seeps and springs, and eventually joins the Mississippi River on the property near a popular canoe landing. Portions of La Salle Creek are a designated trout stream because of high water quality, cold water temperatures, and ability to support coldwater fish species like trout. Little fisheries management work has been done here, however, because of limited access. This project would improve public access to the creek and allow a more intensively managed trout fishery.

This land also provides excellent hunting opportunities. Eight and ten point bucks are regularly harvested on the property and ruffed grouse are abundant. The forested uplands and lowlands are characterized by a mixed deciduous-coniferous forest with many fruit and nut-bearing varieties of trees and shrubs. There is also an old-growth northern white cedar forest north of the lake. Rugged terrain sloping steeply to the basin typifies the topography surrounding the lake and the upstream portions of La Salle Creek. Perhaps most importantly, the property serves to connect large parcels of land already in public ownership (Mississippi Headwaters State Forest, Itasca State Park, and county land) guaranteeing wildlife large landscapes in which to roam. Conservation of this land threatened with development will greatly help prevent forest fragmentation and natural resource degradation.

With respect to biodiversity, the property is "Outstanding." Over 90 species of trees and shrubs and more than 140 species of herbaceous plants, including 12 species of orchids, have been surveyed and recorded growing in the area. MCBS has also identified numerous rare, threatened, endangered, and special concern species of plants and animals such as ram's head lady slipper, hair-like sedge, northern oak fern, two species of caddisfly, and trumpeter swan. The property's abundant and diverse landscapes also provide quality habitat for gray wolf, least weasel, fisher, river otter, bald eagle, osprey, common loon and many species of woodland warblers.

The original landowner required that a substantial portion of the property be acquired in the 2010 tax year. Accordingly, the project was structured in two phases. Phase I was acquired in December 2010 consisting of the 257 acres north of Scenic Byway Highway #9. DNR SNA acquired this property with existing funding and it is open to public hunting.

This proposal addresses Phase II, the remaining 723 acres of the property including all of the lake, which must close by December 31, 2011. Although DNR plans to manage this property as an integrated resource, some of the portions of the property are more appropriate for different uses than others. There is a small area (less than 100 acres) at the north end of the lake by the highway that has some improvements, such as cabins and an RV campground, which would most appropriately be managed by DNR Parks. (The remaining 623 acres are unimproved). TPL has sought funding from the Parks and Trails Fund for this park resource area. The East side of the lake contains some of the most environmentally sensitive and rare features most amenable to SNA management. TPL has sought funding from LCCMR for this resource area and a recommendation to fund about 190 acres of this area has been made. The West side of the lake has some of the best hunting land and sensitive shoreline and it is for this resource area that funding is being sought from L-SOHC. This approximately 433-acre resource area will be managed as WMA/AMA/SNA. It is anticipated that the entire property will be designated as a state recreation area.

The appraised fair market value of this highly developable lakeshore property is \$10,500 per acre. (There is some additional value in some of the improvements at the north end of the lake by the highway, but no funding is being sought from L-SOHC for these improvements). The WMA/AMA/SNA resource area consists of approximately 433 acres. Accordingly, \$4,547,000 is being requested in this proposal for land acquisition capital, as well as \$20,000 for DNR land acquisition costs and \$65,000 for initial site development/restoration.

Planning

The La Salle Lake property is of such high quality that it meets numerous goals and priorities in statewide resource management plans including the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (SCPP), L-SOHC's Northern Forest Section Vision, and Minnesota's Aquatic Management Area (AMA) Plan.

The Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (SCPP) states "habitat issues are arguably the most important issues facing the conservation and preservation of natural resources throughout Minnesota" (p. 31). La Salle Lake meets habitat recommendations from the SCPP, including protection of priority land habitats (p. 63), protection of critical shorelands of streams

and lakes – particularly ‘protection of aquatic habitats at a large scale’ and ‘providing shoreline buffers’ (p. 67), improving connectivity and access to outdoor recreation and protection of in-water habitats – particularly ‘in-stream habitat’ and ‘deep water lakes with exceptional water quality’ (p. 74).

The La Salle Lake property is located in the Northern Forest Section of the L-SOHC Ecological Sections and meets the Section Vision and fulfills Priority Actions #1 and #2. In order to maintain forest diversity and integrity, the La Salle Lake forestland will be “accessible for forest management purposes”. The MN DNR Division of Forestry will provide technical expertise to carry out professional forest management activities on the land. Acquisition of the La Salle Lake property would protect over half a mile of La Salle Creek, the entire La Salle Lake and over half a mile of the Mississippi River, which fulfills Priority Action #1 to “protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on... cold water lakes, streams and rivers”. Permanent protection of the entire La Salle Lake area provides connection and access to the surrounding thousands of acres of public land and prevents development and fragmentation in the area, which meets Priority Action #2 to “protect forest land through acquisition...to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties”.

Protection of the La Salle Lake property furthers the statewide goal of Minnesota’s AMA Plan 2008-2033 to “acquire... cold water stream habitat in the next 25 years to provide sustainable populations of trout and greater opportunities for angling recreation for future generations” (p. 19) and meets the Ecological Section 6, Northern Lakes Regional Recommendation, that “additional lake ... shoreline needs to be acquired to insure public walk-in access to favorite angling destinations and to insure that critical cleanwater habitat is preserved” (p. 31).

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

This proposal is seeking funding from L-SOHC for the WMA/AMA/SNA resource portions of this property. A proposal has also been submitted to the LCCMR for acquisition of the SNA resource portion of the property. Funding has also been sought for acquisition and development costs of the Park portion of the property from the Parks and Trails Fund.

Relationship to Current Organizational Budget

L-SOHC funding would provide capital for the land acquisition, which is not part of The Trust for Public Land's budget. L-SOHC funding will not substitute for any traditional funding sources.

Sustainability and Maintenance

Once Phases I and II are completed, La Salle Lake will provide nearly one thousand acres of rare habitat and unique terrain for hunters, anglers, and other visitors to enjoy for generations to come. The La Salle Lake property will provide a connection to the Itasca State Park, the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest as well as other publicly owned lands surrounding the property. An innovative management plan that will be coordinated across multiple divisions of the Minnesota DNR is currently being developed and will be implemented once the property is acquired. La Salle Lake will be the first project ever to implement this type of cross-division plan in the DNR Northwest Region and will serve as a model for future state land management plans. Potential management divisions include: Parks and Recreation Division (State Park/ Recreation Area), Division of Ecological Resources (SNA), and Division of Wildlife and Fisheries (WMA & AMA). An Operations and Maintenance Plan that identifies potential future sources of funding will also be developed to ensure the La Salle Lake area will be a well-managed, viable resource for Minnesota. Costs for initial site development of the WMA/AMA/SNA area and restoration of two small fields are included in the budget for this proposal.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Milestone	Date
Acquisition of 723 acres in fee-title	Complete landowner negotiations and obtain option agreement	July 15, 2010
	Complete due diligence (appraisal certification, environmental assessment, title review, etc.)	Winter 2011
	Acquire 723 acres and transfer to the MN DNR	12/31/11
Initial Site Development	Sign, post, parking, restoration of small field area	Summer 2012

Table B-2. Other Outcome Table N/A

Attachments (*on spreadsheet workbook – 3 separate tabs*):

- A. Budget
- B. Proposed Outcome Tables
- C. Parcel List

No Map is needed for the accomplishment plan

Attachment A. Budget Spreadsheet

Name of Proposal:	La Salle Lake: Protecting Critical Mississippi Headwaters Habitat
Date:	11/4/2010
Legal Citation / Proposal Number:	M.L. 2011, Ch. , Art. ,Sec. , Subd. /F-03

[Link Here to definitions of the budget items below.](#)

Total Amount of Request \$ 4,632,000 *From page 1 on the funding form.*

Personnel

Position breakdown here	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash		Total
				Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	
<i>Manager of Programs</i>						\$ -
<i>Admin Asst</i>						\$ -
<i>position 3</i>						\$ -
<i>position 4</i>						\$ -
<i>position 5</i>						\$ -
<i>position 6</i>						\$ -
<i>position 7</i>						\$ -
Total	0		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

Budget and Cash Leverage *(All your LSOHC Request Funds must be direct to and necessary for program outcomes.)*

Please describe how you intend to spend the requested funds.

Budget Item	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash		Total
		Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	
Personnel - <i>auto entered from above</i>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Contracts	\$ 65,000			\$ 65,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT <i>(breakout in table 6 & 7)</i>	\$ 4,547,000	\$ 3,943,000	ENRTF & Parks & Trail	\$ 8,490,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT <i>(breakout in table 6 & 7)</i>				\$ -
Easement Acquisition				\$ -
Easement Stewardship				\$ -
Travel (in-state)				\$ -
Professional Services				\$ -
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$ 20,000			\$ 20,000
Other				\$ -
Capital Equipment <i>(auto entered from below)</i>	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -
Other Equipment/Tools				\$ -
Supplies/Materials			local fundraising	\$ -
	\$ 4,632,000	\$ 3,943,000	\$ -	\$ 8,575,000

Capital Equipment *(single items over \$10,000 - auto entered into table above)*

Item Name	LSOHC Request	Leverage
<i>Item 1 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 2 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 3 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 4 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 5 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 6 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 7 enter here</i>		
<i>Item 8 enter here</i>		
Total	0	0

Attachment B. Outcome Tables

Name of Proposal:	La Salle Lake: Protecting Critical Mississippi Headwaters Habitat
Date:	11/4/2010
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Table 1 and Table 3 column totals should be the same AND Table 2 and Table 4 column totals should be the same

If your project has lakes or shoreline miles instead of land acres, convert miles to acres for Tables 1 and 3 using the following conversion:

Lakeshore = 6 acres per lakeshore mile / Stream & River Shore = 12 acres per linear mile, if both sides

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Describe the scope of the project in acres (use conversion above if needed)

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore			84		84
Protect			216.5	216.5	433
Enhance					0
Total	0	0	300.5	216.5	

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

517

These two cells should be the same figure.

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

517

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore			\$ 65,000		\$ 65,000
Protect			\$ 2,283,500	\$ 2,283,500	\$ 4,567,000
Enhance					\$ -
Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,348,500	\$ 2,283,500	

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)

\$ 4,632,000

These two cells should be the same figure.

Total Dollars (sum of Total row)

\$ 4,632,000

Check to make sure this amount is the same

as the Funding Request Amount on page 1 of Main Funding Form.

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore					84	84
Protect					433	433
Enhance						0
Total	0	0	0	0	517	

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

517

These three cells should be the same figure.

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

517

Total Acres from Table 1.

517

Attachment C. Parcel List

Name of Proposal: La Salle Lake: Protecting Critical Mississippi Headwaters Habitat
Date: 11/4/2010
Legal Citation / Proposal Number: M.L. 2011, Ch. , Art. , Sec. Subd. /F-03

Parcel Name	County	Township	Range	Direction	Section	TRDS	# of acres	Budgetary Estimate (includes administrative, restoration or other related costs and do not include matching money contributed or earned by the transaction)	Description	Activity R=Restore P=Protect E=Enhance	Any existing protection? (yes/no)	Open to hunting and fishing? (yes/no)
<i>La Salle Lake</i>	<i>Hubbard</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>30, 31</i>	<i>14535230</i>	<i>433</i>	<i>\$4,632,000</i>	<i>Capital for acquisition of 433 ac</i>	<i>P, R</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>