

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## 2012 Accomplishment Plan

**Program Title: Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex (P-07)**

Manager's Name: Becca Nash  
Title: Project Manager  
Organization: The Trust for Public Land  
Telephone: 651-999-5325  
Email: [.Nash@tpl.org](mailto:.Nash@tpl.org)  
Fax: 651.917.2248

**Funds Recommended: \$ 1,533,000**

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

### Abstract:

Protect ~510 acres and restore ~200 acres near Cannon River Headwaters including wetlands, Big Woods forest, and river & shallow lake shoreline to reverse habitat loss, improve watershed function, and provide access

## Program Narrative

### Design and Scope of Work

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase I project will acquire ~510 acres of high-quality wetland, remnant Big Woods forest, and Cannon River shoreline habitat for fish, game and wildlife in the Cannon River watershed located within Rice and LeSueur Counties. Protection of this large complex will provide opportunities for public hunting, fishing and wildlife conservation. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase I project will also restore ~200 acres of the protected lands.

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex effort will address the following problems: degradation and loss of quality and diversity of habitat in the prairie section of the State; degradation of water quality in the Cannon River Watershed; and lack of available public lands for hunting and angling opportunities, especially within an hour's drive for over half of the state's population.

Located just south of the Twin Cities metro in an area that has seen development pressure due to the close proximity of the Twin Cities, I-35 and the Upper Cannon Lakes, much of this part of the state has already suffered fragmentation and habitat loss. Historically inhabited by Big Woods, the landscape is now dominated by agricultural fields and, to a lesser extent, development. Agricultural practices and

shoreline development are also the major contributors to the impaired status of stretches of the Cannon River and its associated lakes and streams.

This conservation effort is part of a long-term effort that includes acquisition, protection, and restoration of core parcels of land that will contribute to a large complex of restored prairies, grasslands, wetlands, lakeshore, and river shoreline. The complex is encircled by the Upper Cannon River, starting at its headwaters at Shields Lake where it flows west, then as it flows south and east through the towns of Waterville and Morristown, and then as it heads northeast before reaching the city of Faribault.

The initial acquisitions of the overall effort are prioritized toward existing large wetland/upland complexes, rare communities (Big Woods forest, tamarack swamp), shallow lakes, river shoreline, and lands adjacent to existing protected areas. Landowner willingness to sell and the threat of development are also taken into consideration. Restoration work will be focused on the degraded portions of the lands acquired and will include conversion of agricultural fields near wetlands, lakes, rivers and existing protected areas back into native habitat.

Protection and restoration of these significant parcels will provide critical habitat for game species, including migratory waterfowl (mallards, canvasback, wood ducks, hooded mergansers, pintails, lesser scaup), upland birds (dove, turkey, pheasant, and woodcock) white tail deer, and fish (northern pike, black crappies, bluegills, bullheads and walleye). Protection will also provide access for a diversity of recreational experiences including duck, pheasant, turkey and deer hunting as well as river, stream, and lake fishing. Non-game wildlife, including Species in Greatest Conservation Need, likely to benefit from this protection and restoration work includes Bald Eagle, Bell's Vireo, Cerulean Warbler, Loggerhead Shrike, Sandhill Crane, Red-headed Woodpecker, Greater Yellowlegs, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Blanding's Turtle, Mudpuppies, and the Giant Floater, a species of freshwater mussel. Protecting and restoring vegetative cover within basins and the riparian areas of the lakes, rivers, and streams in this focus area will also help protect water quality by reducing surface water runoff and by providing ecological services such as infiltration through natural buffers to our waterways. All wildlife—and humans—will benefit from improved water quality.

All parcels have been scored through the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, Section of Wildlife's SWAAT scoring tool. Additionally, the DNR's Southern Region Conservation Focus Area assessment tool ranked the Cannon River area as having the highest level of inter-divisional conservation priority when examined at the landscape level (score= 6).

Work will be completed in phases depending on funding availability. Properties targeted for acquisition and restoration as part of this Phase I request to LSOHC (FY12) include the following:

Dora Lake WMA (new)- tracts 1 and 2 (LeSueur County)

This is a large (510-acre) upland-wetland complex with a mosaic of native plant types. It is near the Velishek, Diamond Lake, and the proposed LeTamaraque WMAs and the Delehanty Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). The parcel contains Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS)- identified native habitat including a portion of remnant Big Woods, some southern-most occurrence of tamarack swamp in the state, and 1.64 miles of naturally flowing Cannon River, directly upstream from a concentration of rare freshwater mussels. The Cannon is a large river basin that along with its associated uplands accomplishes Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (MSCPP) habitat goals #1,2,5, and 7 by maintaining & enhancing water quality of a vital river. These tracts also provide an opportunity to retire approximately 200 acres of tilled land in a sensitive water quality area and restore them to wetlands, grassland and eventual guided succession to Big Woods. This tract would provide

excellent opportunities for hunting, fishing, and recreating within a reasonable drive of the Twin Cities and many southwestern MN communities.

Properties to be included in a likely Phase II request to LSOHC (FY13), and to be considered back up parcels for FY 12, include the following:

Le Tamaracque WMA (addition)- tract 28 (Rice County)-

These 200 acres of rolling terrain with grasslands, forest, and wetlands riparian to the Cannon River are located within a 1000-acre complex of MCBS-identified habitat with high biodiversity significance. Rare communities include Big Woods, some of the southern- most occurrence of Tamarack Swamp in the state, and mixed emergent marsh & prairie. The diversity of marshes and lowland brush is important for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species. The mix of wetland and upland habitats provide nesting areas for waterfowl. Restoration would include minimal tree and shrub plantings to provide nesting cover and minimal wetland restoration. This property also provides easy road access for excellent hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Caron Lake WMA (new)- tracts 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (Rice County)

These 260 acres of rolling croplands, grasslands, forest, and wetlands include lands riparian to the shallow Caron Lake and an unditched tributary, Devil's Creek, which is very rare in this area of the state. The property is adjacent to the Caron Lake Aquatic Management Area and contains approximately half mile of frontage on Caron Lake. The area is within a complex of shallow lakes that drain into the Cannon River. Protecting shoreline vegetation on Caron Lake is important for spawning and nursery habitat for northern pike and other native fishes; protecting natural buffers/water quality is critical for walleye downstream in Cedar Lake. This area is known to host both divers and puddle ducks during the fall migration. This is a great production area for turkey, deer, and other forest species, and extensive hunting opportunities would be available with direct and easy access provided by this acquisition. These tracts provide the opportunity to convert approximately 180 acres of farmed land in this sensitive water quality area and restore them to wetlands, grasslands, and either Oak Savannah or Big Woods habitat. Restoration will provide substantial payback for waterfowl and other marsh denizens given the complex of habitats within a biologically meaningful proximity.

Boyd Sartell WMA tract 3 (Rice County)

This tract contains diverse marsh habitats and about 14 acres of uplands consisting of oak islands and grassy knolls along the headwaters of the Cannon River. Acquisition will conserve a high quality emergent marsh complex (as characterized by MCBS) associated with General Shields Lake and Little Mud Lake. The acquisition will protect seasonally flooded wetlands and other key habitats for waterfowl and wetland wildlife ranging from sedge wrens and ring-necked ducks to sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans. The area also provides habitat for rare animals and species of conservation need, including colonial waterbirds and Blanding's turtles. The tract would expand the Boyd Sartell and protect a part of a large, relatively unfragmented habitat area and corridor – a rare entity in south-central Minnesota.

Dora Lake WMA tracts 3 & 4 (LeSueur County)

Please see above description for Dora Lake WMA

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex effort is highly supported by the **Cannon River Watershed Partnership**, the **Tri-Lake Sports Club**, the **Dark House Anglers Southern Chapter**, **Minnesota Deer Hunters Association South Central Prairieland Bucks Chapter (Le Sueur, Rice, Waseca, and Steele Counties)**, **Waterville Sportsman's Club**, **Montgomery Sportsmen's Club**, **Minnesota Waterfowl Association Scott- LeSueur Chapter**, the **Izaak Walton League Owatonna**

**Chapter**, and the **Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**. Groups listed have already or will be providing a letter of support. Many will also be pledging privately raised funds to the effort.

### Planning

Acquisition of high quality habitat and restoration of degraded habitat within the Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex furthers the goals and strategies of numerous resource management plans including:

- Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (MSCPP)
- L-SOHC Prairie Section Vision
- Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) Strategic Plan 2009-2012
- Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) and Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership's (MFRP) Recommended 25-year LSOHC Forest Priorities Vision: Prairie Section
- MN DNR Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- MN DNR Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant
- Rice County Water Resource Management Plan
- Le Sueur County Local Water Management Plan 2006-2015
- DNR's AMA and WMA Acquisition Plans

The MSCPP states "habitat issues are arguably the most important issues facing the conservation and preservation of natural resources throughout Minnesota" (p 31). The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project addresses multiple habitat issues by furthering the listed Habitat Recommendations. The project will "restore ecoregion-appropriate, landscape-scale complexes of habitat centered on concentrations of existing remnant habitats with a broader goal of developing/maintaining conservation corridors between existing and restored habitats" (p 66). It will "protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes", by focusing on "shoreline buffers...[which] protect water quality by trapping, filtering and impeding runoff laden with nutrients, sediments and other pollutants" (p 67). The project will also "improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation" (p 74), by protecting "contiguous land areas suitable for: natural resource-based outdoor recreation; shorelands; threatened habitat areas with opportunities to improve connectivity of underserved areas; and rapidly growing areas or areas where land use changes may limit future outdoor recreation opportunities" (p 76). The project also addresses the habitat recommendation to "restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds" which is "especially imperative in the prairie and prairie-forest transition zones of the state" (p 80).

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project fits nearly all of the Priority Actions listed in the L-SOHC Prairie Section Vision. The project will "protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes" and "protect, enhance and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests and oak savannah". By protecting and restoring lands containing large habitat complexes and those adjacent to and near existing AMA's, WMA's, and WPA's, the project will convert agricultural land to wetland/upland to protect, enhance, or restore existing habitat complexes, and restore or enhance habitat on public lands, while providing fantastic opportunities for public recreation proximate to the Twin Cities urban area and outstate MN. Protecting and restoring the wetlands, uplands and riparian areas especially located around Caron Lake meet the priority actions to "protect, restore and enhance shallow lakes" and "protect, enhance and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success".

The CRWP Strategic Plan lists their mission and the vision for the Cannon River Headwaters. This project furthers their vision of a “healthy watershed with clean water that is fishable, swimmable, and drinkable” and contributes to their mission of “protecting and improving the water quality and natural systems of the Cannon River watershed” (p 2).

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project furthers the vision and goals of the MFRC and MFRP’s Recommendations for the Prairie Section of the state: the area of Rice and Le Sueur County included in this effort is specifically shown in their recommendation as a “Forest and Wildlife Habitat Priority Area” (Big Woods).

The MN DNR Long Range Duck Recovery Plan states “Minnesota has lost more than 90% of its prairie wetlands” (p 8). The project employs the primary breeding strategy of the plan: “to [restore and protect] two million additional acres (30% wetland, 70% grassland) of habitat in wetland/grassland habitat complexes,” especially in seasonal basins and including shallow lakes (p 3). The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project also furthers the recreation strategy by “improving the quantity and quality of duck hunting and viewing opportunities” (p 5).

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex effort helps accomplish MN DNR’s Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant by restoring grassland habitat as well as protecting shrub-scrub wetlands and other dense woody habitat in close proximity: “Because most pheasants move <2 miles between summer and winter range, both reproductive habitat and at least 1 winter area must be available within a 9-square mile landscape to sustain a population over the long term” (p 6).

The project also meets the following overall water resource management goals from the Rice County Water Resource Management Plan: “Protect, preserve, and manage natural surface and groundwater storage systems”, “prevent erosion of soil into surface water systems”, and “protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities” (iii). The plan also lists wetlands as one of the County’s priority issues. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project meets the management goal to “restore pre-settlement wetlands that provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat, that act as recharge areas for groundwater to filter pollutants” (p vi).

The LeSueur County Local Water Management Plan lists their priority concerns and goals to address the concerns. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex project will create: “protected, restored and improved surface water quality in lakes, rivers and streams” and “minimized impacts from runoff of development areas and agricultural land that alter surface water hydrology” by addressing Objective 7: “Increase the number of wetland restoration acreage in the county” (p 3).

Lastly, the effort helps fulfill the strategies of the DNR’s AMA and WMA acquisition plans: “[lake and warm water stream and river acquisitions] should be concentrated in the north central lakes and transition area between the prairie/grassland and forested portions of the state where development and land use pressures, habitat fragmentation, and increased demand for water-based outdoor recreation will continue to expand” (the Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex is located in the latter for purposes of AMA; p 20). The effort follows guidance in the WMA plan that “emphasis should be placed on habitat in larger complexes of grassland/wetland...including core wintering areas for resident wildlife species, and needed nesting habitat” (p 11).

All parcels have been scored through DNR Division of Wildlife’s scientific SWAAT WMA scoring tool and have been ranked as priority acquisitions. Additionally, the DNR’s Southern Region Conservation Focus Area assessment tool ranked the Cannon River area as having the highest level of inter-divisional conservation priority when examined at the landscape level (score= 6).

### Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

This effort is seeking a significant portion of funding for acquisition and restoration work from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Matching funds will be provided from a current appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as part of the Statewide Habitat Corridors Partnership. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex partners will seek additional restoration funds from the Clean Water Fund if possible as part of its fiscal year 2012 funding cycle.

### Relationship to Current Organizational Budget

L-SOHC funding would provide capital for the land acquisition and funding for the restoration work included in this proposal. These costs are not included in TPL's organizational budget. Additionally, TPL staff time, legal costs, and costs for appraisals, title & environmental investigation, and survey work is not included in this request. Acquisition-associated costs incurred by the DNR as part of accepting ownership of these lands are included in the request. The L-SOHC funding will not substitute for any traditional funding sources.

### Sustainability and Maintenance

Once the Cannon Rivers Headwaters Habitat Complex lands have been acquired and conveyed to the DNR to be managed as a WMA and/or AMA (estimated by July 15, 2011), restoration of the degraded portions of these lands will begin. Estimated costs for the restoration work are included in this proposal. TPL will work with DNR to complete a restoration plan and implementation of that plan will be complete by fall of 2013. The property will be managed for the long term as a WMA and/or AMA and will be maintained by the Minnesota DNR according to their WMA and AMA guidelines.

We envision submitting a Phase II request to LSOHC next year (FY13) for subsequent protection and restoration

### Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Milestone	Date completed
Landowner negotiations & option agreements	Complete	July 15, 2010
Due Diligence	Complete	June 30, 2011
Acquisition (fee title) and transfer to MN DNR	Complete	July 15, 2011
Initial Site Development	Complete	December 1, 2011
Restoration of lands acquired	Plan implemented	By Fall, 2013

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**

<b>Name of Proposal:</b>	Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex
<b>Date:</b>	4-Nov-10
<b>Legal Citation / Proposal Number:</b>	P-07

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

**Total Amount of Request**      \$ 1,533,000 *From page 1 on the funding form.*

**Personnel**

Position breakdown here	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash		Total
				Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
						\$ -
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

**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	\$ 76,000	\$ 50,000	Clean Water Fund	\$ 126,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT <i>(breakout in table 6 &amp; 7)</i>	\$ 1,454,000	\$ 276,000	ENRTF & Private	\$ 1,730,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT <i>(breakout in table 6 &amp; 7)</i>				\$ -
Easement Acquisition				\$ -
Easement Stewardship				\$ -
Travel (in-state)				\$ -
Professional Services				\$ -
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$ 3,000			\$ 3,000
Other				\$ -
Capital Equipment <i>(auto entered from below)</i>	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -
Other Equipment/Tools				\$ -
Supplies/Materials				\$ -
	\$ 1,533,000	\$ 326,000	\$ -	\$ 1,859,000

**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>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Attachment B. Outcome Tables

<b>Name of Proposal:</b>	Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex
<b>Date:</b>	4-Nov-10
<b>Legal Citation / Proposal Number:</b>	P-07

*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		150	25	25	200
Protect	200	220	50	40	510
Enhance					0
<b>Total</b>	200	370	75	65	

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

710

*These two cells should be the same figure.*

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

710

### Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore		\$ 57,000	\$ 9,500	\$ 9,500	\$ 76,000
Protect	\$ 567,750	\$ 624,750	\$ 145,750	\$ 118,750	\$ 1,457,000
Enhance					\$ -
<b>Total</b>	\$ 567,750	\$ 681,750	\$ 155,250	\$ 128,250	

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)

\$ 1,533,000

*These two cells should be the same figure.*

Total Dollars (sum of Total row)

\$ 1,533,000

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				200		200
Protect				510		510
Enhance						0
<b>Total</b>	0	0	0	710	0	

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

710

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

710

Total Acres from Table 1.

710

*These three cells should be the same figure.*



### Attachment C. Parcel List

**Name of Proposal:** Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex  
**Date:** 4-Nov-10  
**Legal Citation / Proposal Number:** P-07

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)
<b>Parcel Name</b>											
<b>Cannon River Headwaters Phase I Parcels (included in this LSOHC FY12 request):</b>											
Dora Lake WMA (tracts 1 & 2)	Le Sueur	110N	23 W	11 & 14	1102311 and	510	\$1,454,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tracts 1 & 2)	Le Sueur	110N	23 W	11 & 14		200	\$76,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
							\$1,530,000				
							\$3,000	DNR transaction costs	P		
							\$1,533,000				
<b>Cannon River Headwaters Phase II Parcels (to be included in a likely LSOHC FY13 request and considered as backup for FY 12) :</b>											
Le Tamaracque WMA (tract 28)	Rice	110N	22 W	18 & 19		200	\$750,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Caron Lake WMA (tracts 4-8)	Rice	110N	22 W	23, 32 & 33		586	\$1,550,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	Rice	110N	22 W	10		75	\$255,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 3)	LeSueur	110N	23 W	14		120	\$408,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 4)	LeSueur	110N	23 W	10		70	\$238,000	fee title acquisition	P	N	Y
Le Tamaracque WMA (tract 28)	Rice	110N	22 W	18 & 19		90	\$40,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
Caron Lake WMA (tracts 4-8)	Rice	110N	22 W	23, 32 & 33		586	\$115,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	Rice	110N	22 W	10		75	\$15,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 3)	LeSueur	110N	23 W	14		120	\$25,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 4)	LeSueur	110N	23 W	10		70	\$15,000	initial site development, restoration	R	Y	Y
							\$3,411,000				