

Main Request for Funding Form

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2012**

Program or Project Title: McGregor Rice and Wildlife Property

| | Funding Request | OHF Out-Year Projections of Needs | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|
| Funds Requested (\$000s) | FY 2012 | FY 2013 | FY 2014 | FY 2015 |
| Outdoor Heritage Fund | \$ 974,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Manager's Name:

Organization: McGregor Rice and Wildlife Property
Street Address: P.O. Box 20
City Palisade State MN Zip: 56469
Telephone: 218-845-2224
E-Mail: dave@yukon-eagle.com
Organization Web Site: www.yukon-eagle.com

County Location: Aitkin County: Section 19, Township 48N, Range 23W

Ecological Planning Regions:

Northern Forest Forest/Prairie Transition Southeast Forest
 Prairie Metro/Urban

Activity Type:

Protect Restore Enhance

Priority Resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands Forests Prairie Habitat

[Project Abstract](#)

Acquire 974 acres to restore and enhance waterfowl habitat and to stop the flow of fertilizer run-off into Sandy River and Big Sandy Lake, an impaired water.

Project Narrative

The landowner wishes to sell 974 acres to the State, to restore and enhance waterfowl habitat and to stop the flow of fertilizer run-off into Sandy River and Big Sandy Lake, an impaired water. With this action, one of the best waterfowl hunting areas in Aitkin County will be opened to the public. For the past 30 years this nearly 1,000 acre wetland and rice paddy has been a coveted, privately owned duck and goose hunting property available only to a select few hunters, usually associates of the property owner. This property has an extensive system of trails that can be used for hiking, bird-watching and other outdoor activities. The McGregor area is a world renowned bird watching area with many rare species. This property will offer new opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The largest property tax base in Aitkin County, Big Sandy Lake, will be protected from further water quality degradation. Within a short period of time, Big Sandy Lake will show measureable improvement of its existing water quality bringing it back toward its once pristine condition. Over the last twenty (20) years, Big Sandy Lake has progressively become greener and greener due to the increase in algae. Aerial views of Big Sandy indicate an increasing level of unwanted plant growth throughout the lake which, at some point in the future, could dramatically impact the fish populations and opportunities for enjoyment of the lake. A major reason for this greening is the dumping of fertilizer from 600 - 800 acres of rice paddies into Sandy River which flows into Big Sandy Lake.

Design and scope of work

The State of Minnesota will purchase and control the 974 acres, which contains a mixture of cultivated wild rice paddies, natural wetlands and wooded uplands, with a ratio of wetland waterfowl habitat to uplands at approximately 80:20. The restoration of these hundreds of acres of wetlands to their original state will sustain game and wildlife, and assures prime waterfowl habitat for the future. This purchase will restore Big Sandy Lake by improving and protecting water quality. Additionally, this acquisition will enhance lakeshore property values on Big Sandy and adjacent lakes while increasing business opportunities.

In the past twenty (20) years more than 2.4 million pounds of fertilizer has been applied to this land for the purposes of wild rice production. A portion of the fertilizer runs off and adds to unwanted algae and weed growth. This growth causes spikes and dips in oxygen levels thereby negatively impacting fish survival. Occasional summer fish kills have been documented due to consumption of oxygen by decomposing weeds and algae. Reducing the fertilizer runoff will lessen the chances of algae blooms and extreme oxygen depletion. Purchasing these 974 acres

prevents any future flow of fertilized run-off water into the Sandy River. In doing so, the State of Minnesota preserves existing ecological systems and prevents future degradation of these systems.

By purchasing the property, this pristine duck and goose hunting property will be opened to public access and hunting. This dramatically increases access to hundreds of acres of some of the best duck and goose hunting areas in Aitkin County. While significantly reducing the outflow of fertilizer into Big Sandy Lake, other areas of recreation benefit as well. The quality of fishing in Big Sandy will markedly improve, while swimming, water skiing, boating, and other water recreation will become more enjoyable. Together, these actions will significantly increase the desire of tourists to visit Aitkin County for their hunting, fishing, boating and recreational enjoyment, thereby raising the economic base in Aitkin County.

As indicated above, some of the best private wetlands in Aitkin County used for duck and goose hunting will be opened to public enjoyment. This acquisition leads to immediate wildlife habitat improvements as these wetlands will be restored and enhanced by keeping the water level at a natural level throughout the year rather than manipulating levels throughout the year in preparation for wild rice harvesting in the fall.

When the millions of gallons of water containing fertilizer from the rice paddies are no longer dumped into Sandy River, the quality of water in Big Sandy Lake will begin to improve. Its approximately 77 miles of shoreline and 6,500 acres of water will become more enjoyable for boating, swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities. Currently, some areas of the lake are too green to swim in from late June through September. Terminating fertilizer discharge and its unwanted nutrients will directly and significantly enhance the water quality and fisheries habitat of Big Sandy Lake. The improvement in the quality of water in Big Sandy Lake will occur over a period of time. Definite measureable progress should be seen within 5 years.

Plans

The top Priority Action identified for the Northern Forest Section of Minnesota by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council addresses critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, etc. This project clearly meets several key goals of the LSOHC such as: wild rice wildlife habitat protection, and public recreational access. This acquisition will permanently protect nearly 1,000 acres of wetland and forest habitat through fee-title acquisition. Shoreland protection via both fee-title purchase and permanent conservation easements comprise the top two Habitat Recommendations listed in the “Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan” Priority 1 = Protect Priority Land Habitats and Priority 2 = Protect Critical Shorelands of Streams and Lakes. This site is also located upstream of Big Sandy Lake which is an impaired water and is identified in the

Aitkin County Water Plan as one of their highest priority waters for management and protection. The Mississippi Headwaters Board, the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners and the Big Sandy Lakes Association have all passed resolutions in support of this project.

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

No other constitutional funds are being sought for this habitat restoration and enhancement project.

Relationship to Current Organizational Budget

This is a proposed sale of rice paddies to the state of Minnesota for wildlife habitat restoration and enhancement. It is unprecedented in our organization (McGregor Rice and Wildlife) and does not replace anything we have done previously.

Sustainability and Maintenance

It is planned that the MN DNR will retain ownership and management of this land. DNR Wildlife managers have been on-site and have expressed interest in acquiring and managing the property for wildlife habitat.

Types of Projects

Fee Acquisition Projects

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition?

X Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here: See attached resolution from the Aitkin County Board of Commissioners

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection?

X Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Easement Acquisition Projects

Will the eased land be open for public use?

Yes No, please explain X not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Will the conservation easement be permanent?

Yes No, please explain X not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Restoration and Enhancement Projects

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters?

X Yes No, please explain not applicable

If no, please explain here:

Does the activity take place on an Aquatic Management Area (AMA), Scientific and Natural Area (SNA), Wildlife Management Area (WMA), or State Forests?

X Yes, which ones No, please explain not applicable

If so, please indicate which ones:

The property is adjacent to the McGregor WMA and an additional 187 acres of State forestland.

Accomplishment Timeline

| Activity | Milestone | Date |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Insert Activity 1 here</i> | Complete the sale of the property to MN DNR | August 2011 or as soon as possible |
| <i>Insert Activity 2 here</i> | MN DNR will manage as part of their McGregor WMA | On-going |
| <i>Insert Activity 3 here</i> | | |

Attachments:

- A. Budget \$974,000**
- B. Proposed Outcome Tables 1-5**
- C. Map**
- D. Parcel List**

Attachment A. Budget Spreadsheet

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

Total Amount of Request \$ 974,000 *From page 1 on the funding form.*

Personnel

| Position breakdown here | FTE | Over # of years | LSOHC Request | Anticipated Cash Leverage | Cash Leverage Source | Total |
|----------------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |
| <i>Manager of Programs</i> | 0 | | \$ - | | | \$ - |
| <i>Admin Asst</i> | 0 | | \$ - | | | \$ - |
| <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 Leverage | Cash Leverage Source | Total |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| | | | | |
| Personnel - auto entered from above | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |
| Contracts | \$ - | | | \$ - |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT <i>(breakout in table 6 & 7)</i> | \$ 974,000 | | | \$ 974,000 |
| 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 | \$ - | \$ - | | \$ - |
| Other | | | | \$ - |
| Capital Equipment | \$ - | | | \$ - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | \$ - | | | \$ - |
| Supplies/Materials | \$ - | \$ - | | \$ - |
| | \$ 974,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 974,000 |

Attachment B. Proposed Outcome Tables

Only enter data in the outlined cells

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 | 780 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 780 |
| Protect | 0 | 0 | 194 | 0 | 194 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 780 | 0 | 194 | 0 | |

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

974 *These two cells should be the same figure.*

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

974

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

| | Wetlands | Prairies | Forest | Habitats | Total |
|--------------|------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Restore | \$ 780,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 780,000 |
| Protect | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 194,000 | \$ - | \$ 194,000 |
| Enhance | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |
| Total | \$ 780,000 | \$ - | \$ 194,000 | \$ - | |

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)

\$ 974,000 *These two cells should be the same figure.*

Total Dollars (sum of Total row)

\$ 974,000

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 | 0 | 779.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 779.2 |
| Protect | 0 | 194.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 194.8 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 974 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

Total Acres (sum of Total column)

974 *These three cells should be the same figure.*

Total Acres (sum of Total row)

974

Total Acres from Table 1.

974

Attachment B. Proposed Outcome Tables

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

| | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | Northern Forest | Total |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------------|------------|
| Restore | \$ - | \$ 780,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 780,000 |
| Protect | \$ - | \$ 194,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 194,000 |
| Enhance | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |
| Total | \$ - | \$ 974,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | |

Total Dollars (sum of Total column)

\$ 974,000

These two cells should be the same figure.

Total Dollars (sum of Total row)

\$ 974,000

Check to make sure these amounts are the same

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

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

0.5

 # miles of Lakes / Streams / Rivers Shoreline

Table 6. Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in acres)

| | Wetlands | Prairies | Forests | Habitats | Total |
|--|----------|----------|---------|----------|-------|
| Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability | 779.2 | 0 | 194.8 | 0 | 974 |
| Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Permanent Easement NO State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 7. Estimated Value of Acquisition by PILT Status (enter information in dollars)

| | Wetlands | Prairies | Forests | Habitats | Total |
|--|------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability | \$ 779,200 | \$ - | \$ 194,800 | \$ - | \$ 974,000 |
| Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |
| Permanent Easement NO State PILT Liability | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |