

# Request for Funding

## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2015 / ML 2014

**Program or Project Title:** Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase IV

**Funds Requested: \$2,000,000**

**Manager's Name:** Bob McGillvray

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**County Locations:** LeSueur, Rice, and Rice .

### Ecological Planning Regions:

- Prairie

### Activity Type:

- Restore
- Protect in Fee

### Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

## Abstract:

Protect approximately 400 acres and restore approximately 65 acres near the Cannon River headwaters, including wetlands, prairies, Big Woods forest, and river & shallow lake shoreline to reverse habitat loss, improve watershed function and provide access.

## Design and Scope of Work:

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex Phase IV 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 multi-year 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.

These acquisitions 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 (approximately 94 acres) and will include restoration of agricultural fields near wetlands, lakes, rivers and existing protected areas to 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, and 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.

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.

Work will be completed in phases depending on funding availability and landowner willingness to sell. Properties targeted for acquisition and restoration as part of this Phase IV request to LSOHC (FY15) include the following:

#### Dora Lake WMA tracts 2 & 5 (Le Sueur County)

These lands build on the new 510-acre Dora Lake WMA property that was created with FY 12 Outdoor Heritage Funds. This large upland-wetland complex with a mosaic of native plant types is near the Velishek, Diamond Lake, and the proposed LeTamaraque WMAs and the Delehanty Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). It 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 over 2 miles of naturally flowing Cannon River, directly upstream from a concentration of rare freshwater mussels. These new tracts would add another ¼ mile of Cannon River and an island of tamaracks to the WMA.

#### Boyd Sartell WMA - tracts 3 & 5 (Rice County)

These two tracts contain diverse marsh habitats and about 100 acres of uplands consisting of oak islands and grassy knolls, Big Woods and tamarack forests, and over ¼ mile of 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.

#### Koester Prairie WMA - tract 1 (Rice County)

This parcel contains approximately 200 acres of rolling grassland, prairie and oak savanna that are associated with Prairie Creek and its tributaries and that directly buffer approximately 130 acres of rare and highly significant native prairie that is currently protected with a native prairie bank easement. Forty-one native upland prairie species have been documented here as well as a number of sedge meadow and wet prairie species. The dry oak savanna found on the property is also extremely rare, with only 13 occurrences of this type documented in the state. The site is known to locals as being the biggest and best birding area in the county. Bird species in Greatest Conservation Need utilizing this site include: Swanson's Hawk, Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Grasshopper Sparrow and Bobolink. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is providing \$10 K matching funds for restoration of this property through their Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program.

### 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.

The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex effort is supported by the **Cannon River Watershed Partnership, the Dark House Anglers Southern Chapter, the Izaak Walton League Owatonna Chapter, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association South Central Prairieland Bucks Chapter (Le Sueur, Rice, Waseca, and Steele Counties), Minnesota Waterfowl Association - Scott-Le Sueur Chapter, Montgomery Sportsmen's Club, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Pheasants Forever - Le Sueur County Chapter, the Tri-Lake Sports Club, Waterville Sportsman's Club, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.**

## Planning

### **MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:**

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

### **Plans Addressed:**

- Grassland Bird Conservation Area
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Wild Turkey
- Minnesota DNR AMA Acquisition Plan
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years

- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Partners in Flight Grassland Bird Plan
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Strategic Habitat Conservation Model
- U.S. Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Plan

### **LSOHC Statewide Priorities:**

- Address Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as long-term or permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work; provides the most cost-effective use of financial resources; and where possible takes into consideration the value of local outreach, education, and community engagement to sustain project outcomes
- Leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land
- Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model

### **LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:**

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna
- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands
- Protect, restore, and enhance shallow lakes
- Protect expiring CRP lands
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

## **Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:**

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund

This effort is seeking the significant portion of funding for acquisition and restoration work from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Past matching funds have been provided from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as part of the Statewide Habitat Corridors Partnership. The Cannon River Headwaters Habitat Complex partners will continue to try to seek additional restoration funds from the Clean Water Fund.

## **Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:**

LSOHC funding would provide capital for the land acquisition and funding for the restoration work included in this proposal. These costs are not included in the Trust for Public Land's organizational budget. Additionally, TPL staff time, legal costs, and costs for appraisals, title and 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 LSOHC 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, initial site development and restoration 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 completed in the following years. 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.

## Government Approval:

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

Notification will be made unless otherwise required.

## Permanent Protection:

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

## Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - **Yes**

None.

## Permanent Protection:

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15? - **Yes (WMA, AMA)**

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Landowner negotiations, agreements, due diligence	June 30, 2016
Land acquired	June 30, 2016
Initial site development/restoration	Fall 2017

## Outcomes

### Programs in prairie region:

- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected *The number of acres of expiring CRP lands protected will be measured.*
- Restored and enhanced upland habitats *Restored upland habitats will be measured in acres.*
- Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems *Agriculture land acquired will be restored to native prairie habitat and measured in acres.*
- Improved access to public lands *Previously private lands will be open to the public within a short drive of*

*the metro area and may be measured in acres.*

- Protected, enhanced and restored remnants of big woods and oak savanna *Big woods and oak savanna remnants will be measured in acres protected and restored.*
- Remnant native prairies are part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and large and small wetlands *Protected prairies and wetlands may be measured in acres.*
- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *Core parcels are identified in partnership with the DNR as well as the partners of the Cannon River Habitat Complex.*
- Remnant native prairies and wetlands are perpetually protected and adequately buffered *Protected prairies and wetlands may be measured in acres.*
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species *Species benefited will be listed and habitat protected and restored will be measured in acres.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$2,000,000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

<b>Budget Name</b>	<b>LSOHC Request</b>	<b>Anticipated Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Contracts	\$90,000	\$10,000		\$100,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,900,000	\$15,000		\$1,915,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,000,000	\$25,000	-	\$2,025,000

## Output Tables

**Table 1. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	12	27	26	0	65
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	136	105	77	82	400
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	148	132	103	82	465

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

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$18,000	\$42,000	\$30,000	\$0	\$90,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$700,000	\$500,000	\$300,000	\$410,000	\$1,910,000
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	\$718,000	\$542,000	\$330,000	\$410,000	\$2,000,000

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	65	0	65
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	400	0	400
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	465	0	465

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,910,000	\$0	\$1,910,000
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	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles**

1 miles

## Parcel List

### Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

LeSueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Dora Lake WMA (tract 2)	23211	40	\$23,400	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 5)	23210	12	\$17,100	Y

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	22210	5	\$2,500	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 5)	22202	50	\$15,000	N
Koester Prairie WMA	19226	40	\$26,000	N
Le Tamaracque WMA (tract 28)	22218	90	\$40,000	No

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Caron Lake WMA (tracts 4-8)	22223	200	\$115,000	No

### Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

LeSueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Dora Lake WMA (tract 2)	23211	80	\$330,000	N	Y	Y
Dora Lake WMA (tract 5)	23210	125	\$361,000	N	Y	Y

Rice

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>	<b>Hunting?</b>	<b>Fishing?</b>
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 3)	22210	75	\$255,000	N	Y	Y
Boyd Sartell WMA (tract 5)	22202	144	\$864,000	N	Y	Y
Koester Prairie WMA (tract 1)	19226	200	\$1,200,000	N	Y	Y
Le Tamaracque WMA (tract 28)	22218	200	\$750,000	No	Y	Y

Rice

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>	<b>Hunting?</b>	<b>Fishing?</b>
Caron Lake WMA (tracts 4-8)	22223	586	\$1,550,000	No	Y	Y

## **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.