

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Accomplishment Plan



Date: October 15, 2014

Program or Project Title: Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V

Funds Recommended: \$ 4,544,000

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Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

County Locations: Not Listed

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

This project is the fifth phase of LSOHC funding to target riparian buffers for clean water and wildlife using the Reinvest In Minnesota easement program. The Clean Water Fund and OHF will be used equally as funding is made available.

Design and scope of work:

MN continues to see a net loss of grasslands each year. Expiring CRP is the leading cause of this landscape change. This exodus is being driven by high land and commodity prices, and increased pressure for alternative uses and declining federal budgets for conservation programs. Minnesota's primary strategy to mitigate the loss of CRP is to target expiring contracts for enrollment into Continuous CRP (CCRP) practices (like buffers) and permanent easements for the most beneficial practices (e.g. wetland restoration, grasslands, and buffers). This program is one proven strategy to provide landowners with a sound option to keep targeted conservation on the land when economic incentives favor row crop production.

This partnership program establishes permanent buffers that provide both critical water quality improvements and improved nesting habitat. For example, a buffer of 100' generally serves to protect water quality, while adding an additional 100' for wildlife greatly enhances nesting opportunities for wildlife. Establishing a minimum of 200' on each side of a stream for a total of 400' plus the natural corridor that already exists creates a block of habitat for nesting birds and a critical link between other permanently protected habitats.

Criteria used to evaluate and prioritize buffers funded under this program include: does buffer build upon a Clean Water Fund Buffer, proximity to other permanently protected habitat, buffers within a designated shallow lake watershed, proximity to lands open to public hunting, plant diversity, overall size, and type of water resource being buffered. A competitive RIM Buffers application process

for landowners will be used. The first four phases of this program have created landowner interest that far exceeds available funding. The goal for this new phase will be to increase funding from both LSOHC but also increase match from Clean Water Funding as well as USDA under new farm bill provisions. Wider buffers can provide longer term water quality treatment and provide better habitat. Buffers that are put in proximity to other grasslands also function at a higher level within the landscape for grassland nesting birds and other wildlife.

RIM Buffers program delivery will be supported by Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership which includes Minnesota BWSR, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota DNR, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Pheasants Forever, LCCMR and numerous local partners. Additionally, the RIM program will be delivered through SWCD's and administered by Minnesota BWSR.

We propose that the LSOHC fund \$4.544M in perpetual state RIM buffer easements that will build equally upon the RIM buffers funded through the Clean Water Fund and/or new USDA programs such as CREP. Approximately 29 easements will be recorded for a total of 1200 acres. Half of these acres will be funded by OHF and half will be funded by CWF. This creates a unique partnership program to accomplish a single project with enhanced outcomes that could not otherwise be obtained with a single funding source. In the event equal match is not available during the project period, buffer areas for wildlife will be secured with available funds.

Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

In certain circumstances food plots for wildlife are an allowable use on RIM easements and must be part of an approved Conservation Plan. Food plots on narrow buffers, steep slopes and wet areas are not allowed. RIM policy limits food plots to 10% of the total easement area or 5 acres whichever is smaller. There is no cost share for establishment of food plots and upon termination the landowners must reestablish the vegetation as prescribed in the Conservation Expense at their own expense. Food plots are a rarely selected option by landowners, to date only 2.2% of RIM Buffers have food plots.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **No**

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories:

Project selection criteria for the buffer program is designed to compliment historic investments to protect areas for wildlife habitat in the degraded prairie region of the state. Providing connections between and adjacent to these previous habitat investments is a key factor in realizing the best return on investment found in wildlife population models. Riparian areas are logical corridors found between these historical habitat areas. Buffers targeting expiring CRP and near existing complexes of greater than 160 acres will be given preference.

What is the nature of urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

In the next 3 years 400,000 ac. will expire from CRP. It is critical that we take this opportunity to retain as many acres in the most important locations. A combination of permanent protection with RIM and re-enrollment of CRP when possible will reduce this impact. The current application period for RIM Buffers will exceed available funding by a 4:1 margin. This means we will have to say no to 4 out of 5 willing landowners. We need to fix this ratio with added funding.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

BWSR uses the Ecological Ranking Tool, MN Nutrient Management Strategy, Watershed Restoration Actions Plans (WRAPS) for the clean water focus. Wildlife benefits are summarized from numerous models (HAPET) and incorporated into our wildlife score sheet.

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

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Prairie:

- Protect expiring CRP lands

Relationship to other funds:

- Clean Water Fund
- USDA Farm Bill Program funding-CRP/CREP

This project brings two of the major components of the Legacy Amendment together by matching with the Clean Water Fund for the RIM buffers program. This project will also build upon expiring CRP contracts that have funding associated with them from the USDA CRP contract that is in place. Where possible, partners would leverage the Outdoor Heritage Funds within a larger buffer initiative within Minnesota using other programs like CRP, CREP funding sources to permanently protect buffers within landscapes that add value for grassland wildlife. In the event equal or greater match is not available from identified sources, easements will be secured for wildlife benefits with OHF funding only.

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

Expiring CRP is a major concern in the prairie landscape of Minnesota. RIM is targeting wetlands and riparian areas for permanent protection that provide water quality benefits and wildlife benefits. The plan is to retain the most critical buffers in perpetuity that provide significant benefits for water and wildlife. Our focus is on protecting expiring CRP, yet collectively, we are working to retain as many acres as possible within new CCRP contracts where sufficient funding is not available to make them permanent. This proposal provides a real mechanism for the Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, and CRP to work in concert to provide Minnesota landowners an opportunity to permanently protect and filter our water in a way that also provides habitat for ground nesting birds (e.g. ring-necked pheasants), native pollinators, and other associated grassland wildlife.

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2011	Clean Water Fund	\$2.249m
2012	Clean Water Fund	\$2.09m
2013	Clean Water Fund	\$3.52m
2014	Clean Water Fund	\$2.2m

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

All easements secured under this project will be permanent. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement and manage the conservation cover. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Initial costs to establish conservation cover are to be provided under this project with additional assistance from Clean Water Fund and the USDA CRP program. The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve program that has over 6,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Stewardship costs for 29 easements at \$5000/easement would cost \$145,000. This cost would be split equally between Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2016-Ongoing	LSOHC-BWSR Stewardship Account	Compliance Checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations	Enforcement action taken by MN Attorney General office
2016-Ongoing	Landowner Obligation	Maintain compliance with easement terms		

Activity Details:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

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

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30, 2015
Allocations to specific parcels made	July 30, 2015
Easements closed	June 30, 2019

Date of Final Report Submission: 12/28/2019

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Outcomes:

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels. Corridors will be scored using the the eligibility scoresheet for wildlife benefits of each parcel.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels. Corridors will be scored using the the eligibility scoresheet for wildlife benefits of each parcel.*

Budget Spreadsheet

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

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount

The acreage and number of easements enrolled as well as budget items have been adjusted downward proportionately to the awarded amount.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 4544000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$100,400	\$100,400	Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund	\$200,800
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$4,304,800	\$4,304,800	Clean Water Fund	\$8,609,600
Easement Stewardship	\$72,500	\$72,500	Clean Water Fund	\$145,000
Travel	\$7,600	\$7,600	Clean Water Fund	\$15,200
Professional Services	\$43,500	\$43,500	Clean Water Fund	\$87,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$7,600	\$7,600	Clean Water Fund	\$15,200
Supplies/Materials	\$7,600	\$7,600	Clean Water Fund	\$15,200
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$4,544,000	\$4,544,000		\$9,088,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	3.00	\$37,500	\$37,500	Clean Water Fund	\$75,000
Easement Processing	0.13	3.00	\$25,400	\$25,400	Clean Water Fund	\$50,800
Eco and Engineering Services	0.25	3.00	\$37,500	\$37,500	Clean Water Fund	\$75,000
Total	0.63	9.00	\$100,400	\$100,400		\$200,800

Amount of Request: \$4,544,000

Amount of Leverage: \$4,544,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 100.00%

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	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	600	0	0	600
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	600	0	0	600

Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	0

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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$4,544,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,544,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$4,544,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,544,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	120	0	480	0	600
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	120	0	480	0	600

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$908,800	\$0	\$3,635,200	\$0	\$4,544,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$908,800	\$0	\$3,635,200	\$0	\$4,544,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$7573	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$7573	\$0	\$7573	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

8 miles

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

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

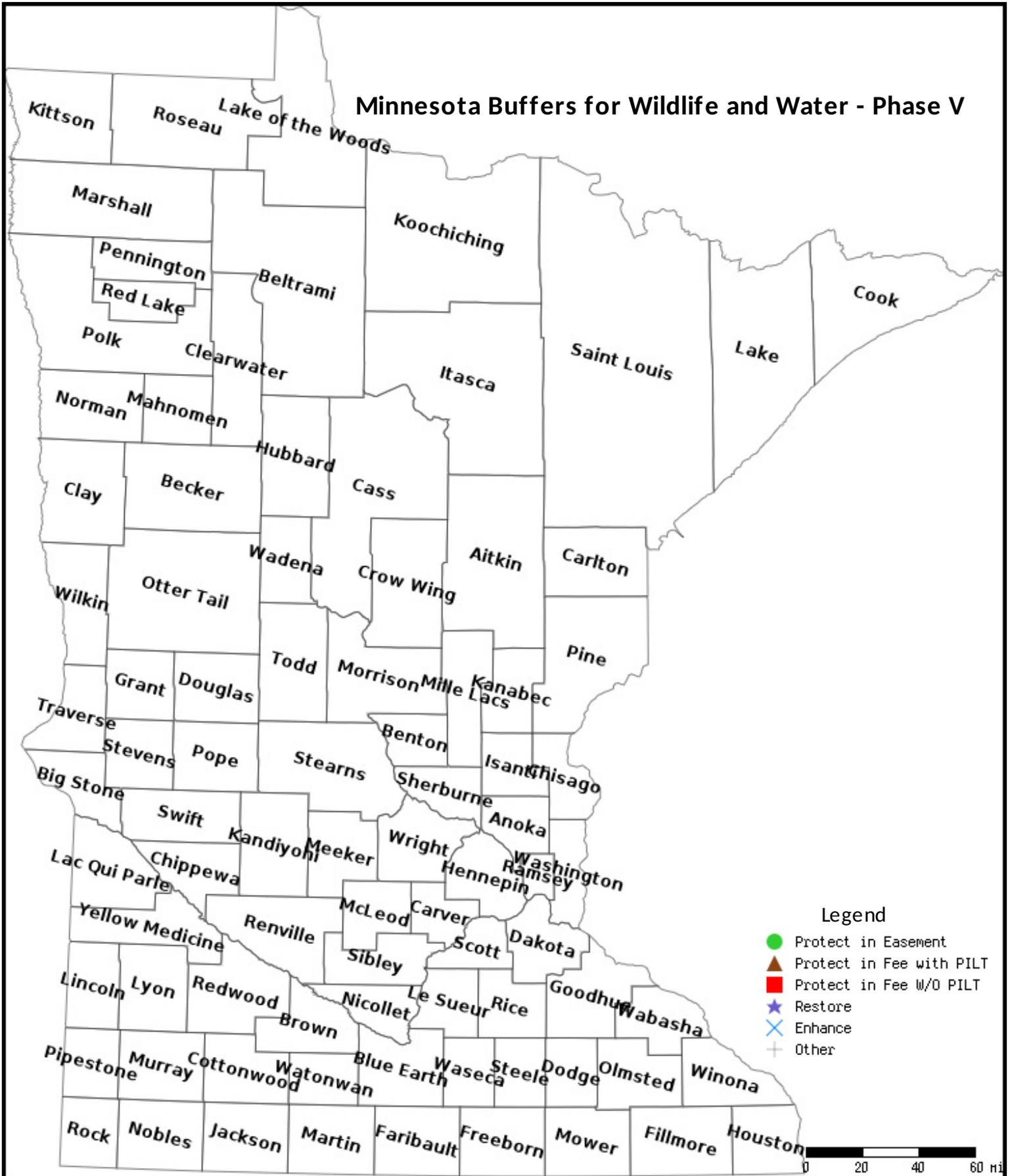
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V



Data Generated From Parcel List

RIM Buffers for Wildlife & Water Scoring Form

Landowner/Project Name:	County (Field Office):	Prepared By:	Date:
			10/22/2014

Instructions: For each enrollment requesting a Wildlife Habitat Buffer Expansion, complete the highlighted sections of this score sheet. For question 1-7 select the response from the dropdown that best answers the question. Print and include it with your sign-up materials. A minimum score of 50 points is required to be eligible.

Offer must meet these minimum criteria to be eligible:

- Offer is within the prairie section identified on the LSOHC map.
- Offer has maximum enrollment (200 feet average).
- Offer is built upon a Clean Water Fund buffer.
- Offer scores a minimum of 50 points on the following factors.

1. Will this offer preserve an existing CRP contract?	Score
	0
2. Is the offer within the watershed of an identified shallow lake?	
	0
3. Proximity to an existing protected habitat complex that is larger than 160 acres?	
	0
4. Proximity to public land that is open for public hunting?	
	0
5. Type of water resource being buffered	
	0
6. Type Vegetative Diversity on proposed site?	
	0
7. Combined Easement Size	
	0
Total Score	0