

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
25 Year Plan Process Update  
August 16, 2010**

**Background and Context**

A working group of conservation professionals has been developing a draft funding framework for the council's consideration. As a reminder from our previous updates, this framework is exploring three alternative habitat scenarios that were originally suggested by Council chair Kilgore:

- A baseline scenario, which describes outcomes that could have been expected if the OHF was not available to fund conservation work,
- An estimated trajectory of funding, based on the decisions made in the council's first two years of appropriations, and
- A maximized scenario, that describes different levels of outcomes that would be achievable if the maximum funding needed were dedicated to one particular habitat. This is not a likely scenario, but it would illustrate the upper bound of the habitat work that could be accomplished.

In addition to these three scenarios, the council has also requested that the working group identify any research needs for the LCCMR's consideration, to recommend future metrics for evaluation, and to note significant organizational or capacity issues.

**Progress Update**

The working group has been meeting every two weeks, with participation by LSOHC staff and facilitation by Management Analysis & Development.

Within the **baseline scenario**, the group is using GIS analysis to describe and identify conservation lands throughout the state. GIS Analyst Aaron Spence of the Board of Water and Soil Resources is assembling all GIS data layers in two general categories – publicly protected conservation lands that provide wildlife habitat, and privately owned lands that are in a state of providing quality wildlife habitat. The working group has provided Aaron with useful guidance and feedback in assembling the data layers, and he should have the results in the next few weeks.

Other information for the baseline scenario is being collected by working group members via a questionnaire that they have distributed to 15 public and non-profit organizations that, we believed, expend a minimum of \$1 million per year to protect, restore and enhance habitat. We are asking them numerous questions that will be helpful for the baseline description, including their recent expenditures, their primary activities and the outcomes from those activities, the extent of their grant programs, and their goals and opportunities for the future. We have received four of those questionnaires back already, and we are expecting the remainder of them in the next week or two.

We will most likely have follow-up questions for these respondents as we analyze the baseline data. Unfortunately, we realized once the information requests had already been distributed that we had adopted an assumption around the term “protect” that was perceived as limiting by some of our respondents. We’ll have an opportunity to ask respondents about additional protection actions that they take when we call with follow-up questions.

For the **two-year trajectory of funding**, Peter Butler of our staff has been working with the appropriations and accomplishment plan data from your first two years of funding, provided by Heather Koop on the council staff. Upon review of this data, we recommended to the working group that the two-year trajectory be performed on a statewide basis, rather than performing individual trajectories for each of the LSOHC sections. We found that we only had one year’s worth of data where we had accomplishment plans that could specify protection, enhancement and restoration acres by habitat type. Furthermore, sectional trajectories would increase the number of trajectory equations from 24 to 120, and we noted that the more these numbers are divided, the less accurate the projections become. The working group agreed with our recommendation, and we have proceeded to refine the statewide two-year trajectory from there.

The estimates for the maximized scenario will follow the same economic assumptions used for the two-year trajectory, only this scenario will demonstrate the maximum outcomes achievable within habitats. You asked, however, that we note if any of the maximized scenarios would be limited or capped by legal, process, organizational or political constraints. To get a better sense of these constraints, we are asking conservation partners who are responding to the Information Request (mentioned above) to rate the significance of various constraints that have affected them in the previous ten years and that might affect their organization’s ability to protect, restore or enhance habitat over the next 10 to 25 years. The basic estimates for a first draft of the maximized scenario were run last week, and the working group will review them this Thursday. The application of constraints on the maximized scenario data will need to wait until we have the information request data returned.

With regard to recommended metrics for future evaluation, Leslie McInenly of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council and Andy Holdsworth of the DNR have developed a draft results management framework for each of the LSOHC sections, based upon the section-specific vision and priorities adopted by the council at their prior meetings. This type of framework helps define success and theories of change, and helps clarify the expected relationships between investments, actions taken, and results achieved. The section-specific frameworks have been in draft form for about a month, but the working group has not had much time to discuss them, due to time needed to discuss the three scenarios. It is on the agenda for our Thursday meeting.

### **Project Management Update**

We are currently on time and on budget. The development of the baseline scenario has taken more effort and time than we originally estimated, due to the need to develop the Information Request form and to allow time for organizations to complete it. However, the two-year trajectory of funding is not as complicated as we thought it would be originally.