

Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council

2009 Recommendation Accomplishment Plan

Project or Program Title: Conservation Partners Grants Program

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Funds Recommended (\$000s)	Council Recommendation Funding	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Outdoor Heritage Fund	4,000	0	0	0

Summary

This program will be managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide competitive matching grants of up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national organizations, including government. Grant activities include the enhancement, restoration, or protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A 10% non-state cash or in-kind match will be required from all grantees, and must be identified at the time of application. The Commissioner of Natural Resources will also report to the Legislature on the feasibility, process, and timeline for creation of a Minnesota fish and wildlife foundation.

Background

CONSERVATION PARTNERS GRANTS PROGRAM

This grant program will consist of two activity categories:

Category 1 - Restoration and Enhancement

For the purpose of this grant program, this work is defined as:

Restore: action to bring a habitat back to a former state of sustaining fish, game or wildlife, with an ultimate goal of restoring habitat to a desired conservation condition.

Enhance: action to increase the ability of habitat and related natural systems to sustain and improve fish, game or wildlife in an ecologically sound manner.

Projects funded under Category 1 - Restoration and Enhancement will consist of activities that restore or enhance habitat for fish, game, or wildlife on lands permanently protected by conservation easement or public ownership. Specific activities can be found in LOHC Habitat activity Definitions.

1. Proposed projects on public lands will be approved by and coordinated with public land managers. Projects proposed for lands under permanent conservation easement will be reviewed by public land managers. Proof of review or approval must be submitted with the grant application.
2. Restoration and enhancement activities will be considered permanent work and a conservation easement must be placed on private land impacted before work may begin. Funding for the easement/deed restriction and associated costs may be paid for with in-kind match or grant funds.
3. Grantees are responsible for all administrative requirements such as Historic Property Review, Wetland Conservation Act, Stormwater Permits, Natural Heritage Review, DNR Waters Permits, and others as appropriate. Costs for any reviews or permits should be included in the grant application, either as in-kind match or requested from grant dollars. As specified in the grant agreement, grantees may, by letter, assign these duties and associated funds back to DNR, with DNR consent.
4. The Commissioner of Natural Resources must approve all projects.
5. Vegetation and seed used in these projects must be from ecotypes native to Minnesota, and preferably of the local ecotype, using a high diversity of species originating from as close to the restoration site as possible. Existing native prairies must be protected from genetic contamination to the extent possible.
6. A restoration and management plan must be prepared for all restorations that is consistent with the highest quality conservation and ecological goals for the restoration site. The plan shall include:
 - a. The proposed timetable for implementing the restoration, including
 - i. site preparation,
 - ii. establishment of diverse plant species,
 - iii. maintenance, and
 - iv. additional enhancement to establish the restoration;
 - b. Identify long-term maintenance and management needs of the restoration and how the maintenance, management, and enhancement will be financed; and
 - c. Use the best available science to achieve the best restoration.
7. Grantees must give consideration to and make timely written contact with the Minnesota Conservation Corps for consideration of possible use of their services to contract for restoration and enhancement services.

Category 2 - Land Protection

For the purpose of this grant program, this work is defined as:

- **Protect:** action to maintain the ability of habitat and related natural systems to sustain fish, game or wildlife through acquisition of fee title or conservation easements.

Acquisitions funded under Category 2 – Land Protection will protect wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife by acquiring land through fee title or permanent easement. Lands acquired in fee title will be open to the public for hunting and fishing during open seasons. Easements must include stewardship provisions to perpetually monitor and enforce the conditions of the easements.

1. The Commissioner of Natural Resources must agree to each proposed acquisition of land or interest in land. For fee acquisition, the final title holder and land manager must be specified. Lands that will be conveyed to a public agency must be donated.
2. For permanent easements, the following information must be provided:
 - a. What organization will monitor the easement;
 - b. Who the easement will revert to in the event the primary easement holder ceases to exist;
 - c. What easement monitoring standards will be used;
 - d. Amount, funding source, and holder of the stewardship endowment dedicated to the easement;
 - e. Any restrictions, allowed structures, allowed activities, and reserved rights.
3. A restoration and management plan must be prepared for all newly acquired lands as described in Category 1, # 6, above.

4. All acquisition selection processes and related transactions costs for all parties involved in the acquisition must be reported to the LSOHC.
5. A Notice of Funding Restriction must be recorded for each acquisition.
6. An analysis of future operations and maintenance costs for any acquired lands must be provided to the LSOHC, commissioner of finance, and appropriate public agency.
7. The grantee must submit an annual report on the status of property acquired with grant funds to the LSOHC by December 1 of each year.

Grantees acquiring land that will be conveyed to DNR will be required to follow DNR's Third Party Land Acquisition Procedures. All appraisals must be done to Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) standards. All land surveys must be done to meet DNR's General Requirements for Land Surveys. Lands that will be conveyed to a public agency for long-term management must be brought up to the agency's minimum operating standards before being conveyed. For potential WMA lands, see DNR's Development Standards for WMAs.

General Program Requirements

All grants must be completed by June 30, 2012, at which time all grant projects must be completed and final products delivered. A one year extension may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

All grant projects must conform to the terms set out in the 2009 MN Session Law Chapter 172, and address the priorities in the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, and Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare. In implementing this program the DNR will comply with the Department of Administration - Office of Grants Management policies.

Grantee Match

The match requirement is 10% in nonstate cash or in-kind work, which may include verifiable equipment use, donation of materials, and donation of labor. The amount and source of the match must be identified at the time of application. Proof of all required and pledged grantee match must be provided before the final payment is made.

Grant Process

A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be posted on the DNR and LSOHC websites by August 25, 2009. The RFP will contain grant program, application criteria, application and proposal requirements, state agency contacts and grant reporting requirements. The RFP and all grant agreements will incorporate appropriate principles and criteria from the 2009 LSOHC Strategic Plan.

Applications will be accepted electronically year-round, with grants selected for funding in December, 2009, and March, 2010. Applications must be submitted electronically on the form provided. Maps and aerial photos showing the location of proposed projects are required, and must include the name of the public land unit or private landowner, county, legal description, acres affected, and on-site and adjacent habitat types.

DNR Grants Program staff will work with grant applicants to ensure applications are complete, compile all grant applications, enter applications into a database, and rank applications based on criteria established by the LSOHC and MN State Legislature. A Technical Guidance Committee selected by the Commissioner of Natural Resources will recommend projects and funding levels. This committee will consist of no more than nine people and may include representatives from DNR, BWSR, the University of MN, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other appropriate members. The Commissioner will make the final decision on projects funded, and funding levels.

Selection Criteria

Criteria for evaluating grant applications will include:

1. Amount of habitat restored, enhanced, or protected;
2. Local support;
3. Degree of collaboration;

4. Urgency;
5. Multiple benefits;
6. Habitat benefits provided;
7. Consistency with sound conservation science;
8. Adjacency to protected lands;
9. Full funding of the project;
10. Supplementing existing funding;
11. Public access for hunting and fishing during the open season;
12. Sustainability; and
13. Use of native plant materials

Every effort will be made to evenly distribute the selected grants by geographic location, activity, and funding level, with an objective of granting 50% of the funds to projects above and below \$125,000.

Once grant applications are selected, DNR Grants Program staff will work with grantees to ensure financial reviews, grant agreements, and any other necessary paperwork are completed. Work may not begin until the grant is executed.

Grant Payment

Grant payments will be administered on a reimbursement basis unless otherwise provided in the grant agreement. Periodic payments will be made upon receiving documentation that the deliverable items articulated in the approved accomplishment plan have been achieved, including partial achievements as evidenced by approved progress reports. Capital equipment expenditures will not be allowed.

No less than 15 percent of the amount of each grant must be held back from reimbursement until the grant recipient has completed a grant accomplishment report in the form prescribed by and satisfactory to the LSOHC.

Project Reviews and Reporting

Project reviews will be completed on an annual basis by Grant Program or other DNR staff. Grantees shall submit annual accomplishment reports in the form determined by the LSOHC by September 1 of each year. These reports will be based on work completed during the previous fiscal year. Reports must account for the use of grant and match funds, and outcomes in measures of wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat restored, enhanced, and protected. The report must include an evaluation of these results. A map and aerial photo showing the location of the project and including the name of the public land unit or private landowner, county, legal description, and acres affected must be included.

DNR Grant Program staff will compile grantee reports and submit an annual accomplishment report to the LSOHC, Legislative Coordinating Commission, and Department of Finance on October 15 of each year. Accomplishment information will also be posted on LSOHC and DNR websites.

MN FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION REPORT

This report will be submitted by January 1, 2010 to the Legislature by the Commissioner of Natural Resources. It will consider the feasibility, process, and timeline for creation of a Minnesota fish and wildlife foundation, to be modeled after the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and on the possibility of allowing for the administration by this entity of the conservation partners grant program. The legislative guide created in this act shall consider whether this program should be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the commissioner of natural resources, or some neutral third party.

Relationship to the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and Other Published Resource Management Plans

This program will provide additional funds to enhance, restore and protect habitat in Minnesota. All published resource management and species plans—including the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan—recognize that habitat is critical for the success of Minnesota’s fish and wildlife species. Lack of funding is consistently listed in many plans as one of the largest issues limiting the amount of habitat work and protection that is completed each year.

In the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan, habitat restoration and enhancement is specified in the following priorities:

- H1: Protect priority land habitats (pg 63)
- H2: Protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes
- H4: Restore and protect shallow lakes (pg 78)
- H5: Restore land, wetlands, and associated wetlands (pg 80)
- H7: Keep water on the landscape (pg 84)
- LU 8: Protect large blocks of forested land (pg 130)
- L10: Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands (pg 131)

Other plans that list habitat restoration, enhancement and protection as priorities include:

- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare (Minnesota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy), which identifies habitat loss and degradation as the primary problem facing species in greatest conservation need in Minnesota.
- The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Strategies #1 and 2.
- The DNR’s Division of Fish and Wildlife has several key plans identifying acquisition and habitat goals for fish and wildlife populations. Habitat goals are also addressed through more focused plans and programs that can be found on the DNR’s website.
- National plans include the North American Wetland Management Plan, various Joint Venture Plans, National Fish Habitat Initiative, and all the Bird Conservation Plans.
- Non-governmental conservation agencies such as Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Minnesota have developed their own conservation plans that list habitat restoration, enhancement and protection as a priority.

Budget

Assumptions: All grants are awarded in FY10. Reimbursements can be requested for costs through June 30, 2013. Up to \$260,000 is available for administrative costs. These administrative grant dollars will provide funding for an estimated 1.5 FTEs in FY2010 and 0.65 FTE in FY2011.

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 10	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Funded Administrative Costs	\$180,000	\$80,000		
Other Projected Costs		\$100,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
Grants	\$3,740,000			
TOTAL	\$3,920,000	\$180,000	\$65,000	\$65,000

Administrative costs will be billed using a professional services rate of \$60.00/hour. The hourly rate includes salary and fringe for grants management staff, contracts management, accounts payable, rent, communications, travel, supplies and expense. It is estimated that additional grant staff time will be required in FY11 (0.8 FTE) and FY12 and FY13 (0.5 FTE) at the professional services rate of \$60.00/hour. This staff time is currently unfunded. Other unfunded projected costs include costs for activities necessary for DNR to receive donated land, and provide technical guidance.

Personnel Details

Title	Name	Amount.
Grant Coordinator	TBD	\$60/hour
Grant Specialist	TBD	\$60/hour

Leverage *In the table below list the sources and amounts of leverage you anticipate by fiscal year you anticipate receiving it.*

Source of Leverage	Fiscal Year 10	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12
Grantees' match funds	10% spread out over grant period		
TOTAL	\$374,000		

Accomplishments:

Specific accomplishments are dependent upon projects submitted by grantees.

Table 1 Accomplishments				Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore				
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 2 Recommend Fund Allocation				Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore				
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 3 Counties Impacted				Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore				
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 4 Non-State Leverage \$				Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore				
Protect				
Enhance				

Table 5 Acquisition Data				Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability				
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
Permanent Easement				

Accomplishment Time Table

Milestone	Date	Measure
Progress report to Council	July 2009 Council Meeting	
Progress report to Council	August 2009 Council Meeting	
FY10 RFP issued	August 25, 2009	
Progress report to Council	September 2009 Council Meeting	
First round grant applications due	November 3, 2009	
Quarterly progress report to Council	December 2009 Council Meeting	
First round grantees/projects selected	December 15, 2009	
MN Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report due	January 1, 2010	
First round grants executed	February 16, 2010	
Quarterly progress report to Council	March 2010 Council Meeting	
Second round grant applications due	March 1, 2010	
Second round grantees/projects selected	May 11, 2010	
Quarterly progress report to Council	June 2010 Council Meeting	
Second round grants executed	June 25, 2010	
First annual grantee reports due	September 1, 2010	
Quarterly progress report to Council	September 2010 Council Meeting	
FY11 RFP issued (if needed)	August 13, 2010	
First annual program report to LSOHC due	October 15, 2010	
Third round grant applications due	November 2, 2010	
Quarterly progress report to Council	December 2010 Council Meeting	
Third round grantees/projects selected	December 14, 2009	
Third round grants executed	February 15, 2010	
Quarterly progress report to Council	March 2010 Council Meeting	
Second annual grantee reports due	September 1, 2011	
Second annual program report to LOHC due	October 14, 2011	

Quarterly progress report to Council
Grants end (without extension)
Third annual grantee reports due
Quarterly progress report to Council
Third annual program report submitted
Quarterly progress report to Council
Quarterly progress report to Council
All grants end
Fourth annual grantee reports due
Quarterly progress report to Council
FINAL program report submitted

June 2012 Council Meeting
June 30, 2012
September 1, 2012
September 2012 Council Meeting
October 15, 2012
December 2012 Council Meeting
March 2013 Council Meeting
June 30, 2013
September 1, 2013
September 2013 Council Meeting
October 15, 2013

Relationship to Your Current Budget

DNR is the pass-thru agent for this grant program. Grant applicants will be asked to document the impact of LSOHC grant funds to their current budget, and if these funds will supplement or supplant existing funds, in their grant application.

How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained?

Grantees will provide this information in their application by answering the following questions:

1. Who will be the long-term land manager?
2. Describe the short- and long-term maintenance required to sustain the habitat work you will do; and/or
3. Describe the short- and long-term work required to manage the land you will acquire.
4. Who will do this work?
5. How will this work be funded?

Attach:

- 1) ***A list of your projects showing their county location and***
- 2) ***On the attached eight and a half by eleven map of Minnesota show counties each project as a dot.***

Projects may occur statewide. Specific locations are dependent on the projects submitted by grantees. All grantees will be required to submit a map with their application, and also with their final report. These maps will be compiled onto a statewide map and included in DNR's final report to LSOHC.

