

Date: July 30, 2010

Project Title and Number: Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program

Manager Data

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Organization Data

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Appropriation and citation language:

Laws of Minnesota 2009, Chapter 172, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 5(a).

Outdoor Heritage Conservation Partners Grant Program

\$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2010 is to the commissioner of natural resources for a pilot program to provide competitive, matching grants of up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national organizations, including government, for enhancement, restoration, or protection of forests, wetlands, prairies, and habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. Up to 6-1/2 percent of this appropriation may be used for administering the grant. The funds may be advanced in three equal sums, on or after November 1, 2009, February 1, 2010, and April 1, 2010. Grantees may protect land through acquisition of land or interests in land. Easements must be permanent. Land acquired in fee must be open to hunting and fishing during the open season unless otherwise provided by state law. The commissioner of natural resources must agree to each proposed acquisition of land or interest in land. The program shall require a match of at least \$1 nonstate funds to \$10 state funds. The nonstate dollars match may be in-kind. The criteria for evaluating grant applications must include amount of habitat restored, enhanced, or protected; local support; degree of collaboration; urgency; multiple benefits; habitat benefits provided; consistency with sound conservation science; adjacency to protected lands; full funding of the project; supplementing existing funding; public access for hunting and fishing during the open season; sustainability; and use of native plant materials. All projects must conform to the Minnesota statewide conservation and preservation plan. Wildlife habitat projects must also conform to the state wildlife action plan. Priority may be given to projects acquiring land or easements associated with existing wildlife management areas. All restoration or enhancement projects must be on land permanently protected by conservation easement or public ownership. To the extent possible, a person conducting prairie restorations with money appropriated in this section must plant vegetation or sow seed only of 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, and protect existing native prairies from genetic contamination. Subdivision 10 applies to grants awarded under this paragraph. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2013, at which time all grant projects must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the grant agreement. 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 Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council. As a condition of proceeding with this appropriation, the commissioner shall report on 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.

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:

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.

How will the habitat and 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?

Tell us more about your project:

All FY 10 grants were fully executed by April 19, 2010. The first grant payment was made to MN Sharp-tailed Grouse Society in mid-March for brush shearing work completed in NW MN. Had winter not ended early in the NW, all work under that grant would have been completed.

Two land acquisitions were also completed during this reporting period, for a total of 680 acres protected. Final acquisition documents are still pending. These acquisitions are open to the public for hunting and fishing.

CPL Grant staff have been developing forms and procedures to help grantees meet all appropriation requirements, have developed a database to track the grants, and continue work on grant program policies and procedures. Annual reports from grantees for FY 10 are due to grant staff on September 15, 2010.

Grant staff have begun working on the FY 11 grants, including the new Request for Proposal and Program Manual, updating the CPL website and application system, scheduling grant information meetings for land managers and potential applicants, and planning for FY 11 grant selection. A new proposal for the FY 12 cycle has also been submitted to the L-SOHC.

The CPL Grant Program has been moved from DNR's Office of Management and Budget to the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The Department feels this is a better fit for the program, especially with the amount of involvement by FAW staff. Personnel remain the same, with Leslie Tannahill now serving as Program Manager.

To date, no grant monitoring has occurred. Grant staff have been working on other program requirements described above, and most grantees have only recently started work. As more work occurs, monitoring will have to be done. With limited staff, the FY 11 round of grant applications starting, and FY 12 proposal process occurring, it is unlikely that much monitoring will be done this fall. Additional staff was requested in the FY 11 appropriation but not approved (funding for staff was actually reduced). Another request for additional staff has been made in the FY 12 proposal.

MN FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION REPORT

The Department submitted its report on the feasibility, process, and timeline for creation of a Minnesota fish and wildlife foundation to the Legislature in June, 2010. The report can be found online at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/index.html#Legislative>

Table 1. Accomplishment Timeline.

Original Milestone	Original Milestone Accomplishment Date	Requested Changes	Narrative Reason	Progress To-date
Progress report to Council	July 2009 Council Meeting	None		Complete
Progress report to Council	August 2009 Council Meeting	None		Complete
FY10 RFP issued	August 25, 2009	None	Posted Sept 3, 2009 due to internal DNR review	Complete
Progress report to Council	September 2009 Council Meeting	None		Complete
First round grant applications due	November 3, 2009	None		Complete
Quarterly progress report to Council	December 2009 Council Meeting	None		Complete
First round grantees/projects selected	December 15, 2009	None		Complete
MN Fish and Wildlife Fdn Report due	January 1, 2010	June 16, 2010	Submitted to Legislature	Complete
First round grants executed	February 16, 2010	Extend to March 5, 2010	Additional time required for due diligence, work plan updates, insurance, and grant agreement processing	Completed April 19, 2010
Quarterly progress report to Council	March 2010 Council Meeting	Delete	No meeting scheduled	
Second round grant applications due	March 1, 2010	Delete	All funds awarded in first round.	
Second round grantees/projects selected	May 11, 2010	Delete	All funds awarded in first round.	
Quarterly progress report to LSOHC	June 2010 Council Meeting	None	Present; no report requested	
Second round grants executed	June 25, 2010	Delete	All funds awarded in first round.	
First annual grantee reports due	September 15, 2010			
Quarterly progress report to Council	September 2010 Council Meeting			
FY11 RFP issued (if needed)	August 13, 2010	Delete	All funds awarded in first round	
First annual program	October 15, 2010	Changed by		Complete

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
FY 2010 Recommendation
Status Report for Period Ending June 30, 2010

report to LSOHC due		Council staff to August 1, 2010		
Third round grant applications due	November 2, 2010	Delete	All funds awarded in first round	
Quarterly progress report to Council	December 2010 Council Meeting			
Third round grantees/projects selected	December 14, 2011	Delete	All funds awarded in first round	
Third round grants executed	February 15, 2011	Delete	All funds awarded in first round	
Quarterly progress report to Council	March 2011 Council Meeting			
Second annual grantee reports due	September 15, 2011			
Second annual program report to LSOHC due	October 14, 2011			
Quarterly progress report to Council	June 2012 Council Meeting			
Grants end (without extension)	June 30, 2012			
Third annual grantee reports due	September 1, 2012			
Quarterly progress report to Council	September 2012 Council Meeting			
Third annual program report submitted	October 15, 2012			
Quarterly progress report to Council	December 2012 Council Meeting			
Quarterly progress report to Council	March 2013 Council Meeting			
All grants end	June 30, 2013			
Fourth annual grantee reports due	September 1, 2013			
Quarterly progress report to Council	September 2013 Council Meeting			
FINAL program report submitted	October 15, 2013			

Table 2. Project Accomplishments - Attached

Table 3. Recommended Fund Allocation - Attached

Table 4. Budget - Attached

Parcel List

Program Title

County	Township	Range	Direction	Section	TRDS	# of acres	Estimated Cost to OHF	Description	Activity R=Restore P=Protect E=Enhance	Any existing protection ? (yes/no)	Open to hunting and fishing? (yes/no)	Status of Parcel C=completed O=ongoing
Lester Lake	Hubbard	142	32 W	5	1423205	440	\$350,000	Trust for Public - Lester Lake	P	N	Y	C
Tallgrass Aspen Parkland	Kittson	163	46 W	7	1634607	240	\$146,279	The Nature Conservancy - Tallgrass	P	N	Y	C

Table 2. Project Accomplishments (acres)

Using figures in Table 1 "Accomplishments" in the original approved accomplishment plan to complete the "original target" cell column. Under "Current budget" column, indicate any changes to the original approved accomplishment plans "Original target" column. Under "accomplished to-date" column, indicate cumulative progress. Repeat for each set of columns. Measurements need to be in acres. If your original approved accomplishment plan used a measure other than acres, convert that measure to acres in the matrix below and provide a table note describing the conversion ratio.

	Wetlands			Prairies			Forest			Habitats		
	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date
Restore	119	119	0	440	440	0	2292.3	2957.3	654.2	2	2	1
Protect	448.7	448.7	240	183	183	0	0	0	0	726	726	440
Enhance	0	0	0	32	32	0	1017.5	1017.5	118	320	500	440
Total	567.7	567.7	240	655	655	0	3309.8	3974.8	772.2	1048	1228	881

5580.5 Total of Original Target
6425.5 Total of Current Target
1893.2 Total of Accomplished to date

Table 3. Recommended Fund Allocation (dollars)

Using figures in Table 2 "Recommended Funding Allocation" in the original approved accomplishment plan to complete the "original target" cell column. Under "Current budget" column, indicate any changes to the original approved accomplishment plans "Original target" column. Under "accomplished to-date" column, indicate cumulative progress. Repeat for each set of columns. Measurements need to be in acres. If your original approved accomplishment plan used a measure other than acres, convert that measure to acres in the matrix below and provide a table note describing the conversion ratio.

	Wetlands			Prairies			Forest			Habitats		
	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date	Original Target	Current Target	Accomplished to date
Restore	n/a	514,034	-	n/a	131,250	-	n/a	474,372	68,000	n/a	58,646	5,246
Protect	n/a	628,192	149,430	n/a	464,000	-	n/a	-	-	n/a	768,108	350,000
Enhance	n/a	-		n/a	337,956	-	n/a	315,442	22,727	n/a	48,000	31,680
Total	-	1,142,226	149,430	-	933,206	-	-	789,814	90,727	-	874,754	386,926

- Total of Original Target
3,740,000 Total of Current Target
627,083 Total of Accomplished to date

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

Table 4. Budget

Use figures reported in the original approved accomplishment plan and provide data on expenditures-to-date and any change requests you want to make. Measurements need to be in dollars. Be sure to remove the examples in italics prior to completing table. Please use the following definitions in completing the budget form.

Budget *(All your LSOHC Request Funds must be direct to and necessary for program outcomes.)*

Budget Item	Original Allocation to item	Expenditures to-date on item (include remitted and legally committed)	Current Allocation to item	Current Allocation Minus Original Allocation (Change Request)	Balance remaining of Current Allocation to item
Personnel	\$ 260,000	\$ 154,349	\$ 260,000	\$ -	\$ 105,651
Contracts	\$ 3,740,000	\$ 627,083	\$ 3,740,000	\$ -	\$ 3,112,917
Travel (in-state)				\$ -	\$ -
Fee Acquisition				\$ -	\$ -
Easement Acquisition				\$ -	\$ -
Easement Stewardship				\$ -	\$ -
Professional Services				\$ -	\$ -
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$ -			\$ -	\$ -
Other				\$ -	\$ -
Capital Equipment	\$ -			\$ -	\$ -
Other Equipment/Tools				\$ -	\$ -
Supplies/Materials				\$ -	\$ -
	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 781,432	\$ 4,000,000	\$ -	\$ 3,218,568