



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR WMA and SNA Acquisition - Phase VII

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/03/2026

Project Title: DNR WMA and SNA Acquisition - Phase VII

Funds Recommended: \$4,570,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(a)

Appropriation Language: \$4,570,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire land in fee for wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, and to acquire land in fee for scientific and natural area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land and permanent conservation easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Patrick Rivers

Title: FAW Land Acquisition Supervisor

Organization: DNR

Address: 500 Lafayette Road

City: St. Paul, MN 55155

Email: pat.rivers@state.mn.us

Office Number: 651-259-5209

Mobile Number:

Fax Number: 651-297-4916

Website: www.mndnr.gov

Location Information

County Location(s): Kandiyohi, Lyon, Stearns, Koochiching, Big Stone, Pine, Norman, Meeker, Lincoln, Murray, Polk and Becker.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Prairie

Forest

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Work resulting from this appropriation resulted in the acquisition, development, and inclusion of 1,624 acres into the state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system and 300 acres into the the state Scientific and Natural Area system. The acres acquired exceed accomplishment plan goals by 110%, but the over all project came in 9% under budget. The acquired acres compliment both the WMA and SNA programs by adding habitat function and natural resource ecosystem services.

Process & Methods

Through this appropriation the MN DNR protected lands in the prairie and northern forest ecological sections. The MN DNR prioritized our acquisitions to focus on parcels with an existing habitat base, acquisition opportunities that provided connectivity and worked toward building habitat complexes, and opportunities that allowed us to maximize habitat benefits. All acquisitions were a result of a relationship with a willing seller. We scored them using a GIS tool that assigns points based on the natural resource attributes along with other ecological and management criteria. We then ranked them in importance based on their score and input from local DNR land managers. All acquisitions where then subject to County Board review and approval. Eleven WMA parcels and two SNA totaling 1,924 acres are now permanently protected as a result of acquisitions funded by this program. This eclipsed our Accomplishment Plan goal for acquisition by 1,014 acres!

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

Potential acquisitions for WMAs and SNAs are objectively scored for their habitat value. The DNR uses weighted criteria and prioritizes high scoring parcels for acquisition. For example, candidates for WMAs score higher with a prairie grouse lek, presence of shallow lakes, and occurrence of species in greatest conservation need; and candidates for SNAs score higher with high quality native plant communities and habitat for rare species. Both programs also give priority to parcels that adjoin existing units or other conservation lands.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

The DNR uses GIS-based scoring systems to objectively rank potential acquisitions and develop statewide priority lists. These systems incorporate scientific data including native plant community mapping, rare species locations, and watershed/wetland qualities as well as habitat management considerations and suitability for public access, hunting and fishing.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Collaborative partnerships are an integral part of our work in strategic land acquisition. Partners that we consult and work with include local townships, watershed districts, and counties. In addition we work closely with acquisition partners such as Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Trust for Public Lands, and the Nature

Conservancy to ensure that we are coordinating our acquisition efforts in a way that maximizes conservation outcomes. We work very closely with counties as we seek resolutions of approval from the County Board of Commissioners for all MN DNR led acquisitions.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

One challenge is, we submit our initial proposals with proposed acquisition parcel lists in late May. We don't receive funding until a year after we submit the proposal. Often, parcels we planned our proposal and final accomplishment plans around, are no longer available by the time we have funding appropriated and can pursue the acquisition. As such it makes accurate forecasting, and budgeting for land costs, professional services costs, and IDP costs difficult. A second and ongoing challenge we have in acquiring land is, the difference between appraised value and a landowners expectations as to what their land is worth. Because of this, we do have a certain percentage of landowners that reject our offer. A third is the high turnover in available parcels. This is especially challenging in periods of high demand for land. We often cannot act fast enough, and miss opportunities.

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All acquisitions funded through this proposal are state lands, and are part of the state outdoor recreation system. Ongoing management will be accomplished through routine work duties by our network of DNR Area staff. Periodic enhancements will be accomplished by DNR staff, MCC crews, temporary project staffing or through vendor contract using traditional habitat funding, bonding, and future requests for funding from dedicated funding sources.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 and beyond	Game and Fish Fund; other dedicated funds	Manage habitats to maximize wildlife benefits consistent with management guidance documentation (e.g., burning, mowing/shearing, timber stand improvement, planting, invasive species control).	Maintain boundaries	Monitor and manage public use

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$63,300	\$21,400	\$17,000	-	-	-	\$63,300	\$17,000
Contracts	\$185,000	\$213,500	\$172,400	-	-	-	\$185,000	\$172,400
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,054,500	\$3,786,300	\$3,575,900	\$500,000	\$483,500	Landowner donations, Small Game Surcharge, Reinvest in Minnesota Critical Habitat Match Program	\$4,554,500	\$4,059,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$7,400	\$11,100	\$9,300	-	-	-	\$7,400	\$9,300
Professional Services	\$195,400	\$325,900	\$299,700	\$15,000	\$23,800	Wildlife Surcharge, Reinvest in Minnesota Critical Habitat Match Program	\$210,400	\$323,500
Direct Support Services	\$36,400	\$36,400	\$14,100	-	-	-	\$36,400	\$14,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$28,000	\$175,400	\$164,900	-	-	-	\$28,000	\$164,900
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,570,000	\$4,570,000	\$4,253,300	\$515,000	\$507,300	-	\$5,085,000	\$4,760,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Acquisition Coordinator	0.08	3.0	\$5,600	-	-	\$5,600
Field Staff (spec/tech/labor)	0.21	3.0	\$11,400	-	-	\$11,400

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

The MN DNR uses a standardized DSS calculator that has been developed by our Office of Management and Budget Services.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

One challenge is accurate budget forecasting in the face of parcel turnover. We submit our initial proposals with proposed acquisition parcel lists in late May. We don't receive funding until a year after we submit the proposal. Often, parcels we planned our proposal and final accomplishment plans around, are no longer available by the time we receive funding. No two parcels are the same. When you have parcel turnover, It makes accurate forecasting and budgeting for land costs, professional services costs and IDP costs very challenging!

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

Other : Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Small Game Surcharge

How were the funds used to advance the program?

We used RIM and Small Game Surcharge funding to supplement landowner payments (FeeAcq w/PILT) and professional services expenditures for select WMA acquisitions made with this appropriation.

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Amend)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	610	1,253	300	671	0	0	910	910	1,924
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	610	1,253	300	671	0	0	910	910	1,924

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

Type	Native Prairie (AP)	Native Prairie (Final)
Restore	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	130	156
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0
Enhance	0	0
Total	130	156

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$3,566,000	\$3,242,600	\$1,004,000	\$1,010,700	-	-	\$4,570,000	\$4,253,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$3,566,000	\$3,242,600	\$1,004,000	\$1,010,700	-	-	\$4,570,000	\$4,253,300

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Amend)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State	0	0	120	0	0	0	570	1,253	220	671	910	910	1,924

PILT Liability													
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	120	0	0	0	570	1,253	220	671	910	910	1,924

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$300,000	-	-	-	\$3,630,400	\$3,242,600	\$639,600	\$1,010,700	\$4,570,000	\$4,253,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$300,000	-	-	-	\$3,630,400	\$3,242,600	\$639,600	\$1,010,700	\$4,570,000	\$4,253,300

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

Overall we were very successful and exceed our overall Accomplishment Plan goal by 1,014 acres! That said, although we had plans to acquire a portion of our overall acre goal in in the Forest/Prairie Ecological Section we were not able to complete any acquisitions there. However, and as stated previously, we made up for that by significantly overachieving in the Prairie and Northern Forest Ecological Sections.

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced aspen parklands and riparian areas ~ *Unfortunately we did not acquire any parcels in the Forest-Prairie transition region. If we had, outcomes would have been measured and evaluated by acres of aspen parklands and feet of riparian areas protected. In addition, if parcels supported unique Minnesota species (e.g. endangered, threatened, and special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need). Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented would be completed.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Acres of forest land protected that adds to large blocks of habitat, creates or adds to habitat corridors or protects blocks of habitat from the pressures of development and protect unique Minnesota species (e.g. endangered, threatened, and special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need). Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.*

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Acres of prairie acquired. Acres of grassland/wetland habitat complexes acquired that support upland game birds, migratory waterfowl, big-game, and unique Minnesota species (e.g. endangered, threatened, and special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need). Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Dinner Creek SNA	Becker	14236235	241	\$264,000	No
Hornstein WMA 4	Big Stone	12449214	100	\$210,000	No
Ringo-Nest WMA 7, 8	Kandiyohi	12134231	27	\$61,000	No
Watrous Island	Koochiching	07027236	59	\$54,000	No
Blue Wing WMA tr2	Lincoln	11246236	51	\$215,000	No
Sioux Prairie WMA 12	Lyon	11143207	55	\$350,000	No
Prairie- Big Woods WMA	Meeker	11830218	152	\$435,000	No
Irruption WMA 15	Murray	10639220	80	\$240,000	No
Moccasin WMA 8	Norman	14343226	117	\$380,000	No
Prairie Dunes WMA	Norman	14644219	469	\$1,200,000	No
Pine V&S WMA 1	Pine	03822202	371	\$750,000	No
Sheas Lake WMA 1A	Polk	11224232	28	\$87,000	No
Prairie Smoke WMA 1	Stearns	12435218	174	\$600,000	No

Parcel Map

