



Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water



Clean Water Funds: \$6,000,000
Outdoor Heritage Funds: \$2,249,000

Grant	\$8,249,000
Leveraged Funds*	\$4,249,900
Total Budget	\$12,498,000

* Leveraged Funds include 25% local match

Project Sponsor:

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR)

Project Partners:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Pheasants Forever

Grant Period:

2012

Project Contact:

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Project Narrative

This program accelerates permanent protection of buffers for wildlife and water quality for private landowners. It is an innovative project that bridges the resource benefits of the Outdoor Heritage Fund (LSOHC) and Clean Water Fund (CWF). Delivery of this program will be under a coordinated approach that brings together Minnesota BWSR, Minnesota DNR, local SWCD's, Pheasants Forever and other key conservation partners interested in private land conservation.

Loss and fragmentation of grassland habitat is the greatest threat to grassland wildlife in Minnesota. This partnership program permanently adds grassland habitat and reduces fragmentation by combining the efforts of outdoor heritage and clean water. Building upon the 100-foot RIM buffers funded through the Clean Water Fund, additional width would be added to a maximum average of 200'. When installing buffers on each side of a stream the net result would be 400' and will make these buffers more attractive and productive for wildlife. Furthermore, these wildlife buffers are targeted for landscapes with existing permanently protected habitat to accelerate progress toward achieving minimum thresholds of grass habitat required by waterfowl and other wildlife.

This project meets top priority grassland restoration goals cited for the *Long Range Plan for the Ring-neck Pheasant in Minnesota*, the *Long Range Duck Recovery Plan*, and *Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*.

Minnesota currently has just over 200,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Program in buffer practices at various stages of their 10-15 year contracts, some soon to expire. The buffer initiative would compliment other programs, both existing and yet to be determined over the next 25 years.

This program balances the need for quality wildlife habitat, water quality, and what works for farmers and landowners within their operations.

Proposed Measurable Outcomes

Protect 1,156 acres of prairies through easement acquisition.

Measurable Outcomes

Application for easements scheduled for Feb. 1-March 31, 2012.

Evaluation and Outcome Plans

Accomplishment plans required by Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund identify the number of acres of permanent protection, restored wetlands and adjacent wildlife habitat. These RIM easements are a part of a comprehensive public-private partnership for habitat restoration, improved water quality and resource protection. These plans must include a long term stewardship plan and identify sources and amounts of funding.

As these RIM easements are matched with Clean Water Funds, they are selected to meet local identified water quality goals within the larger scope of Minnesota's clean water efforts. The long-term evaluation of projects will be monitored as part of the state's intensive watershed monitoring strategy. RIM easements are subject to ongoing inspection to ensure compliance for the duration of the easement in accordance with established guidelines.

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Eligibility for OHF Funds: LSOHC Prairie Section

