



Bill Becker, Executive Director
Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 17, 2009

Re: Draft Forest Conservation Priority Report

Dear Mr. Becker:

On behalf of the East Central Woodland Owners Council, I would like to express our support for the Lessard Heritage Council's "Forest" resource system. This private woodland owners group is one of more than 16 in the state that helps landowners manage 2/3 of Minnesota's forests.

East Central Woodland Owners Council started on October 18, 1990 and produced many educational forums for private woodland owners. Over the years our group has seen significant changes in the East Central Minnesota forests. With development and construction taking its toll along with increasing disease threats looming, our group would like to participate in a grant to work with Forest Health in this part of the State by applying for funding for an initial Forest Health project.

Please find the attached outline of the proposed project and funding request. Please notify us of our time to present at the Feb. 23rd Council meeting.

I would be happy to discuss the council's activities and efforts with you, at your convenience. You can reach me by calling (612) 390-8624.

Sincerely,

Steve Nelson, Treasurer
East Central Woodland Owners Council

February 17, 2009 Tuesday Draft

David French Forest Health Initiative

Proposal for the First of a 3 Year Pilot Project

Request for funding of \$ 650,000 for disease control and utilization project funded through the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council's "Forests" resource system.

The initial request is to fund a project to protect the oak forest resource on 50,000 acres of private land that is within a 1/2 mile radius from the boundaries of:

1. Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area.
2. Cedar Creek Natural Area.
3. Sand Dunes State Forest.
4. Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

The work would involve compensating private landowners near these four areas for disease control and removals while ensuring proper utilization of the wood resource. It will also compensate private landowners for any reforestation needed. If funds remain after completing the ½ mile area the exterior edges within the four management areas would then be treated, with only the forestry assistance being paid-for out of the grant. Actual control work, removals and harvests would be paid-for out of the stumpage money taken in by these public landowners.

Important statewide/regional conservation issues

Why fund this initial project? Within the last 3 years, oak wilt has been found to be an exotic invasive disease which greatly increases the threat to Minnesota's oak forests. And, just recently, testing is suggesting that the disease may have originated in Central or South America. Control strategies and methods are being upgraded every year, so there is no excuse to drop out, lose faith or give up on stopping oak wilt. Over many years the above listed public landowners have not been able to adequately control oak wilt on their lands due to the lack of funding, knowledge and interest. While cost share funding has been available for private lands outside of these public areas, little control work has been accomplished within them. Sand Dunes State Forest has been the leader in control work of the 4 areas; however, funding has been difficult to obtain for control work.

Because of this lack of control, many private landowners just outside these 4 areas have suffered devastating losses to oak wilt and continue to do so. By treating this ½ mile area surrounding the 4 sites these landowners would be in a small way compensated for their continued loss.

The project would be broken into 3 primary areas.

1. Contact, set-up, and vibratory plow control work on approximately 3,000 infection centers.
2. *Technical assistance to all private landowners in the working groups area in the Anoka Sand Plain ecosystem, where oak wilt is most prevalent. This assistance would encourage and help landowners to control the oak wilt disease on their property.
3. *Develop Utilization guidelines through the cooperation of electric coops in the region to utilize, for energy/CHP, the wood materials taken from the infection centers. This utilization would provide a base of information to assist the State

when Emerald Ash Borer (or another invasive forest pest) hits this area and causes extensive tree loss.

Participants Involved / Summary of Process employed

Main participants involved will be 3-4 members of the East Central Woodland Owner's Council, Steve Kunde, private forestry consultant, Jennifer Juzwik, adjunct Professor and Research Scientist US Forest Service, and 2-3 members from Utility companies such as East Central Energy.

Plans are to start mapping of infection centers and contacting landowners in the 4 areas by late spring 2009, and develop management strategies for each area that would most effectively implement vibratory plowing, harvesting & removals and reforestation so 1,000 infection centers can be treated in 2009.

This project would not only help the hundreds of affected land owners but would also provide immediate on the ground work for many people and small businesses such as tree services, loggers, landscapers, truck drivers, etc.

Our group feels that it is right to let the public -- who are funding this work thru taxes -- receive some of the benefit also.

Long Term Resource System Goals

The long term resource system goal is to help landowners, both private and public, transition away from unnatural northern pin oak monoculture forests and into the natural mixed pine hardwoods (long and short lived species) forest, which existed on the Anoka Sand Plain well before 1850. This diverse forest of pre-European settlement times is able to withstand invasive insect, disease and plant and animal pests better than monoculture forests. Management strategies will be based-on Land Type Associations (LTA's). A later funding opportunity for the program would be used to begin containing and pushing oak wilt disease back from its northern boundaries, making it more manageable for municipalities and governmental units to control.

A suggestion for the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council will be to permanently maintain 25 - 75 % of annual LOHC "Forests" funding in the **Forest Health Area**.

Suggested portion of David French Forest Health funding should be Forests portion.

This funding should cover insect, disease and invasives suppression/eradication projects also including utilization.

Existing conservation partners and partnerships

The existing partners in the Forest protection efforts have been Zimmerman and Cambridge DNR forestry staff and Chisago SWCD staff. Relationships have also been built with other county SWCD's, township governments, Onanegozie RC & D and the East Central Landscape Program of the MN Forest Resources Council. There has also been a long standing relationship with US Forest Service North Central Forest Experiment Station and Dr Juzwik. There is also long standing memberships and relationships with the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture, the State Shade Tree Advisory Committee and the MN Forestry Association.

Existing initiatives, delivery systems, and funding levels addressing conservation issues

It is because of the end of state and federal funding of the programs that existed between 1990 and 2008 that brings concerned landowners to this proposal for renewed funding thru the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council. There is no program or funding source left to help multiple townships or counties. The old delivery systems of county and township governments and county SWCD's don't want to manage an oak wilt program... again. The uniqueness and technical aspects to forest protection and wood utilization makes these programs hard to administer from LGU's and SWCD's. Also, because of the wide area involved, East Central Woodland Owner's Council is exploring the creation of a separate, 501 (c) 3 non-profit Private Woodland Owner's Association, to unify and streamline technical assistance plus manage the fiscal responsibilities.

Highest priority conservation project/program(s)

- Short and long term funding requirements
Short term funding requirements are in this budget. It would be expected that funding would be continued for at least 2 years, and that this pilot project be duplicated in other parts of MN. Long term expectations for funding would be a slowly decreasing amount, but enough to keep the forest threats and accompanying wood utilization projects down to manageable levels.
- Anticipated habitat outcomes and associated timelines. Over a 5-10 year period, have most private lands in project area, comprising monoculture northern pin oak forest, transitioned to mixed pine hardwood forests.
- Measures of success and plans to monitor outcomes. These will be done by the consulting foresters, in their annual checks of each site. Adjustments for further disease control, wood removals/processing/utilization and reforestation can then be made.
- Level of local government support. We expect strong support from Township government level and county SWCD's. Township governments have been clamoring for local oak wilt control programs but have never been set up administratively to run the programs. SWCD's are an important local source for land management technical assistance and for purchasing tree seedlings and other native plant materials.
- Recommended delivery system(s) Establish a 501 c 3 private woodland owners association, hire at least ½ time Manager, and coordinate the technical and financial aspects of this program out of that association workplace. The board of the association will be made up of private woodland owners, with public employees being advisors to the board but not board members. Consulting Forester make assessments at all Forest Health and Utilization locations. If the work cannot be paid-for out of stumpage \$, program \$ will cover the difference.

Process and criteria used to identify the highest priority conservation project/program(s)

Priority for Column I: Oak wilt threat the highest.

Private lands Insect, Disease & Invasives control/eradication and reforestation.

Priority for Column II: Oak wilt threat medium to high

Private lands Insect, Disease & Invasives control/eradication.

Table information based on DNR Forestry oak wilt data and FRC EC Landscape Plan

	I		II	III
County	Oak wilt & other I & D & Invasives Needs	\$ Breakdown (\$ for private landowners in these LGU's)	Other LGU's I&D & Inv Utilization Needs	Totals
Chisago OW	Carlos Avery \$ 110,000	\$ 30 K Linw'd \$ 20 K Colum \$ 30 K Lent \$ 20 K Wyom \$ 10 K Stacy	\$ 30,000 \$ 15k Sunrise \$ 10k Lent \$ 5k Wyo Townships	\$ 140,000
Isanti OW	Cedar Creek \$ 80,000	\$ 20 K Athens \$ 60 K E Beth	\$ 20,000 Isanti Co Only	\$ 100,000
Kanabec EAB			\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Mille Lacs ow			\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
NWashingtonow			\$ 35,000 \$ 10k For Lake \$ 10k Scandia \$ 10k May \$ 5k Hugo	\$ 35,000
Sherburne OW	\$ 210,000 SNWR/SDSF	\$ 80k Blue Hill \$ 60k Orrock \$ 50k Santiag \$ 20k Becker	\$ 90,000	\$ 300,000
Wright ow			\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Benton ow			\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
E Morrison			\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
S Pine ow			\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
	\$ 400,000		\$ 250,000	\$ 650,000

ow – Oak wilt has been found in this county

OW – Oak wilt is still a major problem in this county

EAB – Kanabec County has extensive hardwood forests including large component ash type.

Brief Budget Breakdown

Sherburne NWR/ Sand Dunes SF \$ 210,000

Carlos Avery WMA (Anoka & Chisago Co's) \$ 110,000

Cedar Creek (Anoka & Isanti Co's) \$ 80,000

*Technical Assistance for Oak Wilt 10 Co's. \$ 250,000

Combined with Utilization Assistance

Draft Budget

Budget Item	Outdoor Heritage Funds	Other Cash Funds	In - Kind Funding	Total Funds
Salaries / benefits	\$ 65,000			\$ 65,000
Contracts FH Prior I	\$ 350,000			\$ 350,000
Landowner partic.			\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
ECWOC coord. & admin.			\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Program Develop Musser 17,500 ECWOC 2,500		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000
Program Implement & Coordination			\$ 100,000 LGU's & SWCD's	\$ 100,000
Contracts Utilization	\$ 235,000			\$ 235,000
Landowner Partic			\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Private Org's Donations		\$ 15,000		\$ 15,000
Total	\$ 650,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 315,000	\$ 1,000,000