

# MANAGEMENT ACTION AGREEMENT

Date: March 30, 2023

An  
Agreement Between

The  
U.S. Department of Interior  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Midwest Region

and

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Grantee:  
State of Minnesota  
Department of Natural Resources  
St. Paul, Minnesota

Grantor:  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Midwest - Region 3 Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs  
Bloomington, Minnesota

## **I. Purpose of the Management Agreement**

The purpose of this agreement is to address forest habitat management on lands acquired and managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) using U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (WR) and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) grants, from now on referred to collectively as Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) grants.

The Agreement documents five specific management actions previously agreed to during conversations between the Service and DNR. It also may serve as a framework for future agreements as needed. This agreement shall not take precedence over any other Federal grant rules and regulations, grant conditions or previous agreements.

## **II. Background**

Under WSFR, the Service provides grants to States to acquire, restore, conserve, manage, and enhance their wildlife and sport fish resources. The WSFR Acts and associated Federal programs and grant regulations contain the guiding principles by which the Service can reimburse States up to 75 percent of eligible project costs incurred under approved grants. Additionally, participation in the program requires that States pass assent legislation to ensure hunting and fishing license revenues are only used for the administration of the State's fish and wildlife agency.

From 2016 to 2022, WSFR apportioned between \$29 and \$40 million annually to Minnesota DNR to accomplish the purposes of the grant programs. By accepting these funds, the State of Minnesota agrees to comply with all requirements set forth in laws, regulations, and agreements.

## **III. General Provisions – Five Agreement Points**

### **A. Management Agreement Point 1 – Minnesota DNR prepares and delivers a leadership intent message to staff concerning forest habitat management on Minnesota's Wildlife and Aquatic Management Areas (WMAs and AMAs).**

#### **1. MN DNR Action**

Minnesota DNR Commissioner Strommen and Minnesota DNR Fish and Wildlife (FAW) Director Olfelt will provide a written communication to all MN DNR FAW, Forestry (FOR), and Ecological and Water Resources Division (EWR) staff that reaffirms agency direction and commitment to forest habitat management on WMAs/AMAs to achieve fish and wildlife species habitat management goals and objectives for each unit (Fish and

Wildlife Division Directive 070205 “Forest Management on WMAs and AMA/FMAs”). This message will also reaffirm Minnesota DNR’s commitment to the requirements of the WSFR grant programs.

## **2. Completion Deadline**

This action shall be completed by April 14, 2023

## **B. Management Agreement Point 2 - Commitment to WMA and AMA plans**

### **1. Minnesota DNR and Service Region 3 Actions**

Minnesota DNR FAW will reaffirm its commitment to a schedule for finishing master plans for “major unit” WMAs, and to developing a systematic framework for planning for the remaining WMAs/AMAs. These plans will incorporate interdisciplinary thought, will reflect public engagement, and will describe how active habitat management, including timber harvest, is used to achieve wildlife habitat management goals.

These plans will provide information on desired future habitat conditions and quantifiable objectives for the life of the plans to attempt to meet desired future habitat conditions. Desired future conditions will be based on sound wildlife biology and ecology principles and consider future threats to these areas (e.g., climate change, invasive species).

Management plans will be consistent with legal requirements of the WSFR grant programs and other Federal laws and regulations (as applicable). Service Region 3 WSFR will review plans and DNR will respond to Service feedback before the plans are finalized.

Plans will be developed for WMAs/AMAs that are not considered to be “major units.” For planning purposes WMAs/AMAs may be grouped geographically by ecoregion, management region, or other similarities. These plans will also be consistent with legal requirements of the WSFR grant programs and other Federal laws and regulations (as applicable). Service Region 3 WSFR will review plans and DNR will respond to feedback before the plans are finalized. Minnesota DNR will communicate the plan development timeline to Service Region 3 WSFR when determined.

Upon receipt of acceptable WMA major unit plans per the agreed deadlines in the May 2, 2022, letter from Minnesota DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen to USFWS Region 3 Regional Director Charles Wooley, Service Region 3 WSFR will consider major unit plans completed and approved per Federal grant rules and regulations.

## **2. Completion Deadline**

This action shall be completed in accordance with the individual plan deadlines articulated in Minnesota DNR Commissioner Strommen's letter to Service Midwest Regional Director Charles Wooley dated May 2, 2022:

Red Lake WMA - June 30, 2023  
Mille Lacs WMA - December 31, 2023  
Lac qui Parle WMA - June 30, 2024  
Roseau River WMA - December 31, 2024  
Carlos Avery WMA - June 30, 2025

Plans for WMAs/AMAs that are not "major units" will be completed in accordance with a timeline that is yet to be determined by Minnesota DNR FAW, at which time Minnesota DNR will communicate the timeline to Service Region 3 WSFR.

## **C. Management Agreement Point 3 – Clarify Minnesota DNR Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, and Ecological and Water Resources roles and responsibilities.**

### **1. Minnesota DNR and Service Region 3 Actions**

Minnesota DNR FAW will finalize and implement its "Forest Management on WMAs and AMAs" procedures document. This document clarifies the roles and responsibilities Minnesota DNR FAW, FOR, and EWR staff have in planning, scheduling, implementing, monitoring, and assessing forest habitat management activities on WMAs/AMAs.

Service Region 3 WSFR will review the draft procedures and provide comment on whether the procedures provide adequate controls to meet the legal Federal requirements of the WSFR grant programs and other applicable Federal laws and regulations.

Following its opportunity to comment on the draft procedures document and Minnesota DNR's issuance of the final procedures document, the Service Region 3 WSFR will provide its concurrence and consider this action completed.

### **2. Completion Deadline**

This action shall be completed by May 26, 2023.

## **D. Management Agreement Point 4 – Provide training to Minnesota DNR staff on WSFR rules and regulations that must be followed as part of the Minnesota DNR planning framework, forest habitat management policies**

**and procedures, and specific requirements that need to be followed on WMAs/AMAs.**

## **1. Minnesota DNR and Service Region 3 Actions**

Minnesota DNR will work cooperatively with Service Region 3 WSFR to provide training for FAW, FOR, and EWR staff to ensure understanding of the specific requirements that need to be followed on WMAs/AMAs with a WSFR nexus.

Training will include explanation of the roles and responsibilities of all parties as – including, but not limited to:

- a. Service Region 3 will sponsor training for Minnesota DNR Executives and Managers on the specific Federal Rules and Regulations related to WSFR interest lands and WSFR grants. This training will be completed by October 31, 2023.
- b. Minnesota DNR FAW will sponsor the WSFR Training Branch's project leaders training in Minnesota for its staff. The training is designed for up to 30 participants at a time. Minnesota DNR will determine the number of staff requiring the training and sponsor the appropriate number of sessions. The training will be completed by October 31, 2024. If multiple sessions are needed, the training will be completed following the WSFR Training Branch Schedule in the following years with a minimum of one class per year - to be completed by October 31, 2025 and following years if needed by October 31.
- c. Minnesota DNR will identify appropriate staff to Service Region 3 WSFR to attend the WSFR Training Branch Lands Grant Management Course when it is offered. This action shall be completed by October 31, 2024, and following years as needed.

As needed, Service Region 3 WSFR will be invited to other Minnesota DNR training(s) to provide additional information on the requirements of WSFR grant programs, and other applicable Federal Laws and Regulations.

Finally, Service Region 3 WSFR will, to the best extent possible, assist and prioritize Minnesota DNR FAW in its requests to the National WSFR Training Branch for scheduled courses.

## **2. Completion Deadline**

Initial training under this action shall be completed as already specified.

**E. Management Agreement Point 5 – Develop and implement joint Monitoring Protocols to ensure forest habitat work on Minnesota DNR lands with a WSFR nexus are in compliance with federal rules and regulations.**

**1. Minnesota DNR FAW and Service Region 3 WSFR Actions**

Minnesota DNR FAW and Service Region 3 WSFR will develop protocols for field monitoring visits that assess forest habitat management activities on WMAs/AMAs to ensure they are achieving fish and wildlife management goals and objectives and are following WSFR grant program requirements. Field monitoring visits will be conducted jointly between the Service and Minnesota DNR in a way that promotes trust, communication, learning, and transparency.

Monitoring protocols will include information on forest habitat management activities, including stands selected for treatment and documentation of wildlife and/or fisheries management purposes of the treatment. Monitoring site visits will also provide an opportunity to observe and document site conditions affected by the forest management activities.

**2. Completion Deadline**

Protocols will be developed by August 1, 2023, and the first joint monitoring visit will occur before August 31, 2023.

## IV. Signatories of the Parties of the Management Action Agreement

In witness to this agreement the parties hereto have signed for their respective organizations.

### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Sarah Strommen** Digitally signed by Sarah  
Strommen  
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Sarah Strommen, Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**David Olfelt** Digitally signed by David  
Olfelt  
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David Olfelt, Division Director  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Fish and Wildlife

### United States Fish and Wildlife Service

*Charles W. Traxler*  
3/30/23

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Charles Traxler, Acting Regional Director  
Midwest Region – Region 3  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

**JAMES  
HODGSON** Digitally signed by JAMES  
HODGSON  
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James B. Hodgson, Assistant Regional Director  
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs  
Midwest Region – Region 3  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service