



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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### Laws of Minnesota 2013 Final Report

#### General Information

**Date:** 03/18/2021

**Project Title:** Dakota County Habitat Protection/Restoration Phase 4

**Funds Recommended:** \$4,100,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2013, Ch. 137, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(b)

**Appropriation Language:** \$4,100,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota County to acquire, restore, and enhance lands in Dakota County for fish and wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, or aquatic management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, sections 86A.05, subdivision 14, and 97C.02, and to acquire permanent conservation easements and restore and enhance habitats in rivers and lake watersheds in Dakota County. Up to \$60,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund, as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed land acquisitions and permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Al Singer

**Title:**

**Organization:** Dakota County

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#### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Dakota.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Habitat

## Narrative

### Summary of Accomplishments

During this grant time frame, Dakota County was able to protect habitat through acquisition of seven parcels, totaling 409 acres. The fee title ownership of three of the parcels, totaling 197 acres, was transferred to the Minnesota DNR as part of establishing the new Hampton Woods Wildlife Management Area in Hampton and Castle Rock townships. Another notable acquisition was that of a 109-acre easement on a portion of the Grannis property in Inver Grove Heights, which when added to the original 17-acre easement, totals 126 acres that includes the southernmost and highest quality lake of the Marcott Lakes Chain. Additionally, when combined with the adjacent 103-acre Lindberg easement, provides a total protected area of 229 acres in Inver Grove Heights. As is typical for a voluntary land protection program, landowners don't always move forward with their projects for a variety of reasons; and eight projects that staff worked on were either withdrawn by the landowner, or the County completed them with Outdoor Heritage funding from another grant.

Dakota County also completed a significant amount of restoration work within a variety of habitats, totaling 392 acres. Restoration work was completed in areas including: the new Hampton Woods WMA; on the Grannis easement; and at three locations along the Vermillion River, among other locations. This restoration work is ongoing.

Dakota County's commitment to land conservation is reflected in one of four County Board Strategic Plan Goals: A healthy environment with quality natural areas. This commitment is recognized through annual County Board support (e.g., funding and staff resources) for land conservation programs, other environmental health and protection programs and initiatives, as well as the County Board's commitment to not only establish regional parks and County park preserves, but its commitment to restoring habitat within its park system. Through this commitment, County Land Conservation staff work with confidence and were able to achieve greater grant match support than anticipated, providing County grant-match funding and in-kind staff time totaling \$732,300, \$444,300 more than the original estimate of \$288,000. The extended length of time afforded to expend grant funding, per Section 2.1 of the grant agreement contributed greatly to this level of County grant-match.

### Process & Methods

Through the Dakota County Land Conservation Program, the County has been protecting high-quality natural areas for wildlife habitat and improved water quality, outside its regional park system, since 2003.

As with many conservation acquisition efforts during the term of this grant, modifications were made to accommodate evolving circumstances. As a result, Dakota County acquired four conservation easements that protected 212 acres of: wetlands (5 acres); Forest/Woodland (49 acres); Grasslands (24 acres); Cultivated land that was restored to natural vegetation (100 acres); Habitat (12 acres); and Open Water (22 acres). The County's voluntary program can be unpredictable. An application round is held each year to accept submittals for potential conservation easement projects. Project Prioritization Criteria are used to score and rank project applications. Some projects move through the process to closing, and some stall-out or are withdrawn by the landowner for a

variety of reasons. The common, uncertain nature of a voluntary conservation program is why in future grants, the County extended the window of time to complete acquisitions, because sometimes it just takes more time to get to the closing. An extended acquisition timeframe will provide greater flexibility in completing projects.

The County also successfully completed three natural area fee title acquisitions totaling 197 acres, establishing the first protected land within the new Hampton Woods Wildlife Management Area in Hampton and Castle Rock townships. This historic woodland has stood for centuries and was used by settlers as a woodlot as surrounding areas were cultivated. The County transferred ownership and management of the 197 acres of land to the Minnesota DNR. More acquisitions are planned, with subsequent ownership transfer to the DNR within this new WMA.

Regarding restoration efforts, the County successfully restored 390 acres, involving 16 parcels. The County requires not only Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs) for each natural area easement, but requires that landowners sign a Management Agreement (MA) that outlines restoration and maintenance activities, who is responsible for the work, and how each activity will be funded, using cost estimates from accepted contractor proposals. Restoration work involved parcels that include over 1 mile of shoreline. Restoration activities included: restoring agricultural land to natural vegetation; removing invasive species, like buckthorn; establishing test areas to determine the most effective way(s) to remove invasive species; and forest and prairie seeding to re-establish or enhance native species diversity.

The parcels restored supports populations of eagles, sandhill cranes, deer, eastern cottontail, wild fur-bearing game (fox, coyote, mink, and beaver), wild turkey, pheasant, wood duck, and other waterfowl. Restoration activities anticipate an increase in the populations of these and many other species, which will augment populations on the adjacent land. In addition, these restoration efforts anticipate more diverse populations of non-game species. Baseline populations will be monitored into the future.

### **Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition**

Relative to land protection acquisitions, the LSOHC and our landowners are the County's partners. However, the Land Conservation Program (Program) is supported by local governments within Dakota County, in part, because the Program results in the vast majority of land remaining in private ownership that still generates tax revenue for local governments. Relative to restoration and enhancement, the County has partners that provide resources and opportunities to improve natural habitats throughout the County, including the LSOHC, the MN DNR, non-profit organizations (e.g., Friends of the Mississippi River), and easement landowners. Again, opposition is virtually non-existent, with all parties recognizing the benefits of working together to improve natural resources.

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

Working with a variety of landowner acquisition projects is challenging. Processes don't always go as planned; timelines can get stalled, side-tracked, altered, and extinguished. This is disappointing and impossible to predict. The fact that budget category funding can be shifted is very helpful, and allows the County to funnel resources toward habitat restoration and enhancement efforts when needed. The time extension afforded for restoration activities by section 1.2 of the grant agreement was instrumental in full grant expenditure. Habitat restoration work can be unpredictable, no matter how well-planned. The weather can derail anticipated restoration activities, and did the spring of 2019. County staff and contractors found themselves scrambling to replace anticipated restoration activities with acceptable alternatives that resulted in full grant expenditure. The result was also that some anticipated restoration work was postponed on five specific parcels.

## **What other funds contributed to this program?**

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund
- Parks and Trails Fund

## **How were the funds used to advance the program?**

Past investments of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) provided Dakota County with the opportunity to develop the Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan and the Vermillion River Corridor Plan which provided the foundation for an integrated, comprehensive countywide land conservation vision, priorities and implementation strategies. The initial funding led to the successful passage of a \$20M bond referendum in 2002 that has resulted in the permanent protection of nearly 10,000 acres and 57 miles of shoreline with an estimated fair market value of \$75M.

Current and recommended ENRTF allocations are focused on many of the same habitat areas included in this proposal.

Dakota County has already conducted extensive testing to establish significant water quality impairments. A significant benefit of these habitat protection and improvement projects are to prevent or reduce impairments that would otherwise require Clean Water Funds.

Much of the riparian habitat work is also included within the County's 200-mile regional greenway plan that focuses on integrating wildlife habitat, water quality and outdoor recreation within multi-purpose corridors. Many of the greenways are located along rivers and streams and the objective is to protect the corridors first and make provisions for potential recreational trail development at a future time. Metropolitan Council funds, through their bonding authority or through their Legacy Parks and Trails funds may be available for partial land acquisition funding.

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

The majority of land protection work occurs on private land, designed to achieve maximum conservation benefits, with short- and long-term fiscal efficiency. By primarily focusing on easements on private property, management responsibilities remain with private landowners, creating less of a financial burden on the County. The relationship-building, developing and implementing a Natural Resource Management Plan and Management Agreement, strategic assistance, and subsequent monitoring provide opportunities to share updated natural resource information and best management practices with landowners and achieve a higher likelihood of increased private stewardship. Landowners are contacted at least once each year through required annual monitoring. Monitoring inspectors not only look for environmental concerns, but assist County staff in providing suggestions for natural resource management and maintenance for the protected property. While restoration activities are ongoing, more frequent interaction with landowners is occurring; and maintenance of restored areas is required for at least the next three years. This comprehensive wildlife habitat and water quality approach provides the best opportunity to effectively protect these community assets and past public investments. By comprehensively and intensely restoring and enhancing priority habitat areas, this project is a cost effective way to create and sustain more resilient landscapes that provide multiple public benefits and likely require lower future management costs. The County has a dedicated fund within its five-year capital improvement program for monitoring easements. The County's comprehensive Natural Resource Management System Plan establishes natural resource management goals, policies, standards, and practices for public and private land that provide the foundation for maintaining and even expanding wildlife habitat.

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$147,000	\$27,700	\$288,000	\$732,300	-	\$435,000	\$760,000
Contracts	\$440,000	\$382,000	\$50,000	\$172,200	County	\$490,000	\$554,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$500,000	\$560,600	\$100,000	\$198,800	County	\$600,000	\$759,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,000,000	-	\$250,000	-	County	\$1,250,000	-
Easement Acquisition	\$1,928,000	\$3,018,800	\$950,000	\$1,118,900	County	\$2,878,000	\$4,137,700
Easement Stewardship	\$60,000	-	\$60,000	-	County	\$120,000	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$25,000	\$48,400	-	-	-	\$25,000	\$48,400
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	\$8,300	-	-	-	-	\$8,300
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	\$45,500	-	-	-	-	\$45,500
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>	<b>\$4,091,300</b>	<b>\$1,698,000</b>	<b>\$2,222,200</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$5,798,000</b>	<b>\$6,313,500</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Conservation Manager	0.1	6.0	-	\$60,000	Dakota County	\$60,000
Land Acquisition Specialist	0.7	5.0	-	\$350,000	Dakota County	\$350,000
Senior Project Manager	0.5	7.0	\$27,700	\$322,300	Dakota County	\$350,000

### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Budget success was a result of the ability to shift funds from one or more budget categories into others, to accommodate shifts in the County's ability to spend funds in originally anticipated categories. This resulted in full expenditure of the grant, and expenditure of County grant-match that exceeded County expectations. The ability to amend the budget provides needed flexibility in what has always and continues to be an unpredictable County program, based on its voluntary nature.

**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.

## 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 (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	280	392	280	392
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	197	100	197
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	0	250	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	470	212	470	212
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	70	0	70	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>801</b>

### 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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$420,000	\$427,400	\$420,000	\$427,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$400,000	\$560,600	\$400,000	\$560,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,000,000	-	\$1,000,000	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,210,000	\$3,112,000	\$2,210,000	\$3,112,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$70,000	-	\$70,000	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>

### 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 (Final)
Restore	220	351	0	0	60	41	0	0	0	0	280	392
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	100	197	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	197
Protect in	250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250	0

Fee w/o State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	420	212	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	470	212
Enhance	50	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	70	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,040</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>801</b>

**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	\$330,000	\$321,000	-	-	\$90,000	\$106,400	-	-	-	-	\$420,000	\$427,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$400,000	\$560,600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$400,000	\$560,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,000,000	-
Protect in Easement	\$2,135,000	\$3,112,000	-	-	-	-	\$75,000	-	-	-	\$2,210,000	\$3,112,000
Enhance	\$50,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$20,000	-	-	-	\$70,000	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,915,000</b>	<b>\$3,993,600</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>	<b>\$106,400</b>	<b>\$95,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>

**Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)**

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,500	\$1,090
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,000	\$2,845
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,000	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$4,702	\$14,679
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,000	-

**Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)**

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)
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Restore	\$1,500	\$914	-	-	\$1,500	\$2,595	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$4,000	\$2,845	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$4,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$5,083	\$14,679	-	-	\$0	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$1,000	-	-	-	\$0	-	-	-	-	-

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles**

6

**Outcomes**

**Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:**

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~
- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~
- Improved aquatic habitat indicators ~

**Programs in southeast forest region:**

- Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat ~
- Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat ~

## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

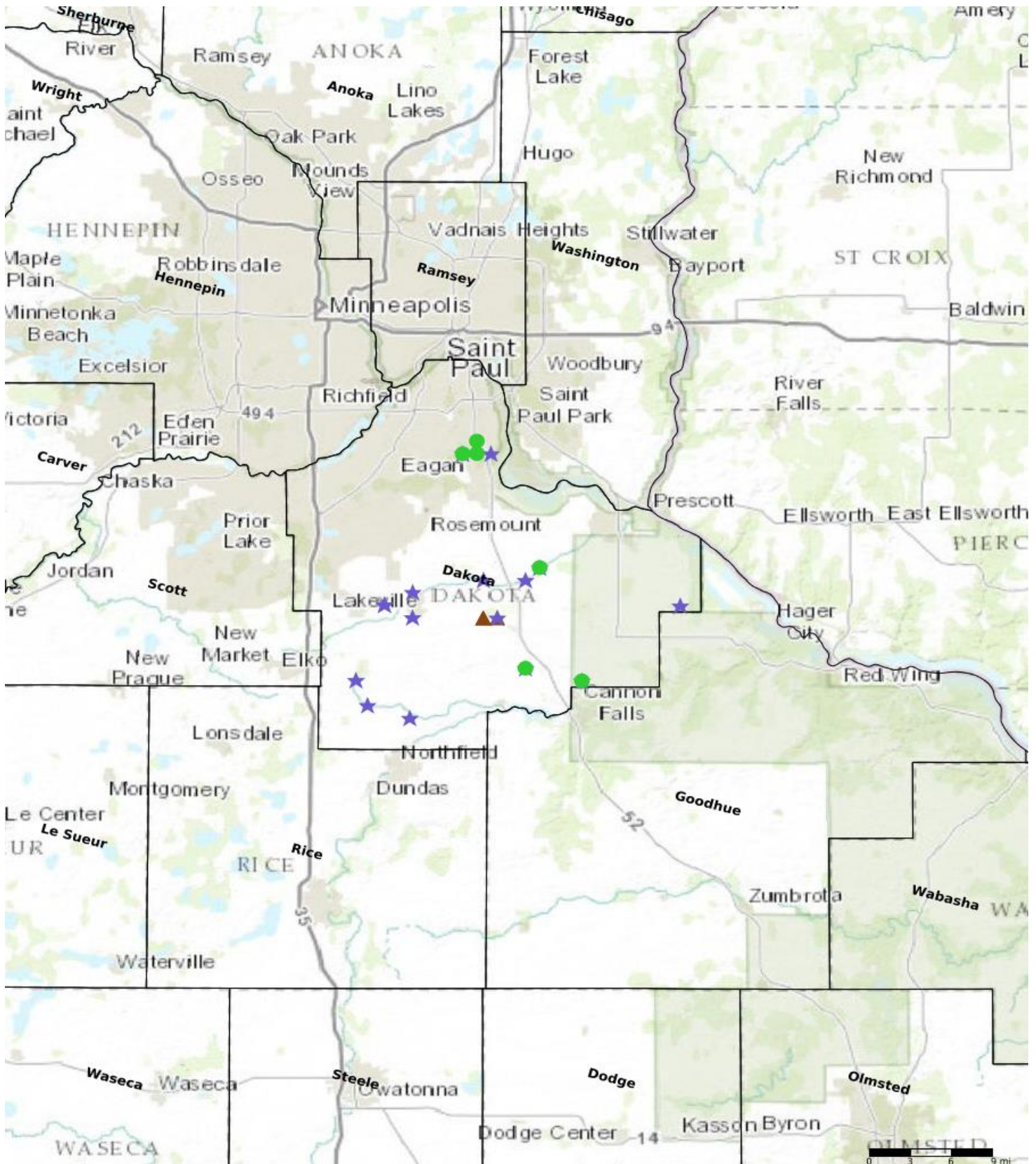
No

### Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Macalester College	Dakota	02722222	8	\$7,350	Yes
Ag Society	Dakota	11319206	10	\$120	Yes
Wilmar	Dakota	11418221	20	\$12,850	Yes
South Creek	Dakota	11420235	20	\$1,590	Yes
Stoffel	Dakota	11418215	46	\$15,450	Yes
Sipe-Schumacher	Dakota	11318228	32	\$89,800	Yes
Johnson	Dakota	11220210	20	\$15,750	Yes
Jennings	Dakota	11320233	78	\$86,130	Yes
Hampton Woods	Dakota	11318206	20	\$50,000	Yes
Hallcock	Dakota	11219218	10	\$11,900	Yes
Grannis	Dakota	02722220	50	\$12,000	Yes
Finden	Dakota	11419230	28	\$63,570	Yes
Cemstone	Dakota	11419224	15	\$14,550	Yes
Callister	Dakota	11317231	6	\$280	Yes
Betzler	Dakota	11416232	3	\$17,430	Yes
Blair/Foley	Dakota	11420235	24	\$2,500	Yes

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Kuntz - Sec 6-Hampton Woods	Dakota	11318206	130	\$397,570	No
Kuntz-Sec 1-Hampton Woods	Dakota	11319201	36	\$112,130	No
Dove Creek Co. LLC	Dakota	11319201	7	\$9,380	No
Stoffel, D-Vermillion River-Main	Dakota	11418215	54	\$55,300	No
Sipe/Schumacher-Forest	Dakota	11318228	42	\$55,000	No
Grannis-Sec 16-Marcott Lakes	Dakota	02722216	11	\$145,000	No
Grannis - Sec 21-Marcott Lakes	Dakota	02722221	44	\$770,000	No
Grannis - Sec 20-Marcott Lakes	Dakota	02722220	54	\$2,084,280	No
Callister	Dakota	11317231	7	\$14,140	No
Uselmann-Hampton Woods	Dakota	11319201	24	\$59,700	No



**Parcel Map**  
**Dakota County Habitat Protection/Restoration**  
**Phase 4**  
**(Data Generated From Parcel List)**

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other