

Main Request for Funding Form

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2014 / ML 2013 Proposal

Program or Project Title: Young Forest Conservation

Funds Requested: \$4,771,000

Manager's Name: George Fenwick

Title: President

Organization: American Bird Conservancy

Street Address: P.O. Box 249

City: The Plains, VA 20198

Telephone: 540-253-5780

E-Mail: gfenwick@abcbirds.org

Organization Web Site: www.abcbirds.org

County Locations: Becker, and Mille Lacs.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity Type:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

Abstract

ABC will provide expertise and significant funding to Minnesota's Young Forest Partnership to: create high quality habitat; meet conservation goals of Minnesota's wildlife plans; create jobs for Minnesotans; and support birdwatching that contributes \$97,000,000+ to Minnesota's economy.

Activity Detail

Design and Scope of Work

Minnesota is the key state in an international initiative to prevent Golden-winged Warblers (GWWA), a species which has seen a precipitous population decline, from being listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or upgraded on the global IUCN list of species in need of immediate conservation action. To accomplish this, high

quality young forest habitat (also known as early successional) must be created in GWWA focal areas in ten states using recently developed GWWA Best Management Practices. Minnesota has the highest number of breeding GWWAs in the country and the second highest population of breeding American Woodcock, another young forest specialist. Successfully meeting GWWA population goals will require creating at least 23,000 acres of high quality young forest a year, over the next ten years, in Minnesota. Creating high quality young forest as GWWA habitat requirements will also help meet goals within six Minnesota conservation plans including *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare*, *Minnesota DNR Non-game Wildlife Plan*, and *Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years*. This work will also support the more than \$97 million that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates is spent in Minnesota annually by people who feed or watch birds (USFWS, 2000).

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and its partners in Minnesota's Young Forest Partnership will meet this goal by creating young forest habitat on public and private lands scientifically identified as prime GWWA habitat. We will adapt GWWA Best Management Practices (BMPs) successfully field tested in Pennsylvania to Minnesota habitats, and use the Minnesota BMPs as the basis for GWWA BMPs throughout the Great Lakes. To achieve this wildlife success, ABC and its partners in Minnesota's Young Forest Partnership respectfully request \$4,771,000 to:

1. Purchase land or conservation easements on approximately 1,800 acres of targeted habitat adjacent to Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This habitat will be converted into high quality young forest, to be owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources respectively;
2. Create high quality young forest habitat on a minimum of 9,000 acres of public and private lands to help meet conservation habitat and species goals;
3. Provide additional manpower and expertise to help the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) enroll private landowners in Farm Bill programs that create young forest in GWWA focal areas ;
4. Work with Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) corporate partners in Minnesota GWWA focal areas to adopt GWWA BMPs on lands they treat;
5. Work with public land managers in GWWA focal areas to incorporate GWWA BMPs for young forest into their management plans to maximize the conservation gains for other wildlife.

With Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) funding, ABC can leverage more than \$1,000,000 in public and private match for this multi-phase project. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has committed millions of dollars over ten years to its Keystone Initiative for Golden-winged Warblers and Early Successional Habitat. NFWF funding requires a 3:1 match; so LSOHC funding could qualify Minnesota for potentially millions of dollars of NFWF funding. Similarly, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recently dedicated a portion of its Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act funding to the conservation of GWWAs, and the United States Department of Agriculture NRCS has also recently redirected some Farm Bill program funding toward GWWAs. LSOHC funding can leverage significant, multi-year funding from these sources as well.

Creating high quality early successional habitat in Golden-winged Warbler focal areas is the most efficient way to measurably increase habitat for the greatest number of young forest-dependent species listed as Minnesota's conservation priorities. GWWAs have the most specialized habitat requirements; they will not occupy generic young forest clearings.

ABC will work with local landowners and government agencies to secure the acreage necessary to ensure that the Golden-winged Warbler, as well as other species such as the American Woodcock and Ruffed Grouse that use similar habitat, prosper in Minnesota. ABC has targeted two areas, the Tamarac Wildlife Refuge and Mille Lacs WMA, as the focus for the first phase of this initiative. These two areas have been identified as excellent habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler with relatively large breeding populations documented by many years of extensive research in the area. This project will enhance and expand habitat on these public lands as well as increase suitable habitat on nearby private lands.

ABC will partner with members of the Young Forest Partnership, a collaboration of federal and state agencies with a proven track record of success in working with landowners. ABC will also work with the forest products industry, as it has so successfully in the past, to adapt their management regimes to support early successional bird species, and with The Conservation Fund, the highest rated environmental organization in the nation, for their land transaction expertise to secure permanent protection of key habitats.

Local contractors will perform the necessary habitat work, providing jobs for Minnesotans. Financial and technical support will be provided to private landowners interested in creating Young Forest, and greater opportunities for birdwatchers to enjoy Minnesota's birds will be created; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that more than \$97 million dollars per year is spent in Minnesota by people who feed or watch birds.

ABC is an international non-profit conservation organization dedicated to conserving habitat for native birds of the Americas. ABC was founded in 1986 on the founding principle that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts"; ABC works with more than 300 public and private partners in the United States. ABC advances bird conservation through direct action and by finding and engaging the people and groups needed to succeed, regardless of their political, economic, or social point of view. ABC seeks innovative, fair solutions to difficult issues. ABC has a long record of successful collaborations of conservation and business interests that ensure that critical birds and habitat receive lasting protection.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Plans Addressed

- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Partners in Flight Conservation Plans for States and Physiographic Regions
- Ruffed Grouse in Minnesota: A Long-Range Plan for Management
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare

LSOHC Statewide Priorities

- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Are able to leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Allow public access. This comes into play when all other things about the request are approximately equal
- Address conservation opportunities that will be lost if not immediately acted on
- Restore or enhance habitat on state-owned WMAs, AMAs, SNAs, and state forests
- Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model
- Address wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work
- Target unique Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife

LSOHC Forest Prairie Transition Section Priorities

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife
- Protect, enhance, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

LSOHC Northern Forest Section Priorities

- Protect forestland through acquisition or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties
- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey
- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds

none

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts

The effort to save GWWA habitat is an international call to arms with a variety of partners devoting millions of dollars toward the conservation of this threatened species. Now the attention must turn to Minnesota where so much of the breeding habitat for GWWA exists, but must be protected to prevent the listing of this species. This project continues and expands the important work initiated by the Minnesota Young Forest Partnership through a Conservation Partners Legacy grant. This project enhances that initial success that was focused on Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock habitat by bringing into play the talents and skills of some of the most effective conservation organizations in the country. With the help of ABC and its partners, including the Golden-winged Warbler as a keystone species will greatly accelerate the creation and management of young

forest habitat in Minnesota. Simply put, the international effort to protect the Golden-winged Warbler will not succeed without the participation of Minnesota and ABC is eager to assist Minnesotans in this important endeavor.

Sustainability and Maintenance

A major strength of this project is the demonstrated, long-term commitment of its many partners to creating and maintaining sufficient Young Forest habitat in Minnesota to sustain healthy populations of Golden-winged Warblers, American Woodcock, Ruffed Grouse and other wildlife **indefinitely**. This first phase will focus on setting the table through the acquisition of critical habitat that is for sale today, using this private and public land as a model of young forest management, training public employees in the management of these lands so that they can do the same on public lands, and work with the private sector to encourage their participation. In addition, we will work with Sustainable Forestry Initiative corporate members already pledged to manage their forest lands in a manner compatible with conservation plans to develop forest management plans that incorporate the best science available for young forest dependent species. Support from LSOHC will also enable partners to attract significant national funding sources to Minnesota from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation who have currently made a ten-year commitment to the conservation of Golden-winged Warblers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **Yes**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **Yes**

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - **Yes**

ABC and The Conservation Fund will seek to acquire land that will be open to hunting as much as possible and, in all cases where LSOHC funds are used to acquire the land outright.

Will the eased land be open for public use? - **Yes**

The eased land will become part of the USFWS Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and will be open to public visitation for passive recreational activities.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **Yes**

Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15? - **Yes (WMA, Private Land, County/Municipal, Refuge Lands, Public Waters, State Forests)**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Hire staff in Minnesota to work with public & private land managers to create/manage Young Forest	September 30, 2013
Purchase at least 1,000 acres in fee or conservation easements	September 30, 2013
Create at least 9,000 acres of high quality Young Forest habitat	June 30, 2018
Engage SFI corporate partners in creating high quality Young Forest habitat	June 30, 2018

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation
- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species
- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors
- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers

Programs in forest-prairie transition region

- Protected, restored, and enhanced aspen parklands and riparian areas
- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$4,771,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$325,000	\$433,400	-	\$758,400
Contracts	\$1,955,000	\$226,000	-Private	\$2,181,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,700,000	\$0	-	\$1,700,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0	-	\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$600,000	\$91,500	-Private	\$691,500
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0	-	\$0
Travel (in-state)	\$56,000	\$82,500	-Private	\$138,500
Professional Services	\$50,000	\$59,000	-Private	\$109,000
Direct Support Services	\$60,000	\$76,600	-Private	\$136,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$25,000	\$0	-	\$25,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0	-	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$11,000	-Private	\$11,000
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$20,000	-	\$20,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0	-	\$0
Total	\$4,771,000	\$1,000,000	-	\$5,771,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
MN Coordinator	1.00	5.00	\$325,000	\$0	-	\$325,000
MN NRCS Coordinator	2.00	3.00	\$0	\$390,000	Private Source	\$390,000
ABC Migratory Bird Director	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$23,000	Private Source	\$23,000
ABC VP Conservation	0.05	3.00	\$0	\$20,400	Private Source	\$20,400
Total	3.15	14.00	\$325,000	\$433,400	-	\$758,400

Capital Equipment

Item Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Cash Leverage	Cash Leverage Source	Total
Total	\$0	\$0	-	\$0

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	9,000	0	9,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,400	0	1,400
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	400	0	400
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	10,800	0	10,800

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$2,280,000	\$0	\$2,280,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,838,000	\$0	\$1,838,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$653,000	\$0	\$653,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$4,771,000	\$0	\$4,771,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	3,000	0	0	6,000	9,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	1,400	1,400
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	400	0	0	0	400
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	3,400	0	0	7,400	10,800

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$752,400	\$0	\$0	\$1,527,600	\$2,280,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,838,000	\$1,838,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$653,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$653,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$1,405,400	\$0	\$0	\$3,365,600	\$4,771,000

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

0 miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Becker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Tamarac #1	14039213	400	\$600,000	No	Limited	Full

Mille Lacs

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mille Lacs #1	04027232	800	\$900,000	No	Full	Full
Mille Lacs #2	04027234	600	\$800,000	No	Full	Full

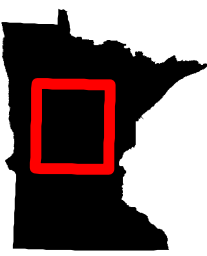
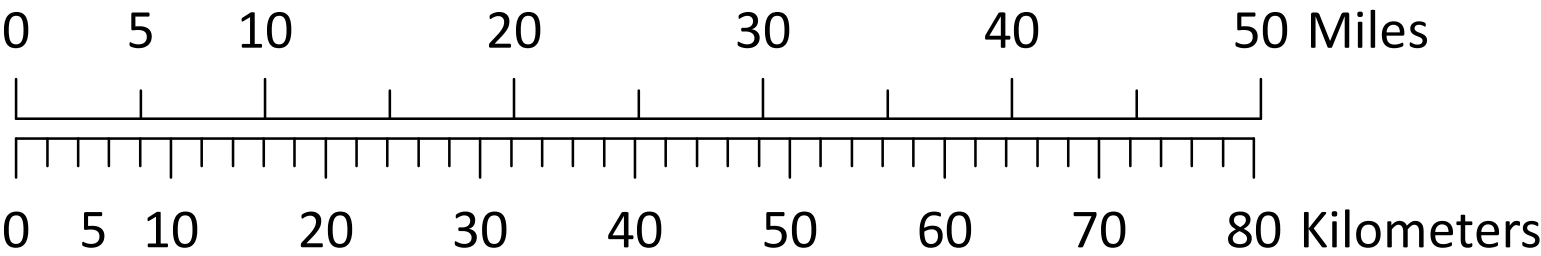
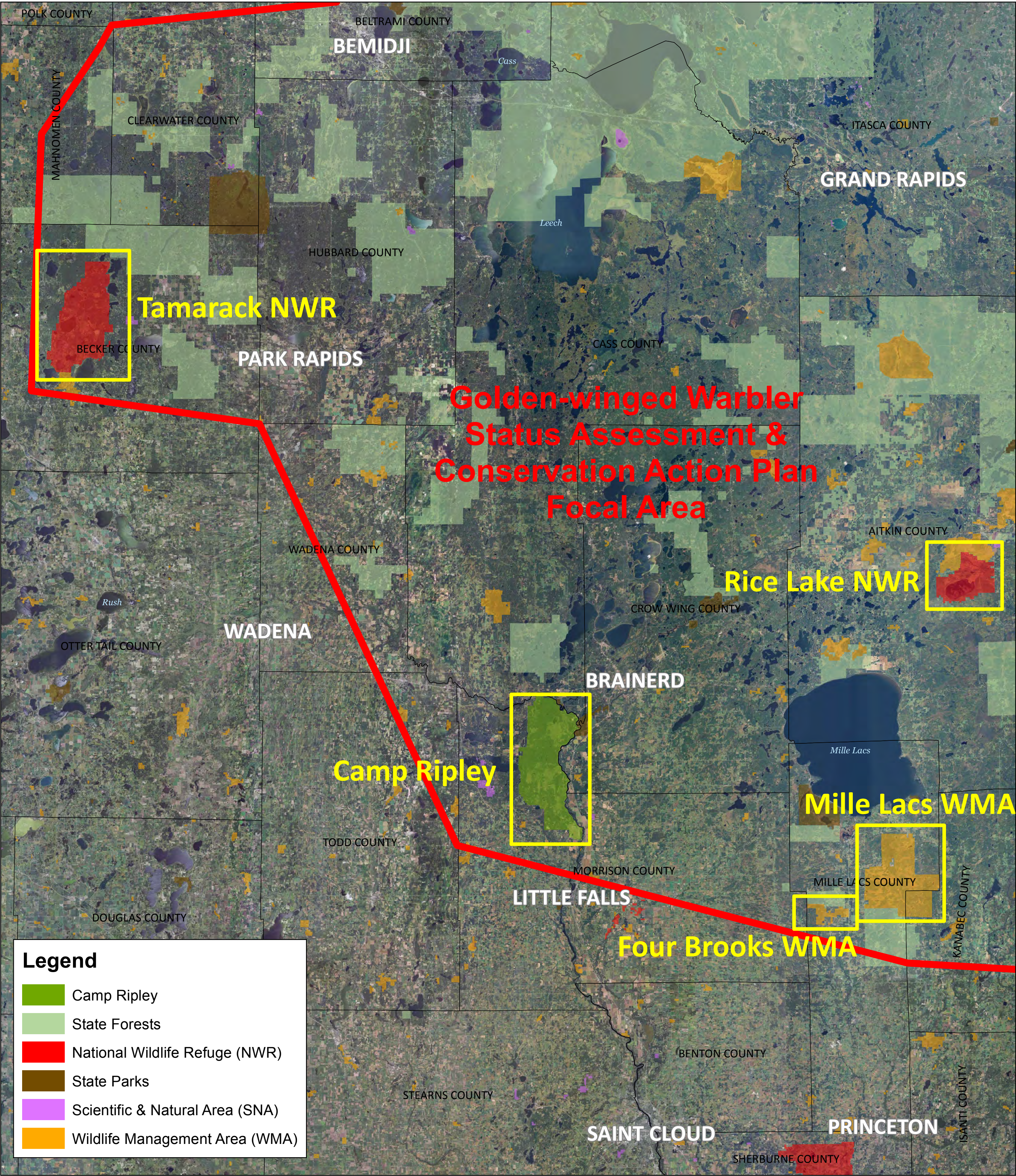
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

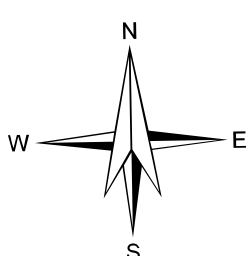
Young Forest Conservation Focus Areas



Data courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010 FSA Aerial Photo.

Map by Ned Phillips for The Conservation Fund

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JOHN B. EICHINGER
President and CEO



June 28, 2012

Steve Hobbs
Minnesota Project Director
The Conservation Fund
Suite 340
7101 York Avenue South
Edina, MN 55435

Dear Steve,

The Ruffed Grouse Society is pleased to voice our support for the *Young Forest Conservation* project proposal developed by the American Bird Conservancy and The Conservation Fund. As outlined in the project proposal, on-the-ground habitat enhancement efforts coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and private partners, including the Ruffed Grouse Society, will significantly aid in the conservation of the shrub-dominated and young forest habitats beneficial to many species of wildlife.

Wildlife dependent upon shrub-dominated and young forest habitats are experiencing precipitous population declines throughout much of the eastern United States. The ruffed grouse and American woodcock are important game birds throughout much of the eastern United States and although populations within the Great Lakes region remain stable, these species are experiencing disturbing population declines throughout significant portions of the East.

Breeding Bird Survey data (1966 – 2010) document that 53% of the bird species characteristic of shrub-dominated or young forest habitats in the eastern United States are experiencing population declines, whereas only 29% are increasing. Conversely, within this same landscape and temporal interval, 58% of the bird species characteristic of mature forest habitats are experiencing population increases, whereas only 29% are declining.

***Dedicated To Improving The Environment For
Ruffed Grouse, Woodcock, And Other Forest Wildlife***

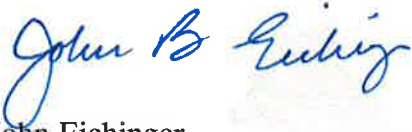
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
451 McCormick Road Coraopolis, Pennsylvania 15108-9377
412-262-4044 ♦ Fax 412-262-9207 ♦ Toll Free 888-564-6747 ♦ www.ruffedgrousesociety.org

The golden-winged warbler breeds almost exclusively in shrub-dominated and young forest habitats. This species is currently being reviewed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for possible listing under the Endangered Species Act. Approximately half of the global population of the golden-winged warbler is found in Minnesota.

The *Young Forest Conservation* Project would greatly aid land managers as they work to conserve these imperiled habitats and associated wildlife. The Ruffed Grouse Society respectfully requests that the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council support this worthy endeavor.

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



John Eichinger
President and CEO
Ruffed Grouse Society



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
35704 County Highway 26
Rochert, Minnesota 56578-9638
Phone: 218/847-2641 Fax: 218/847-9141



June 29, 2012

Mr. George H. Fenwick, President
American Bird Conservancy
P.O. Box 249
The Plains, VA 20198

Dear Mr. Fenwick:

I am writing in support of the American Bird Conservancy's Young Forest Conservation grant proposal. Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge fully supports the approach outlined in the grant proposal and is eager to work directly with the American Bird Conservancy and other partners to restore and enhance forest habitats for the benefit of golden winged warblers and other migratory bird species.

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge administers a five county Wetland Management District that covers an area of over 19,000 sq. miles in north central Minnesota. Our long-term goal for this area as outlined in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan is to protect, restore and maintain a diversity of wildlife species with special emphasis on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Conservation Priority Species which include golden winged warblers among other migratory birds. Funding proposed under the framework of this grant would parallel and strengthen our ongoing conservation efforts for these species.

We look forward to the opportunity to work collaboratively with your agency and appreciate your efforts to promote migratory bird conservation.

Sincerely,

Neil J. Powers
Project Leader