Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2014 Final Report

General Information

Date: 09/23/2020

Project Title: Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water-IV

Funds Recommended: $2,200,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(f)

Appropriation Language: $2,200,000 in the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements to protect and enhance habitat by expanding the clean water fund riparian buffer program for at least equal wildlife benefits from buffers on private land. Up to $112,500 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. Lands with easements acquired with this appropriation may not be used for emergency haying and grazing in response to federal or state disaster declarations. Conservation grazing under a management plan that is already being implemented may continue. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Nobles, Grant, Cottonwood, Kandiyohi, Renville, Yellow Medicine and Jackson.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Clean Water Fund and OHF were used together to secure easements on buffer areas. Seven easements were recorded for a total of 606.5 acres. These acres represent 303.1 acres funded by OHF and 303.4 acres funded by non-OHF sources. Only the OHF acres are being reported in this final report to be consistent with the approved accomplishment plan.

Process & Methods

Minnesota's primary strategy to mitigate the loss of CRP contract acres is to target expiring contracts for enrollment into continuous CRP practices (like buffers) and permanent easements for the most beneficial practices (e.g. wetland restoration, grasslands, and buffers). This program model is a proven strategy to provide landowners with an option to keep targeted conservation on the land when economic incentives may lead to a switch to row crop production. This program established permanent buffers that provide both improved wildlife habitat and water quality. For example, a buffer of 100 feet generally serves to protect water quality, while an additional 100 feet for wildlife greatly enhances nesting opportunities for wildlife. Establishing a minimum of 200 feet on each side of a stream for a total of 400 feet, plus the open water, creates a block of habitat for nesting birds and a critical link between other permanently protected habitats.

Criteria used to evaluate and prioritize buffers funded under this phase of the program included building upon Clean Water Fund buffers, proximity to other permanently protected habitat, buffers within a designated shallow lake watershed, proximity to lands open to public hunting, plant diversity, overall size, and the type of water resource being buffered. A RIM Buffers application process for landowners was utilized for the program. The process built upon the established RIM Buffer enrollments supported by the Outdoor Heritage Fund and Clean Water Fund in the previous funding cycles. In future years, it is hoped that a broader buffer initiative (full field or all land within the floodplain of larger order streams) will create increased demand for this program as wider buffers provide better habitat. Further, buffers that are put in proximity to other grasslands also function at a higher level for grassland nesting birds and other wildlife.

The $2.2 million from OHF was used for perpetual RIM easements that built upon RIM buffers funded through the Clean Water Fund allocation of $2.2 million. This creates an equal partnership of both programs to accomplish a single project with enhanced outcomes that could not otherwise be obtained with a single funding source.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

This phase of the RIM Buffers Program was supported by Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership which includes BWSR, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota DNR, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Pheasants Forever and local partners. The program was delivered locally through SWCDs and administered by BWSR.

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

Not completed

What other funds contributed to this program?

- Clean Water Fund

How were the funds used to advance the program?

This project matched an equal amount of Clean Water Fund with OHF funding for the RIM buffer easements. The project focused on expiring CRP contracts that had funding associated with them from a USDA CRP contract.

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

BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring into perpetuity for RIM easements. BWSR partners with SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of the conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years after the first five years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Budget

Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	$102,800	$107,400	$102,800	$107,400	-	$205,600	$214,800
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	$1,922,200	$1,951,600	$1,922,200	$1,942,200	Clean Water Fund	$3,844,400	$3,864,400
Easement Stewardship	$112,500	$45,500	$112,500	$45,500	Clean Water Fund	$225,000	$158,000
Travel	-	$300	-	-	-	-	$300
Professional Services	$62,500	$6,000	$62,500	$6,000	Clean Water Fund	$125,000	$68,500
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$2,200,000**	**$2,110,800**	**$2,200,000**	**$2,101,100**	**-**	**$4,400,000**	**$4,306,000**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Eco Services	0.05	3.0	$10,000	$10,000	Clean Water Fund	$20,000
Program Management	0.05	3.0	$9,000	$9,000	Clean Water Fund	$18,000
Easement Processing/Data Base/GIS	0.5	3.0	$50,900	$50,900	Clean Water Fund	$101,800
Project Manager	0.25	3.0	$37,500	$37,500	Clean Water Fund	$75,000

Explain any budget challenges or successes:
There was an overage on personnel that was discussed with LSOHC staff in November of 2018. The memo to file regarding that meeting is included as an attachment to the final report.

Total Revenue: $0

Revenue Spent: $0

Revenue Balance: -

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	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	375	303	0	0	0	0	375	303
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**375**	**303**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**375**	**303**

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	$2,200,000	$2,110,800	-	-	-	-	$2,200,000	$2,110,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**$2,200,000**	**$2,110,800**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$2,200,000**	**$2,110,800**

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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	375	303	0	0	375	303
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**375**	**303**	**0**	**0**	**375**	**303**

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	$2,200,000	$2,110,800	-	-	$2,200,000	$2,110,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$2,200,000**	**$2,110,800**	**-**	**-**	**$2,200,000**	**$2,110,800**

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	$5,866	$6,966	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Liability										
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	$5,866	$6,966	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

7.5

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Increased participation of private landowners in habitat projects ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Increased wildlife productivity ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear*

habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.

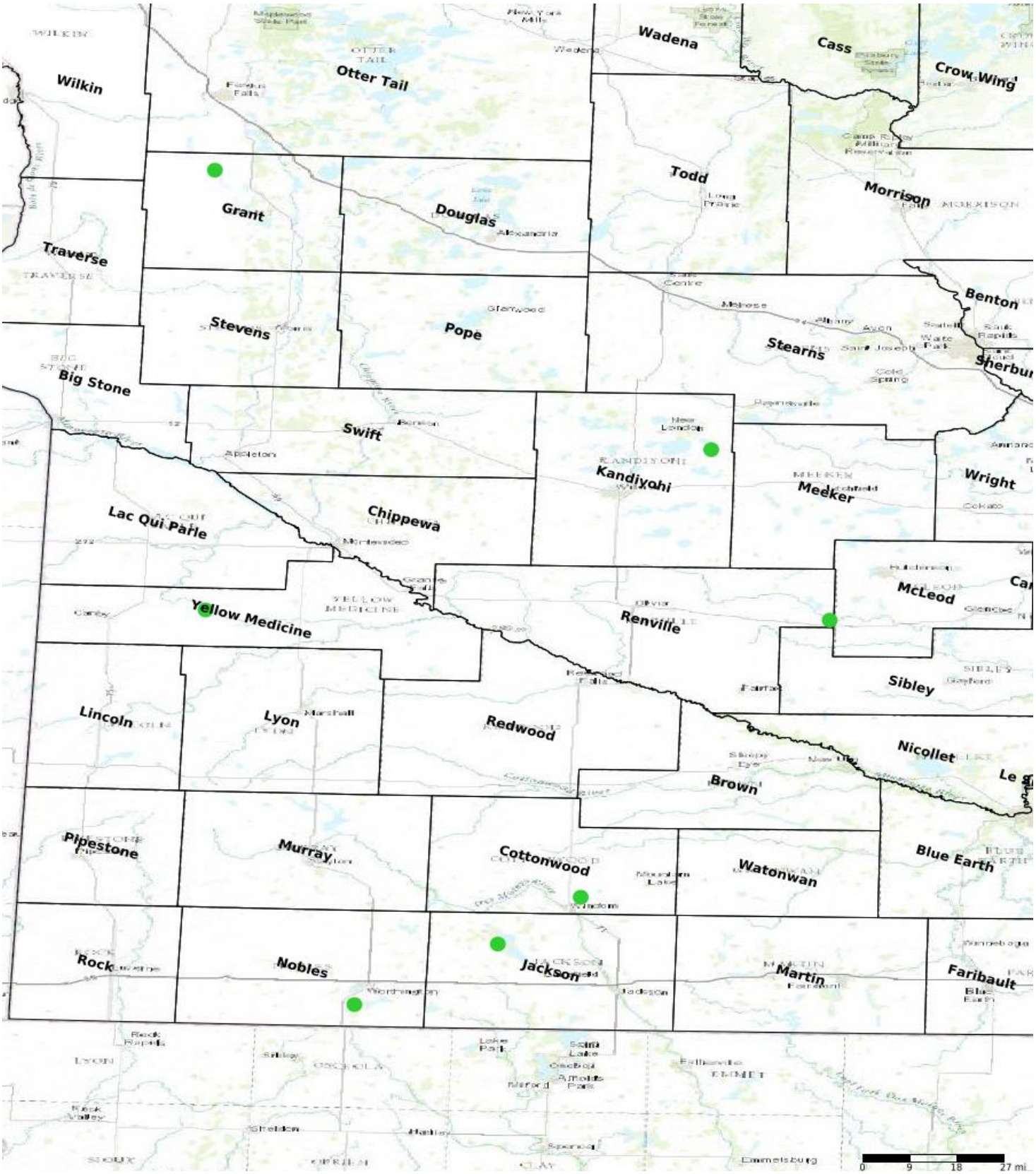
- Enhanced shallow lake productivity ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Water is kept on the land to reduce flood potential and degradation of aquatic habitat ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*
- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *Adding buffers to shallow lakes and wetlands provides improved water quality and upland nesting based on a wildlife scoring system, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. Habitat value is improved as corridors secured with this funding widen the buffer for wildlife purposes. Creating linear habitats that exceed 200 feet in width that function as blocks of habitat and serve as a link connecting existing core habitat parcels.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?
No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
17-14-14-09- -	Cottonwood	10535218	28	$85,300	No
26-03-14-09- -	Grant	13043221	110	$100,600	No
32-03-14-09- -	Jackson	10337204	284	$1,121,200	No
34-01-14-09- -	Kandiyohi	12133234	23	$40,000	No
53-03-14-09- -	Nobles	10140210	39	$112,500	No
65-01-14-09- -	Renville	11531225	101	$412,900	No
87-04-14-09- -	Yellow Medicine	11543228	21	$72,000	No



- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- Restore
- Enhance
- Other

Parcel Map
Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water-IV
(Data Generated From Parcel List)