



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

---

### Laws of Minnesota 2014 Final Report

#### General Information

**Date:** 06/01/2021

**Project Title:** Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Partnership

**Funds Recommended:** \$3,150,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(b)

**Appropriation Language:** \$3,150,000 in the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever in cooperation with the Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society to acquire and enhance lands in Aitkin, Carlton, Kanabec, Pine, and St. Louis Counties for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8. Lands 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 proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Ward Julien

**Title:**

**Organization:** Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society

**Address:** 644 - 107th Lane NW

**City:** Coon Rapids, MN 55448

**Email:** wjulien@peoplepc.com

**Office Number:** (763) 754-8361

**Mobile Number:** (763) 360-1449

**Fax Number:**

**Website:** www.sharptails.org

#### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Carlton, Aitkin, Pine and St. Louis.

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

- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee
- Restore

- Enhance

#### **Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Habitat

### **Narrative**

#### **Summary of Accomplishments**

This partnership protected 2257.81 acres, restored 50 acres and enhanced 2060.58 acres, primarily brushland, in northeastern Minnesota. Habitat was added to the WMA system and enhanced on existing public lands for species in greatest conservation need, outdoor recreation, and environmental benefits.

#### **Process & Methods**

This program sought to increase the quantity and quality of open land habitat for Sharp-tailed Grouse. This was accomplished by acquiring 2257.81 acres of lands that are now permanently protected as State Wildlife Management Areas. These acquisitions were focused in areas that directly benefit Sharp-tailed Grouse populations by acquiring properties with existing grouse leks or that are in close proximity to lands with existing grouse leks. All of these acquired properties were restored and enhanced to the highest habitat quality possible for Sharp-tailed Grouse.

Additionally restoration (50 acres) and enhancement (2060.58 acres) practices including, tree removal, brush mowing and shearing, and native grass planting were completed on WMA's to improve Sharp-tailed Grouse habitat. Similar to acquisition efforts these practices were completed on or near lands with existing grouse leks. One success, but challenge of the program, was how the appraised value of lands was significantly lower than anticipated. This allowed for more acres to be acquired but meant more time and funds needed to be allocated to the acquisition process. Additionally this meant more acres of acquired lands needed to be restored and enhanced. As for the enhancement activities the most significant challenge came from weather delays. Much of the brushland habitat where Sharp-tailed grouse are found in NE MN is wetland, and therefore requires very dry or frozen conditions for work to be completed. Many projects took multiple years to fully complete. Despite these minor challenges this program was a great success and was able to far exceed the proposed outcomes. Sharp-tailed Grouse leks are surveyed every year to monitor the population. Most leks in NE MN have seen significant decreases in the number of lekking individuals mostly due to habitat degradation (i.e. early successional habitat growing into later stages) or the conversion of unprotected open lands to cropland or development. Multiple acquisition and enhancement sites completed by this program showed an increase in the number of lekking individuals surveyed in the years after the acquisition and enhancement work was completed.

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

We worked in close collaboration with MN DNR to find and evaluate the best properties based on the criteria listed in the process and methods section. During the process, we also worked with many other partners to gauge interest levels and determine if the property is suitable for a Wildlife Management Area and those needing enhancement/restoration work.

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

There were no exceptional failures or challenges that were encountered. There was a bit of timing issues in completing enhancement work because of weather, but this is common and expected.

#### **What other fund may contribute to this program?**

- N/A

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

All parcels acquired have been transferred to the MN DNR for enrollment into the Wildlife Management Area program. All parcels were acquired then restored as part of this effort. The long-term management & maintenance of these new WMAs will be the responsibility of the MN DNR. Pheasants Forever is also active in additional habitat enhancement and restoration activities on existing public lands where there is a need.

### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2025-30	Pheasants Forever/Sharp-tailed Grouse Society	work with DNR to identify maintenance shortcomings	identify funding	complete project

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$15,000	\$21,000	\$23,100	-	\$15,800	-	\$15,000	\$38,900
Contracts	\$239,500	\$808,500	\$761,700	-	\$6,900	Pheasants Forever, Private	\$239,500	\$768,600
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$2,540,000	\$1,965,000	\$1,903,900	-	\$27,800	Pheasants Forever, Private Land Owner	\$2,540,000	\$1,931,700
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$30,800	-	\$14,000	Pheasants Forever, Private	\$28,000	\$44,800
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$21,500	\$36,500	\$36,500	-	-	-	\$21,500	\$36,500
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$306,000	\$160,000	\$133,800	\$5,000	-	-	\$311,000	\$133,800
DNR IDP	-	\$131,000	\$131,000	\$26,000	-	-	\$26,000	\$131,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,020,800</b>	<b>\$31,000</b>	<b>\$64,500</b>	-	<b>\$3,181,000</b>	<b>\$3,085,300</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Director of Conservation	0.075	3.0	\$13,900	\$9,500	PF	\$23,400
PF Regional Representative	0.04	3.0	\$3,300	\$2,300	PF	\$5,600
PF Grants Staff	0.08	3.0	\$5,900	\$4,000	PF	\$9,900

### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

We did not have any notable challenges with the budget. We did end up having to move funds from Fee Acq to contracts after we had completed our acquisitions, but this allowed us to better restore and enhance habitat for sharp-tailed grouse .

**Total Revenue:** \$1,923

**Revenue Spent:** \$1,923

**Revenue Balance:** \$0

### Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

- A. This revenue, or a portion of it, was used according to the appropriation purposes approved in the AP Forest.

## 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	50	50	50	50
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,685	2,258	1,685	2,258
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,034	2,060	1,034	2,060
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,769</b>	<b>4,368</b>	<b>2,769</b>	<b>4,368</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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$34,600	\$40,000	\$34,600
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,967,000	\$1,561,300	\$2,967,000	\$1,561,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$143,000	\$1,424,900	\$143,000	\$1,424,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,020,800</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,020,800</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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50	50	50
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,685	2,258	1,685	2,258
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Fee w/o State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,034	2,060	1,034	2,060
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,769</b>	<b>4,368</b>	<b>2,769</b>	<b>4,368</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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$34,600	\$40,000	\$34,600
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,967,000	\$1,561,300	\$2,967,000	\$1,561,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$143,000	\$1,424,900	\$143,000	\$1,424,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,020,800</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>	<b>\$3,020,800</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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$800	\$692
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,760	\$691
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$138	\$691

**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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$800	\$692
Protect in Fee with	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,760	\$691

State PILT Liability										
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$138	\$691

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

**Outcomes**

**Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Landlocked public properties are accessible with have increased access for land managers ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Other ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*
- Greater public access for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation ~ *MN DNR does annual surveys of the Sharp-tailed grouse leks in MN in order to have a metric for estimating the population. Numerous projects in this proposal have permanently protected areas containing sharptailed grouse leks or completed*

*enhancement/restoration work on or near leks. Many of these sites have seen increases in sharp-tailed grouse that utilized the leks after the work in this proposal was completed.*



## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

### Restore / Enhance Parcels

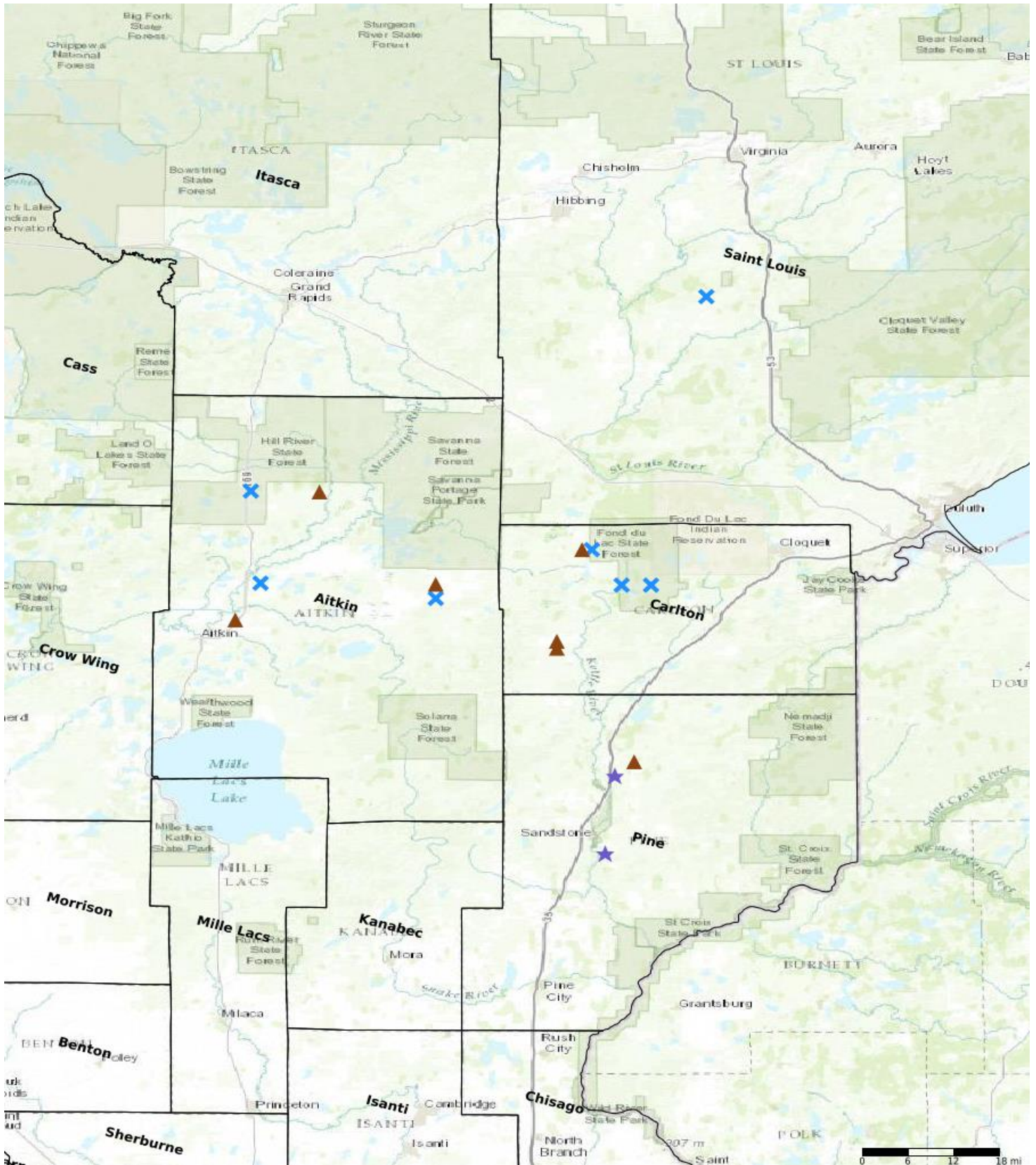
Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Wagner West Bog Mow	Aitkin	05026211	177	\$19,802	Yes
Great River Mow	Aitkin	04826213	319	\$49,482	Yes
Thumb Island Mow	Aitkin	04823225	565	\$75,710	Yes
Kettle Lake West Shear	Carlton	04819218	44	\$8,357	Yes
East Cross Lake Mow	Carlton	04920222	128	\$35,430	Yes
Kettle Lake East Shear	Carlton	04819215	508	\$40,081	Yes
Rutledge WMA Natives Seeding	Pine	04420236	50	\$17,500	Yes
Sandstone	Pine	04220226	70	\$10,150	Yes
Sax-Zim Mow	St. Louis	05518222	250	\$41,000	Yes

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Grayling WMA Addition	Aitkin	04823213	320	\$358,000	No
Aitkin WMA Addition	Aitkin	04726209	158	\$79,200	No
Willowssippi WMA Addition (Latourneau)	Aitkin	05025212	300	\$235,000	No
Firebird WMA Addition	Carlton	04721225	82	\$81,600	No
Firebird WMA	Carlton	04721236	638	\$652,000	No
Rutledge WMA Addition	Pine	04419220	480	\$324,000	No

### Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Red Clover WMA	Carlton	04920221	280	\$151,500	No	2	\$8,000



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

**Parcel Map**  
**Northeastern Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse**  
**Habitat Partnership**  
 (Data Generated From Parcel List)