

Request for Funding

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2016 / ML 2015

Program or Project Title: Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands Cass County VI

Funds Requested: \$1,710,000

Manager's Name: Joshua Stevenson

Title:

Organization: Cass County

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Organization Web Site:

County Locations: Cass

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest

Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

Abstract:

Project will protect forest wildlife habitat in central Minnesota through fee title acquisition of key forest tracts. Title of lands acquired will be held by Cass County in fee.

Design and Scope of Work:

Problem: Central Minnesota, especially the area in Cass County from Brainerd/Baxter to Walker, has and will continue to see some of the fastest human population growth in Minnesota. This growth will lead to increased demands/use of this area, its natural resources and related public land base that needs to support this growth. Development of these parcels has resulted in the loss of Jack Pine barrens and forested lakeshore in the landscape of southern Cass County. Forest tracts currently undeveloped, held by private property owners, are currently being sold to private developers. These lands often provide access to existing public lands for resource management, are in holdings in otherwise unfragmented landscapes, create contiguous wildlife corridors, and protect larger blocks of land especially useful for stand level management of habitat.

Opportunity: Key forest tracts (i.e. in-holdings in large public land tracts, management access issues, etc.) are being considered or currently being offered for sale by private property owners in this area. Depressed market conditions and a willingness by current owners to sell at this time is an opportunity that should be addressed now since it is narrow and may close (properties sold) at any time. The strategy is to acquire lands that hold together unfragmented landscapes, avoid incompatible in holding development or creates habitat corridors. The land acquired has existing forest access roads that have been used for management access for years. The sale of these lands to private individuals has already resulted in the loss of access for resource management on public lands. The acquired lands are not being pursued for convenience of management.

The identified parcels play a key role in future management plans of the Jack Pine Barrens and Forest Lakeshore including the role of fire as a management tool. The loss of these parcels to private ownership will result in lost access. Management of adjacent public lands will be limited to frozen ground conditions. This will eliminate management tools such as site preparation for Jack Pine plantings and aerial seeding as well as prescribed burns

for Jack Pine regeneration. This type of management requires year round access. The acquired lands provide year round management access to existing public lands in the Jack Pine barrens landscape. The acquisition of these lands will provide permanent year round access for forest management as well as protecting habitat in and around the surrounding areas.

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible to protect our management access. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land and local unit of government input on all purchases and land sales. This project meets the requirements of both plans and will require stakeholder input as part of the project. The local units of government with the lands to be purchased will be contacted for input before any acquisitions are made. Recent purchases of this nature have been supported by both the County and local units of government. The Cass County Board of Commissioners has a strong history of supporting land sales and acquisitions that have local unit of government support.

How the request addresses MN habitats:

This request is targeting land that has been historically open to public hunting and fishing or land that has been used to access public land that has been open to public hunting and fishing. The request also targets lands with a high potential for rare, threatened and endangered species. These species include but are not limited to the Northern Long Eared Bat and the Blanding's Turtle.

Please explain the nature of urgency:

Forest land conversion to center pivot agriculture use has created a urgent need for public funds to purchase strategic parcels. The parcels acquired will protect shallow water aquifers, wildlife habitat, and rare, threatened and endangered species that rely on forest habitat.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

Plans Addressed:

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan

Please describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

The science based planning and evaluation model used for selecting parcels comes from our Forest Resource Management Plan. We select parcels based on location, access, habitat, and the support of local units of government.

LSOHC Northern Forest Section Priorities:

- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

The total value of this project is almost 50% of our annual budget. The entire amount received will be used for acquisition. The amount of money available to the Cass County Land Department for acquisition in the past is directly related to land sale revenue. Land Sales revenue has been down recently and funds to LCCMR are still outstanding pending the sale of land currently available over the counter. Our current staff will use this money to acquire lands in fee following existing procedures. Because our activity in land purchases and sales is currently low due to the depressed land sale market, there will be little or no effect on current duties.

Non-OHF Money Spent in the Past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
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Sustainability and Maintenance:

The Cass County Land Department manages all County Administered lands under our Forest Resource Management Plan. This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. Cass County has a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by Cass County and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

Maintain Project Outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2017	Cass County	Forest Inventory	Update Forest Work Plan	
2020	Cass County	Manage Timber as work plan directs		
2025	Cass County	Plant trees as needed		

Applicable Criteria:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056? - Yes

Government Approval:

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

Permanent Protection:

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

Current Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing? - No

Future Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion? - Yes

All Cass County administered lands are open to public hunting and fishing consistent with State of MN regulations.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Contract for appraisals	August 2015
Meet with LUGs and prepare purchase agreements	January 2016
Title Opinions	February 2016
Record Deeds	Summer 2016

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *Total acres acquired and the total acres of public forest land that will be accessible to the public after acquisitions are complete. We also measure to total amount of public/private land property boundary reduced through acquisition.*

Relationship to Other Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$1,710,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$37,000		\$37,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,700,000	\$0		\$1,700,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1,710,000	\$37,000	-	\$1,747,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Commissioner	0.25	2.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Resource Manager	0.25	2.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Total	0.50	4.00	\$0	\$37,000	-	\$37,000

Amount of Request: \$1,710,000

Amount of Leverage: \$37,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 2.16%

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	799	0	799
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	799	0	799

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,710,000	\$0	\$1,710,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$1,710,000	\$0	\$1,710,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	799	799
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	799	799

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,710,000	\$1,710,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,710,000	\$1,710,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$2,140	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,140
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Cass

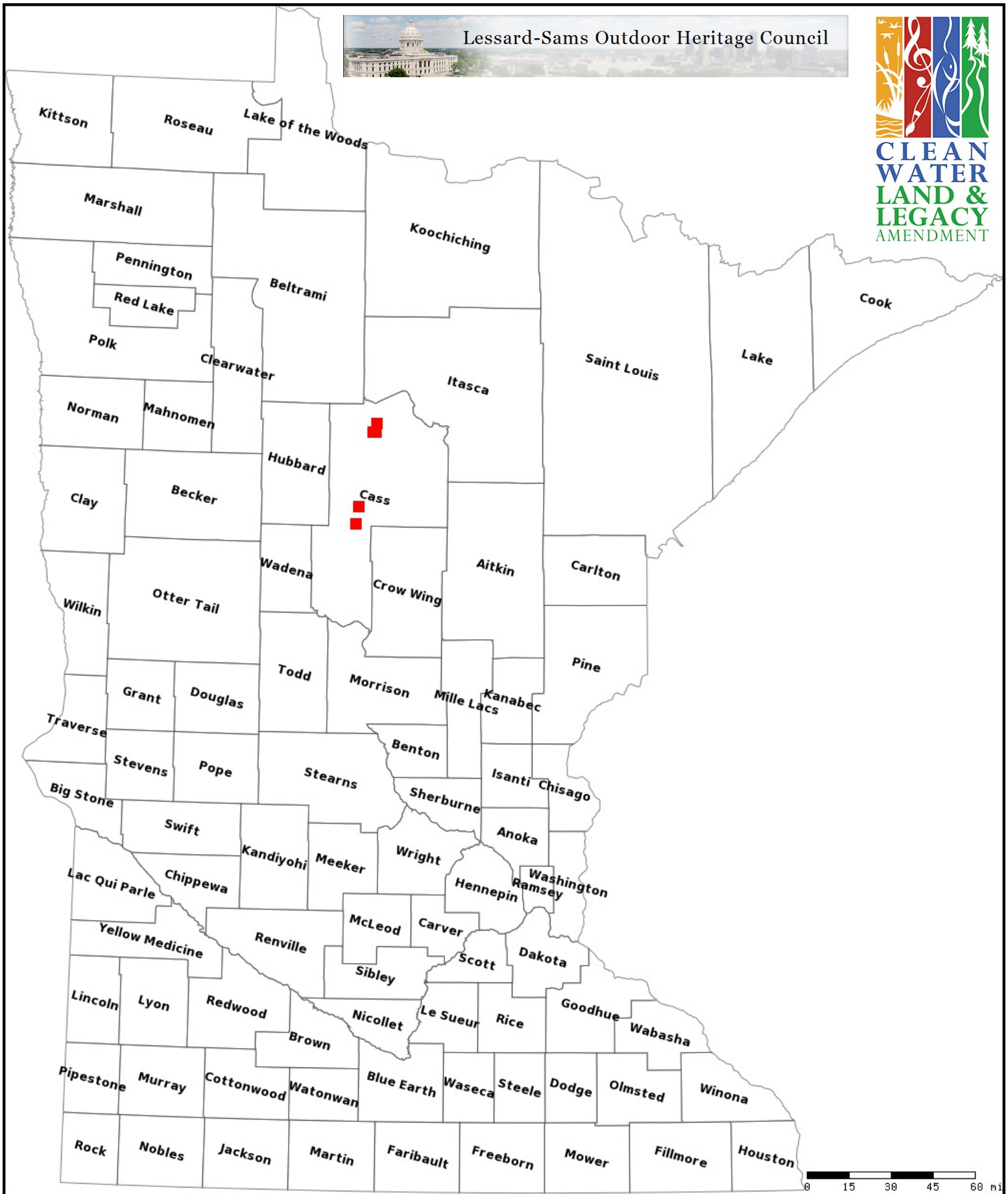
Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Boy River parcel in Birch Lake	14030235	483	\$1,208,100	No	Full	Full
Lindsey Lake River Access	13930234	50	\$106,000	No	Full	Full
Ottertail 127	14429222	127	\$178,700	No	Full	Full
Ottertail 42	14429202	42	\$54,500	No	Full	Full
Ottertail 92	14429223	92	\$122,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

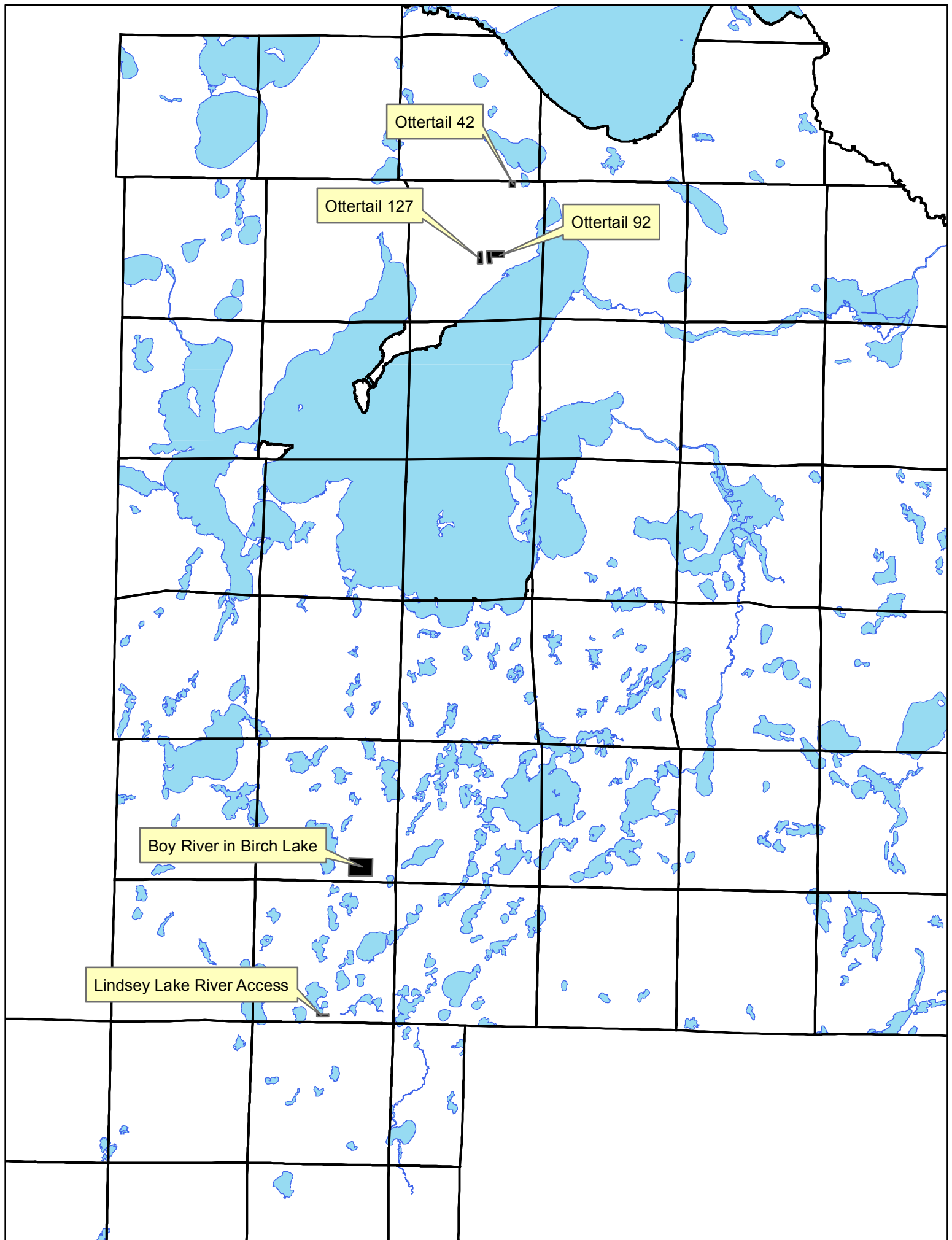
No parcels with an other activity type.



Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands Cass County VI

Legend

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



Ottertail 42

Ottertail 127

Ottertail 92

Boy River in Birch Lake

Lindsey Lake River Access