

# Request for Funding

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

**Program or Project Title:** Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water-V

**Funds Requested:** \$12,000,000

**Manager's Name:** Tabor Hoek

**Title:**

**Organization:** BWSR

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**Organization Web Site:**

**County Locations:** No Counties Listed

### Ecological Planning Regions:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

### Activity Type:

- Protect in Easement

### Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Prairie

## Abstract:

This project is the fifth phase of LSOHC funding to target riparian buffers for clean water and wildlife using the Reinvest In Minnesota easement program. The Clean Water Fund and OHF will be used equally as funding is made available.

## Design and Scope of Work:

MN continues to see a net loss of grasslands each year. Expiring CRP is the leading cause of this landscape change. This exodus is being driven by high land and commodity prices, and increased pressure for alternative uses and declining federal budgets for conservation programs. Minnesota's primary strategy to mitigate the loss of CRP is to target expiring contracts for enrollment into Continuous CRP (CCRP) practices (like buffers) and permanent easements for the most beneficial practices (e.g. wetland restoration, grasslands, and buffers). This program is one proven strategy to provide landowners with a sound option to keep targeted conservation on the land when economic incentives favor row crop production.

This partnership program establishes permanent buffers that provide both critical water quality improvements and improved nesting habitat. For example, a buffer of 100' generally serves to protect water quality, while adding an additional 100' for wildlife greatly enhances nesting opportunities for wildlife. Establishing a minimum of 200' on each side of a stream for a total of 400' plus the natural corridor that already exists 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 program include: does buffer build upon a Clean Water Fund Buffer, 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 type of water resource being buffered. A competitive RIM Buffers application process for landowners will be used. The first four phases of this program have created landowner interest that far exceeds available funding. The goal for this new phase will

be to increase funding from both LSOHC but also increase match from Clean Water Funding as well as USDA under new farm bill provisions. Wider buffers can provide longer term water quality treatment and provide better habitat. Buffers that are put in proximity to other grasslands also function at a higher level within the landscape for grassland nesting birds and other wildlife.

RIM Buffers program delivery will be supported by Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership which includes Minnesota BWSR, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Minnesota DNR, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, Pheasants Forever, LCCMR and numerous local partners. Additionally, the RIM program will be delivered through SWCD's and administered by Minnesota BWSR.

We propose that the LSOHC fund \$12M in perpetual state RIM buffer easements that will build equally upon the RIM buffers funded through the Clean Water Fund and/or new USDA programs such as CREP. This creates a unique partnership program to accomplish a single project with enhanced outcomes that could not otherwise be obtained with a single funding source. In the event equal match is not available during the project period, buffer areas for wildlife will be secured with available funds.

## **How the request addresses MN habitats:**

Project selection criteria for the buffer program is designed to compliment historic investments to protect areas for wildlife habitat in the degraded prairie region of the state. Providing connections between and adjacent to these previous habitat investments is a key factor in realizing the best return on investment found in wildlife population models. Riparian areas are logical corridors found between these historical habitat areas. Buffers targeting expiring CRP and near existing complexes of greater than 160 acres will be given preference.

## **Please explain the nature of urgency:**

In the next 3 years 400,000 ac. will expire from CRP. It is critical that we take this opportunity to retain as many acres in the most important locations. A combination of permanent protection with RIM and re-enrollment of CRP when possible will reduce this impact. The current application period for RIM Buffers will exceed available funding by a 4:1 margin. This means we will have to say no to 4 out of 5 willing landowners. We need to fix this ratio with added funding.

## **Planning**

### **MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:**

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

### **Plans Addressed:**

- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

## **Please describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:**

BWSR uses the Ecological Ranking Tool, MN Nutrient Management Strategy, Watershed Restoration Actions Plans (WRAPS) for the clean water focus. Wildlife benefits are summarized from numerous models (HAPET) and incorporated into our wildlife score sheet.

### **LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:**

- Protect expiring CRP lands

### **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

## Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Expiring CRP is a major concern in the prairie landscape of Minnesota. RIM is targeting wetlands and riparian areas for permanent protection that provide water quality benefits and wildlife benefits. The plan is to retain the most critical buffers in perpetuity that provide significant benefits for water and wildlife. Our focus is on protecting expiring CRP, yet collectively, we are working to retain as many acres as possible within new CCRP contracts where sufficient funding is not available to make them permanent. This proposal provides a real mechanism for the Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, and CRP to work in concert to provide Minnesota landowners an opportunity to permanently protect and filter our water in a way that also provides habitat for ground nesting birds (e.g. ring-necked pheasants), native pollinators, and other associated grassland wildlife.

## Non-OHF Money Spent in the Past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2011	Clean Water Fund	\$2.249m
2012	Clean Water Fund	\$2.09m
2013	Clean Water Fund	\$3.52m
2014	Clean Water Fund	\$2.2m

## Sustainability and Maintenance:

All easements secured under this project will be permanent. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement and manage the conservation cover. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Initial costs to establish conservation cover are to be provided under this project with additional assistance from Clean Water Fund and the USDA CRP program. The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve program that has over 6,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Stewardship costs for 157 easements at \$5000/easement would cost \$785,000. This cost would be split equally between Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund.

## Maintain Project Outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2016-Ongoing	LSOHC-BWSR Stewardship Account	Compliance Checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations	Enforcement action taken by MN Attorney General office
2016-Ongoing	Landowner Obligation	Maintain compliance with easement terms		

## Applicable Criteria:

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

## Public Use:

*Will the eased land be open for public use? - No*

## Permanent Protection:

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

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30, 2015
Allocations to specific parcels made	July 30, 2015
Easements closed	July 1, 2017

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels. Corridors will be scored using the the eligibility scoresheet for wildlife benefits of each parcel.*

### Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels. Corridors will be scored using the the eligibility scoresheet for wildlife benefits of each parcel.*

## Relationship to Other Funds:

- Clean Water Fund
- USDA Farm Bill Program funding-CRP/CREP

This project brings two of the major components of the Legacy Amendment together by matching with the Clean Water Fund for the RIM buffers program. This project will also build upon expiring CRP contracts that have funding associated with them from the USDA CRP contract that is in place. Where possible, partners would leverage the Outdoor Heritage Funds within a larger buffer initiative within Minnesota using other programs like CRP, CREP funding sources to permanently protect buffers within landscapes that add value for grassland wildlife. In the event equal or greater match is not available from identified sources, easements will be secured for wildlife benefits with OHF funding only.

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$12,000,000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$592,500	\$592,500	Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund	\$1,185,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$10,719,500	\$10,719,500	Clean Water Fund/CREP	\$21,439,000
Easement Stewardship	\$392,500	\$392,500	Clean Water Fund	\$785,000
Travel	\$20,000	\$20,000	Clean Water Fund	\$40,000
Professional Services	\$235,500	\$235,500	Clean Water Fund	\$471,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$20,000	\$20,000	Clean Water Fund	\$40,000
Supplies/Materials	\$20,000	\$20,000	Clean Water Fund	\$40,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$12,000,000	\$12,000,000	-	\$24,000,000

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	1.00	3.00	\$150,000	\$150,000	Clean Water Fund	\$300,000
Easement Processing	3.00	3.00	\$292,500	\$292,500	Clean Water Fund	\$585,000
Eco and Engineering Services	1.00	3.00	\$150,000	\$150,000	Clean Water Fund	\$300,000
Total	5.00	9.00	\$592,500	\$592,500	-	\$1,185,000

Amount of Request: \$12,000,000

Amount of Leverage: \$12,000,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 100.00%

## 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	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	1,500	0	0	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1,500	0	0	1,500

**Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?**

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	0

**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	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$12,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$12,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$12,000,000

**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	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	300	0	1,200	0	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	300	0	1,200	0	1,500

**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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$2,400,000	\$0	\$9,600,000	\$0	\$12,000,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$2,400,000	\$0	\$9,600,000	\$0	\$12,000,000

**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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$8,000	\$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	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$8,000	\$0	\$8,000	\$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

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Parcel list provided after signup	2	0	\$0			

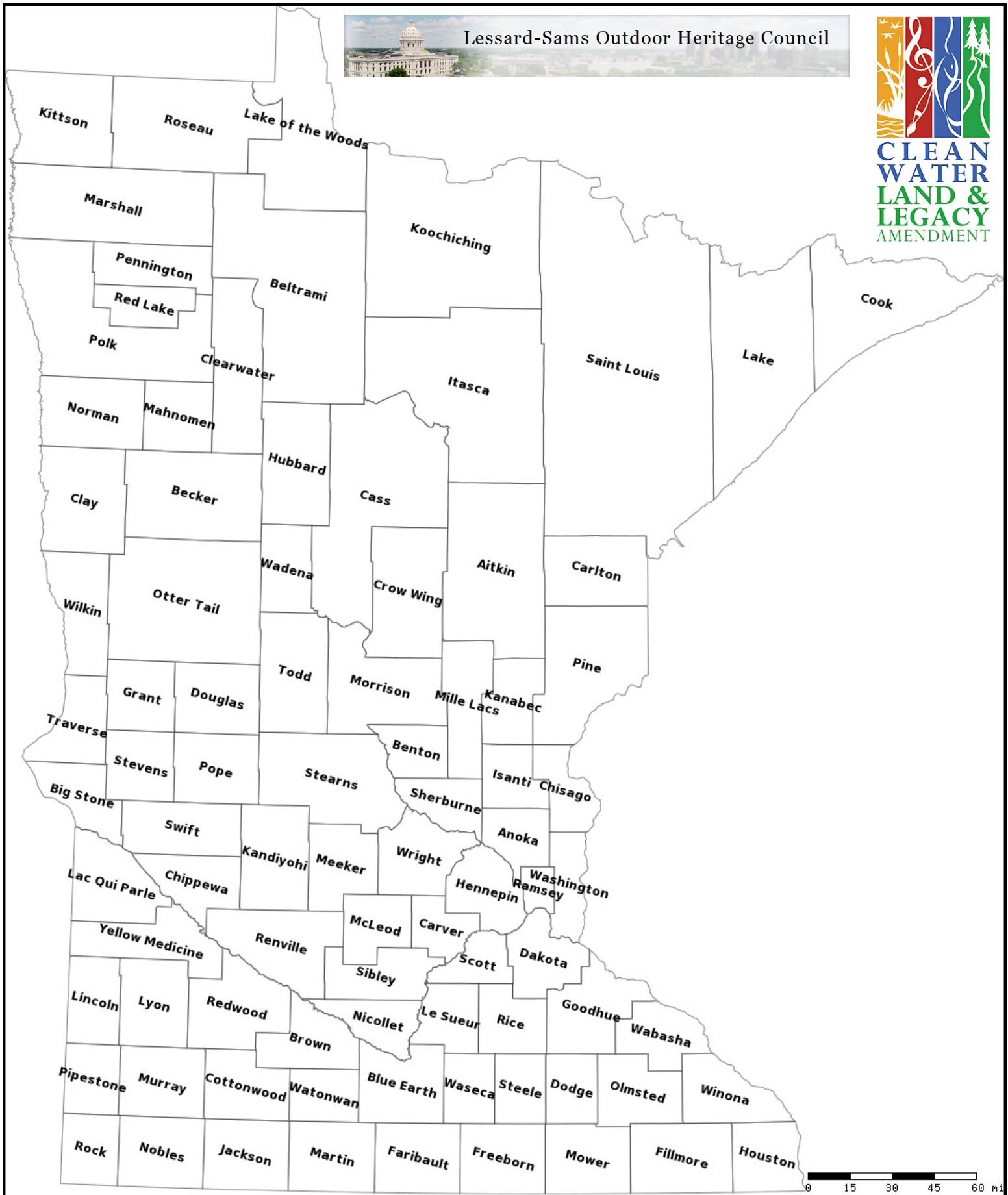
## Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

## Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.





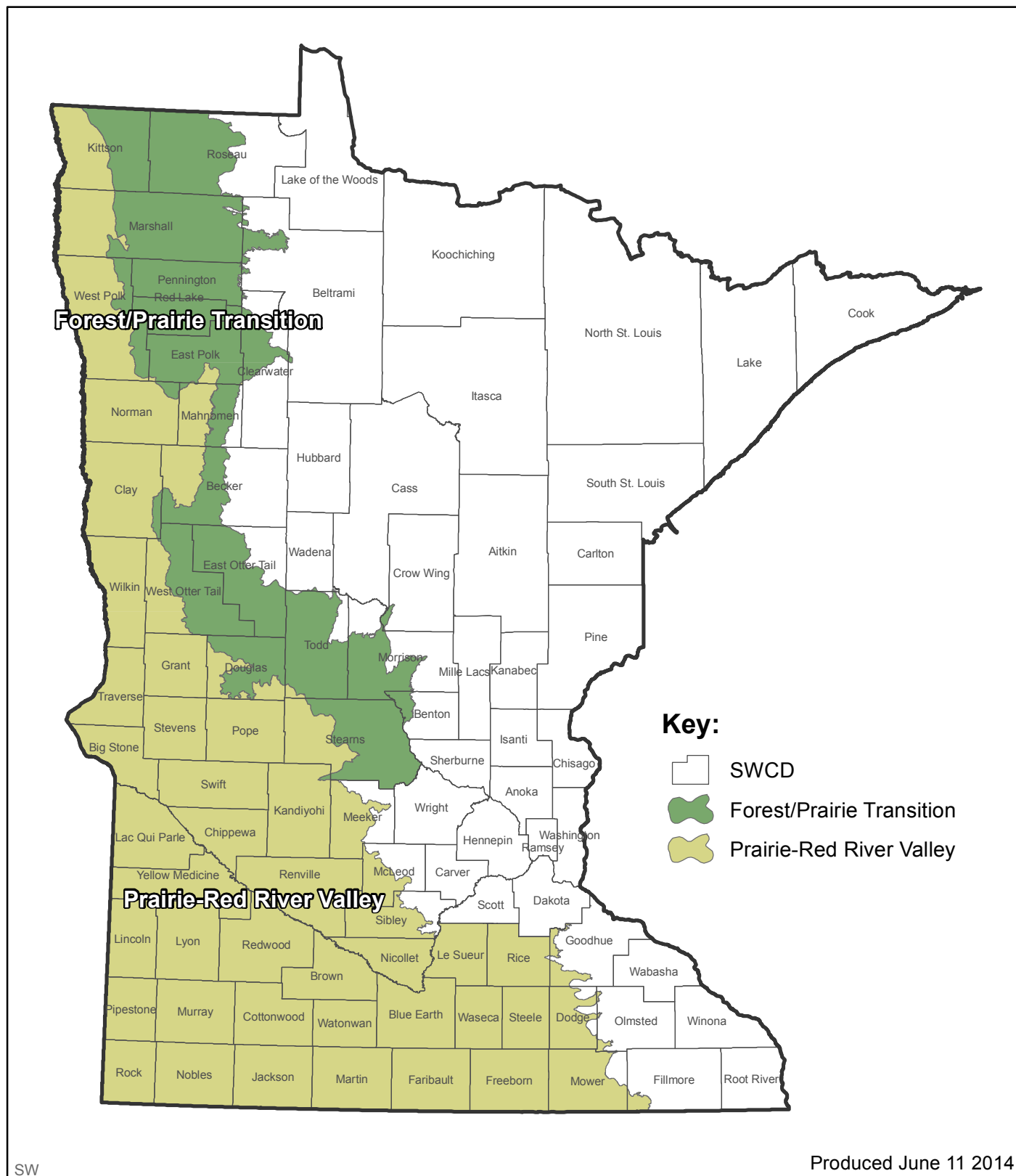
### Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water-V

#### Legend

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

# Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve

## Riparian Buffers - Phase V Work Area



# RIM Buffers for Wildlife & Water Scoring Form

Landowner/Project Name:	County (Field Office):	Prepared By:	Date:
			6/25/2014

**Instructions:** For each enrollment requesting a Wildlife Habitat Buffer Expansion, complete the highlighted sections of this score sheet. For question 1-7 select the response from the dropdown that best answers the question. Print and include it with your signup materials. A minimum score of 50 points is required to be eligible.

**Offer must meet these minimum criteria to be eligible:**

- Offer is within the prairie section identified on the LSOHC map.
- Offer has maximum enrollment (200 feet average).
- Offer is built upon a Clean Water Fund buffer.
- Offer scores a minimum of 50 points on the following factors.

**1. Will this offer preserve an existing CRP contract?**

**Score**

0

**2. Is the offer within the watershed of an identified shallow lake?**

0

**3. Proximity to an existing protected habitat complex that is larger than 160 acres?**

0

**4. Proximity to public land that is open for public hunting?**

0

**5. Type of water resource being buffered**

0

**6. Type Vegetative Diversity on proposed site?**

0

**7. Combined Easement Size**

0

**Total Score**

0