

Request for Funding

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

Program or Project Title: Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection Program - Phase IV

Funds Requested: \$16,000,000

Manager's Name: Jon Schneider

Title:

Organization: Ducks Unlimited

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Organization Web Site:

County Locations: Chippewa, Clearwater, Freeborn, Kandiyohi, Le Sueur, Martin, Meeker, Nobles, and Rice.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Abstract:

Ducks Unlimited's Phase 4 program proposes to purchase and restore approximately 2,000 acres of land to prairie and wetlands for Minnesota DNR for inclusion in state Wildlife Management Areas, with focus on land containing wetlands and on shallow lakes.

Design and Scope of Work:

This is Ducks Unlimited's Phase 4 programmatic land acquisition proposal, a component of our Living Lakes Initiative in Minnesota, and contributes to the implementation of the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan by restoring prairie and small wetlands on new lands acquired by DU for inclusion in the state Wildlife Management Area (WMA) system. This work specifically addresses the need for prairie and wetland restoration as identified in the Prairie Plan, which compliments other work to protect intact native prairie. Acquisition and restoration of prairie and small wetlands is important because in the Prairie Section of Minnesota, 90% of our prairie wetlands have been drained and 99% of native prairie uplands lost to conversion for agriculture. The wetland basins that remain are often large, deep wetlands or shallow lakes that are degraded because they now receive the runoff and drainage from the intensively cultivated landscape that surrounds them. As of May 2014, 49 of these shallow lakes have been legally designated for active wildlife management purposes by Minnesota DNR (for water-level draw-downs and surface use restrictions), whereas others are actively managed via flowage easements. Hundreds of other shallow lake basins and large wetlands are contained in whole or part by state WMAs or federal Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA).

Drainage and intensive cultivation of the prairie landscape has degraded our remaining wetlands and shallow lakes into turbid waters that now provide only limited habitat benefit to migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife. Altered landscape hydrology, increased nutrient and sediment loading, and invasive fish such as common carp now greatly and negatively impact the aquatic ecology of our remaining wetland basins. This has

especially negatively affected the prairie wetland habitat quality for both migrating and brood-rearing waterfowl, and the quality of outdoor recreational opportunities for Minnesota duck hunters, bird watchers, and the general public.

To remedy, Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service managers actively manage shallow lakes and wetlands through temporary water level draw-downs to consolidate sediments and nutrients, reduce and remove invasive fish, improve water clarity, and enhance the aquatic ecology in some shallow lake and large wetland basins under their control. DU is actively involved in delivering these efforts by providing bio-engineering technical assistance supported by Outdoor Heritage Fund appropriations.

In addition, it is also important to buffer our remaining shallow lakes and wetlands with native prairie grass, and restore and protect the lands immediately surrounding them as agriculture intensifies and pressures to convert idle land into row-crop production grow. Some private lands adjacent to our remaining wetlands and shallow lakes contain unbroken patches of native prairie or are restored cropland enrolled in the USDA's short-term Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), but remain vulnerable to conversion back to agriculture and therefore need permanent protection. Other lands are intensively cultivated right up to the edge of shallow lakes and wetlands, or state WMAs containing such, and need to be restored and permanently protected.

Thus, public land acquisition and restoration is a critical component of shallow lake and wetland conservation in Minnesota, especially in the prairie portion of the state where wetland complexes are critical for both breeding and migrating ducks. Many basins are only protected by a narrow buffer that may not adequately protect their aquatic ecology from landscape runoff or provide adequate upland nesting cover for birds, making it important to purchase and restore additional lands around them to protect public water investments. Finally, many shallow lake and large wetland basins with management potential (and those partially drained with restoration potential) have only limited or no public land on them, which limits the ability of Minnesota DNR to actively manage them - thus public land acquisition is needed to give wildlife agencies land control on basins in need of improvement for wildlife and to provide public access. Active management and protection of shallow lakes and wetlands is identified as a priority action in all major conservation plans in Minnesota.

This proposal is Phase 4 of a programmatic, ongoing public land acquisition effort by Ducks Unlimited to acquire and restore lands on shallow lakes and state WMAs and federal WPAs containing large wetland basins for public ownership and land management to buffer shallow lakes and help create wetland complexes, restore and preserve prairie uplands and small wetlands around shallow lakes and WMAs and WPAs, protect investments in shallow lake management, and make new shallow lake enhancement or wetland restoration projects possible. DU proposes to acquire (and restore where needed) approximately 2,000 acres of land on shallow lakes and WMAs containing wetlands and prairie in the Prairie and Forest-Prairie Sections.

DU field staff work with DNR area wildlife managers and private landowners to identify tracts of land for sale on shallow lakes and on public lands containing large wetlands, and obtain approval that DNR will accept a tract before lands are purchased for the eventual transfer to the state DNR for inclusions into the state WMA system. Sensitive shoreland and tracts that provide public access to shallow lakes, and those containing restorable prairie and wetlands or make shallow lake enhancements possible, will be prioritized for acquisition and inclusion in the state WMA system. Tracts acquired will be prioritized in consultation with DNR Section of Wildlife, and DU will work with DNR to expedite the transfer of lands and minimize the time DU must hold the land.

Grant funds will pay for land, appraisals, surveys, closing costs, restoration, and DU staff, in-state travel, and associated DSS costs to work landowners and DNR field staff to identify, purchase, and restore, land. Budget reallocations up to 10% will not require an amendment to the pending Accomplishment Plan as per LSOHC and DNR OMB guidance.

How the request addresses MN habitats:

In Prairie Minnesota, 90% of our prairie wetlands have been drained and 99% of our native prairie uplands lost to agriculture and development. Ongoing loss of Conservation Reserve Program lands exacerbates this problem. The prairie wetlands that remain are fragmented, and are often large, deep wetlands or shallow lakes that are now degraded because they receive the runoff and drainage from the intensively cultivated landscape that surrounds them. Drainage and intensive cultivation of the prairie landscape has degraded our remaining wetlands and shallow lakes into turbid waters that now provide only limited habitat benefit to migratory waterfowl and other wetland-dependent wildlife. Altered landscape hydrology, increased nutrient and sediment loading, and invasive fish such as common carp now greatly and negatively impact the aquatic ecology of our remaining wetland basins. This has especially negatively affected the prairie wetland habitat quality for both migrating and brood-rearing

waterfowl, and the quality of outdoor recreational opportunities for Minnesota duck hunters. This also affects the habitat of many wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and several threatened and endangered species too. Acquisition and restoration of converted prairie and wetlands is necessary to restore and create prairie wetland complexes required by game and non-game species alike.

Please explain the nature of urgency:

The Prairie Pothole Region of western and southern Minnesota is the most degraded ecosystem in the state and has lost the most habitat, and remaining habitats remain threatened by intensive agriculture and landscape drainage. Acquisition is imperative to restore and protect land adjacent to existing prairie public lands for wildlife.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Plans Addressed:

- Ducks Unlimited Living Lakes Initiative
- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan

Please describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Ducks Unlimited works with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's HAPET to focus our conservation efforts, and with Minnesota DNR to strategically focus our land acquisition and restoration efforts on sites of priority to DNR and those with restoration potential and which buffer shallow lakes and make enhancement projects possible.

LSOHC Prairie Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

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:

This proposal significantly accelerates and supplements Ducks Unlimited's Living Lakes conservation initiative work in Minnesota by providing funding for the land acquisition costs necessary to restore prairie and wetlands, and enhance adjacent shallow lakes. Ducks Unlimited does not have the capital funding required for land acquisition in Minnesota due to our large wetland engineering staff focus, and instead relies on state OHF grants to fund this portion of our conservation work. Thus, funds requested from the OHF for land acquisition in Minnesota are entirely supplementary to our operational budget, and will accelerate our conservation work here.

Non-OHF Money Spent in the Past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
None	None	None

Sustainability and Maintenance:

Lands acquired and restored through this OHF grant by Ducks Unlimited will be transferred to the Minnesota DNR

for incorporation into the state Wildlife Management Area system of public land, and will be maintained by the Minnesota DNR Section of Wildlife field staff through with funding from the Game & Fish Fund, and other traditional sources of state funding. Management actions such as prescribed prairie burns, woody tree removal, and wetland water level management may be conducted by DNR roving crews also funded through OHF grants in the future too. Lands proposed for acquisition are part of approved WMA projects, and should not add a considerable amount of additional annual management workload, and management treatments should be infrequent in nature based on habitat conditions as determined by DNR wildlife management field staff.

Maintain Project Outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2018	DNR Game & Fish Accounty & OHF	Mow restored prairie to remove initial weeds and trees that may respond before enough plant material fuel for prescribed burns are possible.	Chemically or mechanically spot treat problem weed and tree areas .	Burn restored prairie on a rotational 5-10 year basis, and manage water levels in restored wetlands with water control structures on a 5-10 year basis 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? - No

Notification will be provided to the county shortly after land acquisition as in past appropriations, and will include a DU conservation staffer attending a county board meeting with representation from Minnesota DNR to allow for discussion and questions/answers.

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

No variations are anticipated, and all lands acquired will be transferred into the state wildlife management area system.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Purchase approximately 2,000 acres of prairie land containing restorable prairie and wetlands for inclusion in the state WMA system.	June 2018
Restore lands acquired and transfer to the Minnesota DNR for inclusion into the state WMA system.	June 2020

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 *Acquiring and restoring prairie and wetlands in the forest-prairie transition region will increase the amount of breeding and migration habitat for waterfowl according to USFWS HAPET models, and will be monitored by Minnesota DNR field staff during annual surveys. Water and habitat quality in restored wetlands will be monitored by DNR area wildlife field staff, and basins managed to optimize habitat conditions.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species *Prairie tracts acquired will be restored back to native prairie and forbs, and will transferred into the state wildlife management area system to provide additional prairie habitat for migratory species. Use by migratory species will be monitored by Minnesota DNR field staff, who will also monitor public use.*

Relationship to Other Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$16,000,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$300,000	\$0		\$300,000
Contracts	\$2,000,000	\$0		\$2,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$13,000,000	\$0		\$13,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$60,000	\$5,000		\$65,000
Professional Services	\$100,000	\$0		\$100,000
Direct Support Services	\$30,000	\$55,000		\$85,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$100,000	\$0		\$100,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
DNR IDP	\$400,000	\$0		\$400,000
Total	\$16,000,000	\$60,000	-	\$16,060,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
DU Bio-Engineering Staff to acquire and restore land	0.40	5.00	\$210,000	\$0		\$210,000
DU Conservation Program Manager to coordinate work and administer grant	0.20	5.00	\$90,000	\$0		\$90,000
Total	0.60	10.00	\$300,000	\$0	-	\$300,000

Amount of Request: \$16,000,000

Amount of Leverage: \$60,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.38%

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	500	1,500	0	0	2,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	500	1,500	0	0	2,000

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	\$4,000,000	\$12,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$16,000,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$4,000,000	\$12,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$16,000,000

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	160	0	1,840	0	2,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	160	0	1,840	0	2,000

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	\$500,000	\$0	\$15,500,000	\$0	\$16,000,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$500,000	\$0	\$15,500,000	\$0	\$16,000,000

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	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$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	\$3,125	\$0	\$8,424	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Chippewa

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Grace WMA	11939227	160	\$300,000	No	Full	Full

Clearwater

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Old Red Lake Trail - Birnstengel Tract	14837214	120	\$150,000	No	Full	Full

Freeborn

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Magaksica WMA - Ashleson Tract	10222212	26	\$130,000	No	Full	Full

Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Genessee WMA - Tract 2	11933235	15	\$90,000	No	Full	Full
Prairie Big Woods WMA Tract 1	11830218	155	\$450,000	No	Full	Full

Le Sueur

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Montgomery WMA - Bohn Tract	11123224	100	\$500,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 10	11223235	35	\$105,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 11	11223235	5	\$15,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 3	11223226	33	\$375,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 7	11223235	0	\$200,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 8	11223235	75	\$375,000	No	Full	Full
Sanborn Lake - Tract 9	11223235	12	\$40,000	No	Full	Full

Martin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Rooney Run - Round Lake Krahmer Tract	10332228	280	\$2,200,000	No	Full	Full

Meeker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Popular WMA	11932232	50	\$150,000	No	Full	Full

Nobles

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Peterson WMA - Larson Tract	10140221	43	\$130,000	No	Full	Full
Swessinger WMA - Jones Trust Tract	10441217	640	\$5,500,000	No	Full	Full

Rice

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wineberger Lake	10922202	30	\$300,000	No	Full	Full

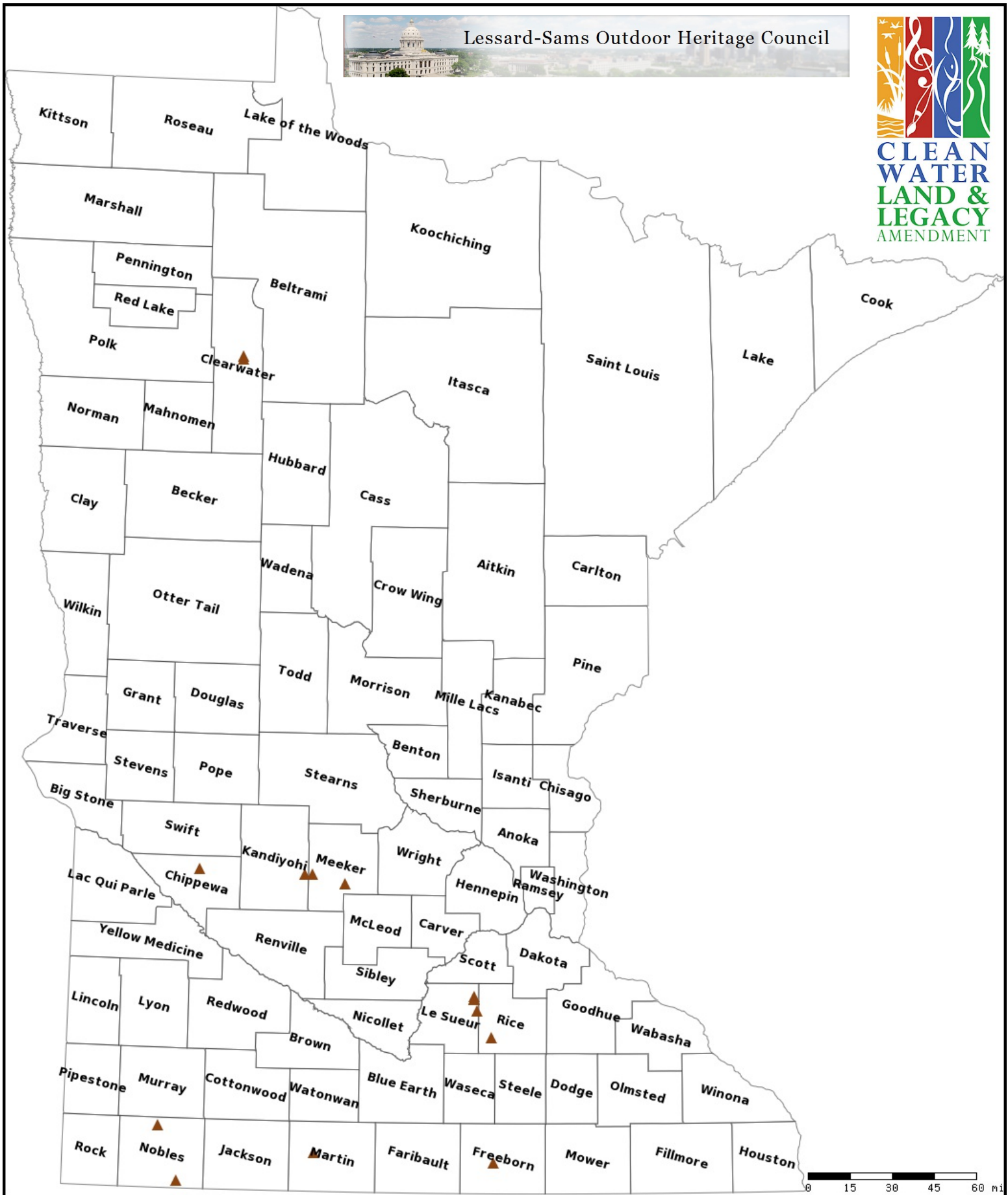
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Clearwater

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Old Red Lake Trail - Johnson Tract	14837223	160	\$230,000	1	Garage with seasonal bedroom	\$20,000	Remove

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.



Shallow Lake & Wetland Protection Program - Phase IV

Legend

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee w/o PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- + Other

DU Acquisition Proposal - David Jones Tract

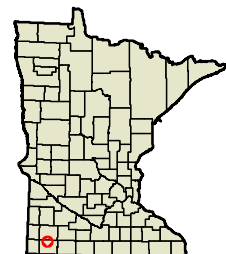
Nobles County, MN T104N, R41, S17
MN-491-1



**LIVING
LAKES**

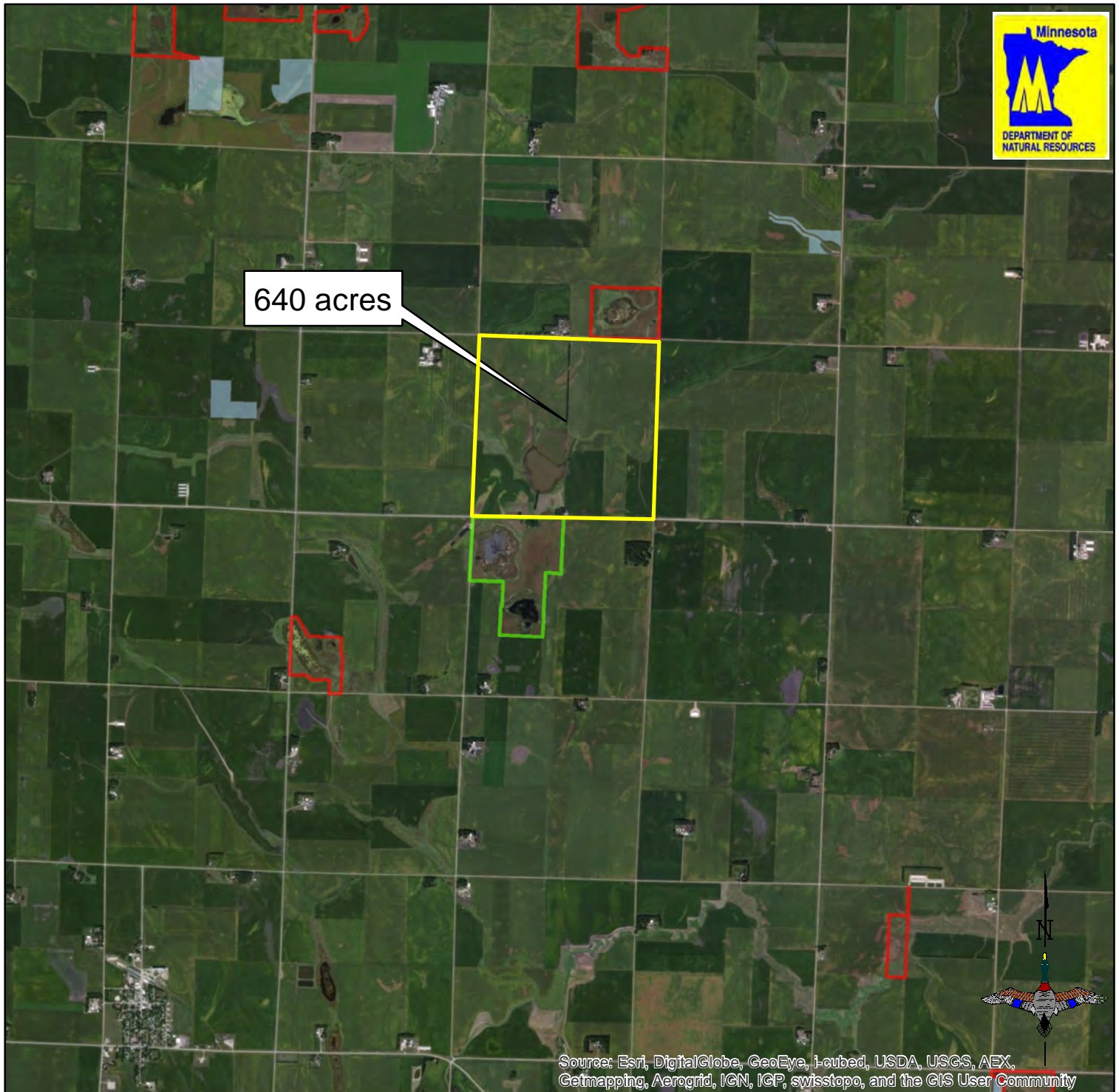


- State, Wildlife Management Area
- County
- Private
- State
- Federal, Waterfowl Production Area
- Federal
- Other Public



DU Acquisition Proposal - David Jones Tract

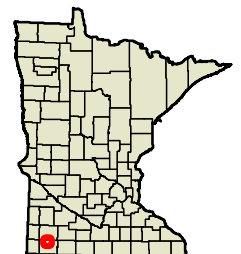
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**LIVING
LAKES**

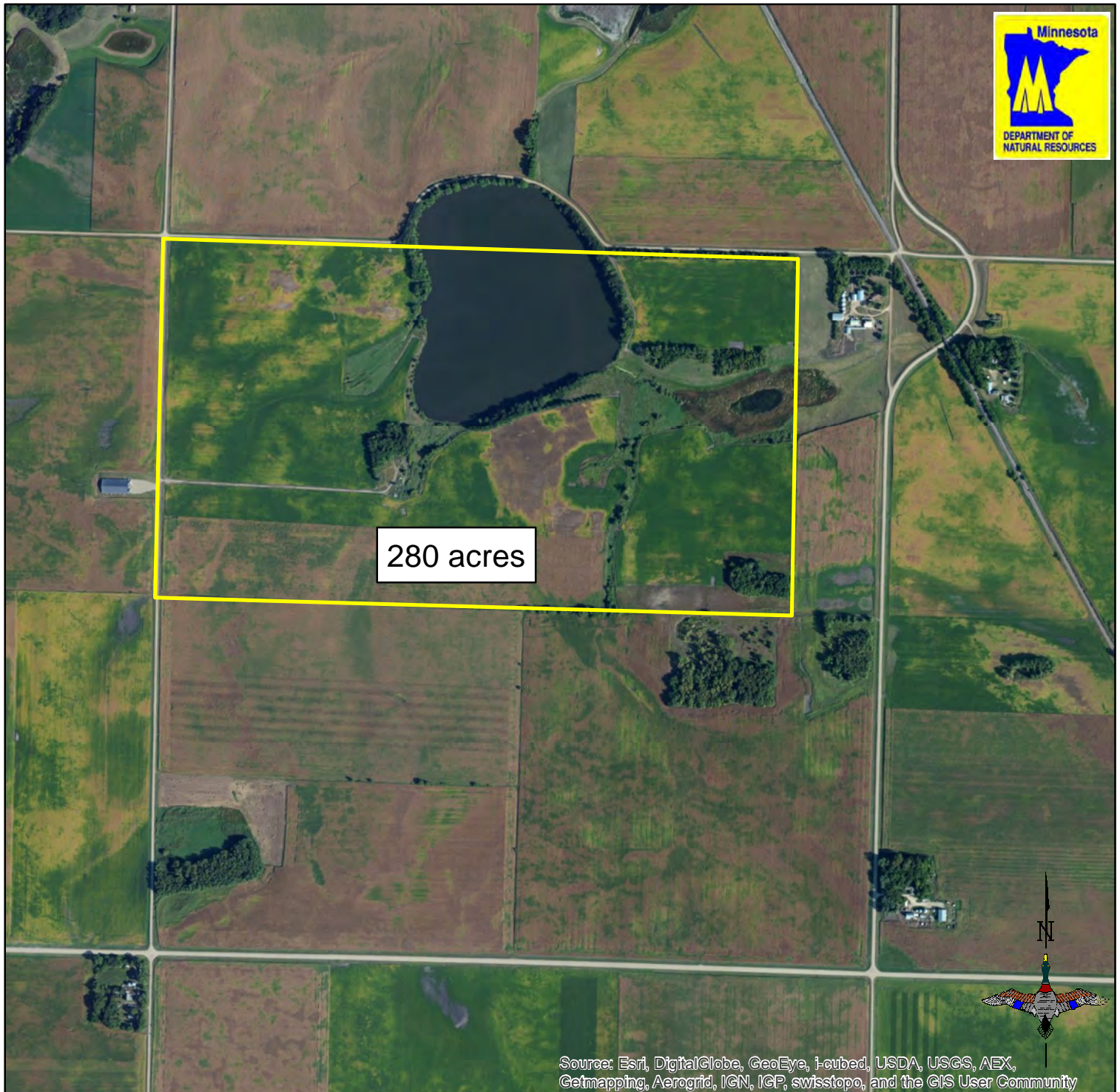


- State, Wildlife Management Area
- County
- Private
- State
- Federal, Waterfowl Production Area
- Federal
- Other Public



DU Acquisition Proposal Rooney Run WMA - Round Lake

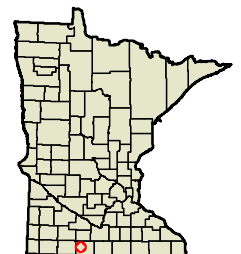
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**LIVING
LAKES**



- State, Wildlife Management Area
- County
- Private
- State
- Federal, Waterfowl Production Area
- Federal
- Other Public



DU Acquisition Proposal Rooney Run WMA - Round Lake

Martin County, MN T103N, R32, S28



**LIVING
LAKES**



- State, Wildlife Management Area
- County
- Private
- State
- Federal, Waterfowl Production Area
- Federal
- Other Public

