

Request for Funding

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

Program or Project Title: Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase IV

Funds Requested: \$2,494,800

Manager's Name: Dan Steward

Title: Board Conservationist

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County Locations: Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, St. Louis, and Wadena.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Northern Forest

Activity Type:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Forest

Abstract:

This Phase IV continuation of the Wild Rice Shoreland Protection project will acquire 1,513 acres translating to approximately 10 miles of wild rice shoreland habitat through permanent conservation easements or fee-title acquisition in the Northern Forest Section.

Design and Scope of Work:

Wild rice is officially the "State Grain" of Minnesota (MN Statute - 1.148). Minnesota remains the epicenter of this plant's natural range supporting more habitat than any other state in the U.S. This Phase IV project will continue critical habitat protection, helping to keep this legacy intact.

Wild rice shoreland encompasses a complex of shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes that support rice and provide some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota. Wild rice habitat is especially important to Minnesota's migrating and breeding waterfowl and provides Minnesotans with unique recreation opportunities: hunting waterfowl and harvesting the rice itself for food.

Historically, wild rice occurred throughout Minnesota and extended into northern Iowa. Wild rice has since been extirpated from most of its southern range due to human impacts including changes to water quality and chemistry, sedimentation, drainage, flow alteration, boat traffic and competition from introduced aquatic invasive species. Today, the heart of the state's wild rice acreage falls within this project work area comprised of eight counties -- Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, St. Louis, and Wadena. These counties also account for nearly 80% of harvesting trips for licensed harvesters. Becker, Beltrami and Clearwater SWCDs have expressed interest in being included in Phase IV. If funding levels allow, the project will be expanded to include them.

This wild rice shoreland complex exists primarily in the state's Northern Forest Section and remains intact with good water quality, but it is subject to intense development pressure that, if allowed, will degrade the resource. Recent well-documented population and development trends pose a serious threat to wild rice habitat in the Northern Forest Section. This population and development boom has reduced the availability of developable shoreline on recreational lakes, resulting in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays containing wild rice being increasingly targeted for shoreline development.

Shallow lakes and rivers in the forest are very susceptible to the impacts of shoreline development. The alteration of shoreline vegetation, construction of impervious surfaces, placement of in-lake structures, and increased boat and water based recreation can result in a reduction in emergent and floating plant abundance; mixing of bottom sediments, increased nutrient loading (including substantial changes in phosphorous) and shoreline erosion. Further, expectations of new shoreline homeowners may conflict with wildlife management strategies designed to maximize wild rice production and improve waterfowl habitat. The impact of development is cumulative, and over time, such changes can severely reduce wild rice production, water quality and waterfowl use of these important water bodies. Activity from developed shoreline also disturbs migrating waterfowl as they seek to rebuild reserves.

Beyond public ownership, current shoreline protection on wild rice shoreland is limited to county shoreland ordinances, and limited conservation efforts by non-governmental organizations. Shoreland ordinances do not prevent wild rice habitat fragmentation. Further, even the most stringent ordinances still allow for some subdivision and development, which is detrimental to the wild rice shoreland complex.

Voluntary, incentive-based conservation protection options for shoreland landowners are few. Unlike the prairie portion of the state where state funded easement options exist for conservation-minded landowners, private land protection options are limited for wild rice shoreland in the forest due to funding constraints. Further, many easement programs are targeted for restoration and not protection. In the northern forest, lower land values allow conservation dollars to stretch further while also leveraging existing public lands. Most public waters offer some form of public access. This proposal will continue to fill a need for shoreland protection on key water bodies supporting wild rice in the Northern Forest Section.

Phase I of this project began with 2012 Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) funding by providing wild rice lake shoreline landowners with expanded protection options through permanent shoreland conservation easements and, where needed, fee-title acquisition. This extremely successful effort is poised to exceed project goals with over eight miles of important shoreland habitat proposed for permanent protection from development. The supply of offered quality easements exceeded available funds. Building on Phase I, Phase II easements will protect another 1,240 acres. Phase III dollars are available to begin work on July 1, 2014. To-date, 22 easements totaling over \$1.23M have been funded and acquisitions are nearing completion. Phase II partner Minnesota DNR completed their fee-title goal.

Utilizing permanent conservation easements and fee-title acquisitions, the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Section of Wildlife (DNR Wildlife), and the eight local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) will continue to offer permanent shoreland protection on the shallow lakes, rivers and shallow bays producing wild rice. The BWSR's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program will acquire 1,500 acres through permanent conservation easements and DNR Wildlife will acquire approximately 13 acres through fee-title acquisition.

Emphasis for Phase IV will again be placed on securing permanent conservation easements rather than fee-title acquisition, which will keep land in private ownership and on local and county tax rolls. Fee-title acquisition will be offered in cases where land is for sale and easements are not an option, and where a tract is a desirable addition to adjacent public land. Fee-title acquisitions will provide public access.

Through the local SWCD offices, BWSR will purchase RIM easements using rates set by BWSR. Tracts will be selected based on the degree to which they help permanently protect all the land around a given wild rice water body. The BWSR RIM easements will be acquired through a sign-up process similar to BWSR's other easement programs. SWCD generated landowner applications will be reviewed and parcels ranked by the project committee with guidance provided by the "Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Criteria Sheet" (attached). Shoreland protection for wild rice lakes and rivers enjoys widespread support from tribal interests, SWCDs, and other habitat conservation partners.

How the request addresses MN habitats:

More than 17 species of wildlife listed in MNDNR's Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare as "species of greatest conservation need" use wild rice areas as habitat for reproduction and / or foraging. Also, wild rice is some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota as noted in the MNDNR's Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota report to the legislature (2008).

Please explain the nature of urgency:

North central Minnesota is projected to grow significantly by 2030. With much of the best shoreland already developed, future housing pressure will be focused on remaining natural shoreland, including wild rice lakes and streams.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams

Plans Addressed:

- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota

Please describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Potential lakes were identified in "Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota". CrowWing County recently prioritized lakes in the County, a similar process will likely be used in other counties. Each potential project is ranked and scored using the attached score sheet.

LSOHC Northern Forest Section Priorities:

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Phase IV funding will continue work to protect wild rice lake and river shoreland begun by Phase I and continued with Phase II and III efforts. When work started on Phase I, it was unknown how much interest there would be on the part of landowners on wild rice lakes to permanently protect these important habitats. Over the past few years field staff with DNR, BWSR, the SWCDs, and Ducks Unlimited (DU) have all found continued strong interest on the part of landowners. Permanently protecting wild rice lake shoreland also compliments ongoing efforts to manage water levels on wild rice lakes. Wild rice plants are very susceptible to rising water levels when they are in the floating leaf stage in June. Permanent protection of wild rice shoreland adds a protection element to the ongoing maintenance effort that together make a comprehensive program for wild rice lakes recommended by the Wild Rice Working Group.

Non-OHF Money Spent in the Past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
0	0	0

Sustainability and Maintenance:

RIM easements will be secured and permanently monitored and enforced by the BWSR and county SWCDs professional field staff. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after

the easement is recorded. Thereafter on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. Stewardship costs are part of this project and are calculated at \$5,000 per easement. BWSR is in the process of reassessing stewardship costs.

Land acquired in fee-title by DNR will be held by DNR for permanent ownership and management.

Maintain Project Outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2018 - Ongoing	LSOHC - BWSR stewardship account	Compliance checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations	Enforcement action by Mn Attorney General's office.
2018 - 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**

Government Approval:

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

Easement acquisitions are decided using a scoring and ranking process. However, county board approval will be obtained by DNR Wildlife for fee-title acquisitions.

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**

Land acquired by DNR Wildlife through fee-title will be open to hunting and fishing. The underlying fee-title for lands with RIM easements, however, continues to be privately held after the easement is acquired. Therefore, they will not be open to hunting or fishing unless the landowner chooses to grant that right to individuals on a case-by-case basis.

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
RIM easements secured on 1500 acres	June 30, 2018
DNR Wildlife fee-title acquisitions completed on 13 acres	June 30, 2018

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *Miles of wild rice shoreland permanently protected and acres of permanently protected wild rice shoreland.*

Relationship to Other Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$2,494,800

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$123,800	\$0		\$123,800
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$120,000	\$0		\$120,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$1,987,400	\$0		\$1,987,400
Easement Stewardship	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Travel	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
Professional Services	\$98,000	\$0		\$98,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
Supplies/Materials	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
DNR IDP	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Total	\$2,494,800	\$0	-	\$2,494,800

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	3.00	\$75,000	\$0		\$75,000
Easement Processors	0.25	3.00	\$48,800	\$0		\$48,800
Total	0.50	6.00	\$123,800	\$0	-	\$123,800

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	BWSR	\$123,800	\$0		\$123,800
Contracts	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	BWSR	\$1,987,400	\$0		\$1,987,400
Easement Stewardship	BWSR	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Travel	BWSR	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
Professional Services	BWSR	\$90,000	\$0		\$90,000
Direct Support Services	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	BWSR	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
Supplies/Materials	BWSR	\$4,200	\$0		\$4,200
DNR IDP	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	-	\$2,363,800	\$0	-	\$2,363,800

Personnel - BWSR

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	3.00	\$75,000	\$0		\$75,000
Easement Processors	0.25	3.00	\$48,800	\$0		\$48,800
Total	0.50	6.00	\$123,800	\$0	-	\$123,800

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Contracts	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	DNR Wildlife	\$120,000	\$0		\$120,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	DNR Wildlife	\$8,000	\$0		\$8,000
Direct Support Services	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	DNR Wildlife	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	DNR Wildlife	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Total	-	\$131,000	\$0	-	\$131,000

Amount of Request: \$2,494,800

Amount of Leverage: \$0

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%

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	13	0	13
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	1,500	0	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1,513	0	1,513

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	\$131,000	\$0	\$131,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$2,363,800	\$0	\$2,363,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$2,494,800	\$0	\$2,494,800

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	13	13
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	1,500	1,500
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,513	1,513

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	\$131,000	\$131,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,363,800	\$2,363,800
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,494,800	\$2,494,800

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	\$10,077	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$1,576	\$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	\$10,077
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,576
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

Aitkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Carlton

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Clearwater

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Upper Rice Lake WMA	14536208	13	\$131,000	No	Full	Full

Crow Wing

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Hubbard

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Itasca

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

St. Louis

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

Wadena

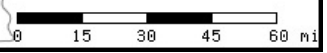
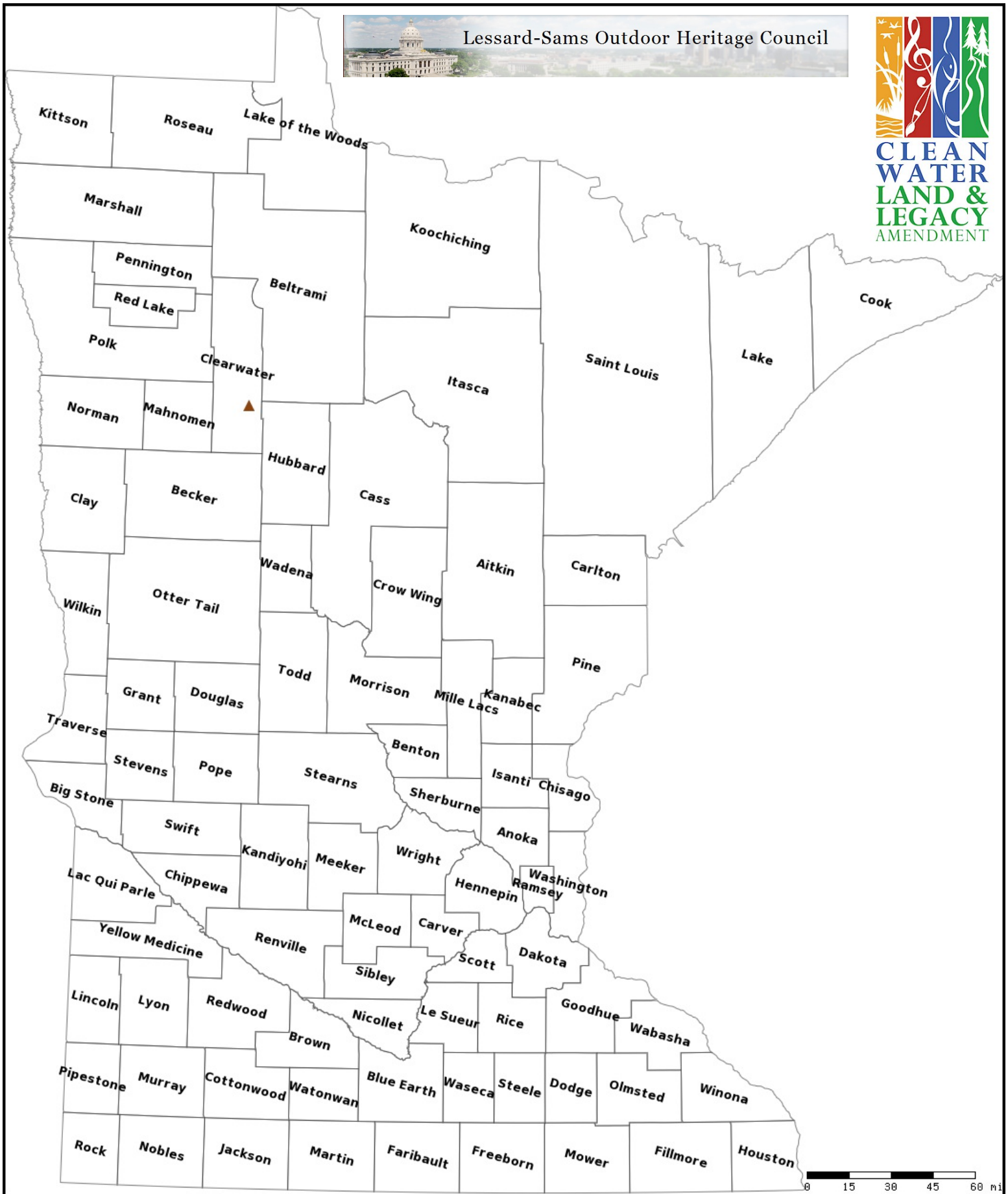
Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wild Rice Lakes	2	0	\$0			

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.

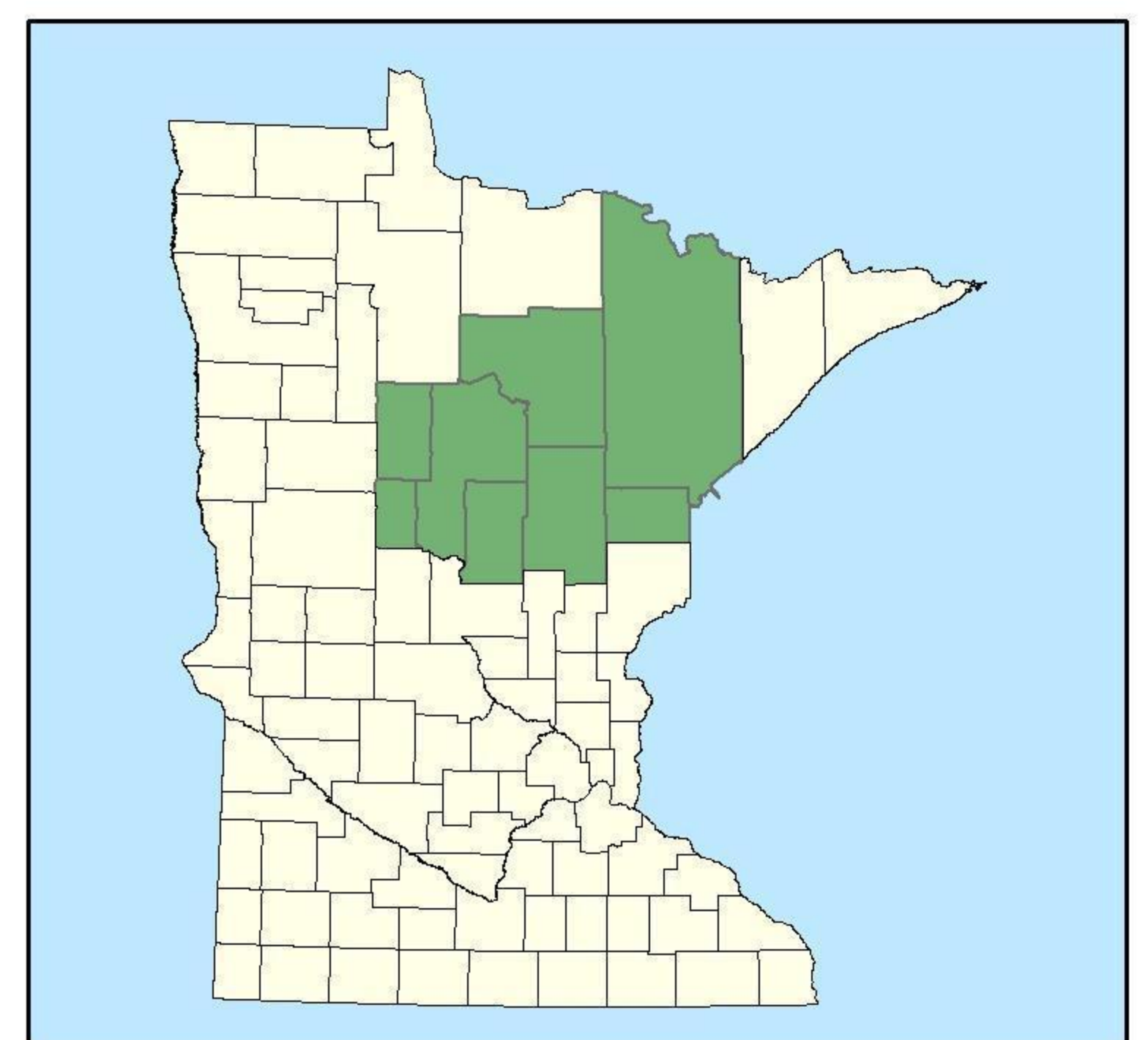
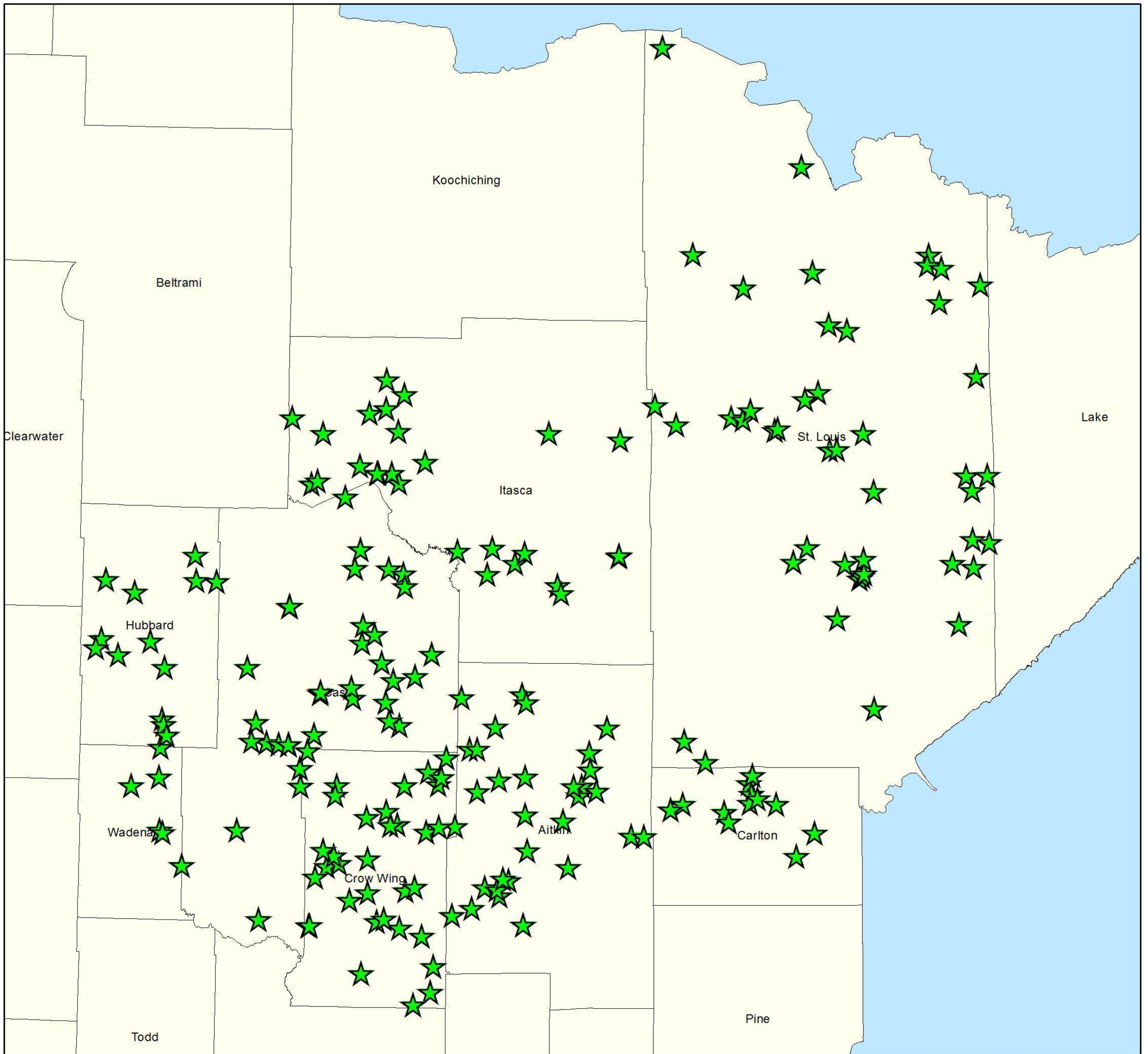


Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase IV

Legend

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

Important Wild Rice Lakes



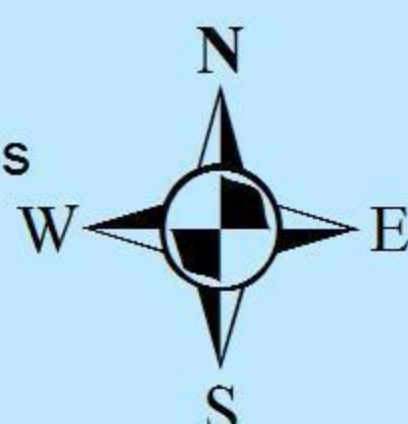
Legend



Important Rice Lakes



County Boundaries



2012 RIM Ranking Sheet **3/22/2012 Update**
Wild Rice Lake RIM Shoreland Easement Applications

<u>Score</u>	<u>Maximum Points Possible</u>	<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Guidelines:</u>
	30	# Feet of Shoreline	5 points for minimal shoreland on wild rice lake (<500ft) 10 points for at least 500 - 999 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake 15 points for 1,000 - 2,000 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake 20 points for 2,000 - 3,000 feet of shoreline on a wild rice lake 30 points for more than 3,000 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake
	20	Development Potential of Proposed Easement	1-20 points based on the proportion of tract that is developable (10% = 2 pt)
	20	Urgency	Property protection opportunity is likely to be lost if we do not act quickly
	20	Depth from shore	5 points for easements >300 feet deep along wild rice lake shore 10 points for easements >500 feet deep along wild rice lake shore 20 points for easements >900 feet deep along wild rice lake shore
	10	Adjoining Applications	10 points for land adjoining another application
	10	Adjoining Public Land	10 points for land adjoining public land on the wild rice lake, or adjoining land permanently protected by other easement program
	10	Habitat Value	1-10 points based on the habitat value of the property, uniqueness, and lack of existing development and shoreline alterations
	10	% of Parcel/Tract	1-10 points based on the proportion of the parcel enrolled (10% = 1 point)
	10	% of Lake Undeveloped	1-10 points based on the proportion of lake currently undeveloped (10% = 1 pt)
	15	Lake Outlet	15 points for tracts containing land on the outlet of a wild rice lake & likelihood of access being granted to DNR for beaver dam and water level management
	15	Watershed	15 points for tracts with majority acres draining into the wild rice lake
	15	No Additional Docks	15 points for landowner that will forego additional future docks on the lake
	15	Stakeholder Support	Up to 15 points for level of landowner support for shoreland protection and wild rice management (e.g. lake mgt plan that prioritizes wild rice protection in lake)
0	200	TOTAL GROSS SCORE	other factors may raise or lower the priority of a parcel
0	100	Final Score (Total / 2)	