



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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### Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

#### General Information

**Date:** 03/03/2021

**Project Title:** Jack Pine Forest/Crow Wing River Watershed Habitat Acquisition

**Funds Recommended:** \$3,570,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(b)

**Appropriation Language:** \$3,570,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association to acquire in fee and restore and enhance forest habitat lands in Cass and Hubbard Counties for county forest purposes. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Craig Engwall

**Title:** Executive Director

**Organization:** MN Deer Hunters Association

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#### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Hubbard and Cass.

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

- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee
- Restore

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest

- Habitat

## Narrative

### Summary of Accomplishments

This project protected in fee approximately 1,960 acres in Cass County and 320 acres in Hubbard County of forest habitat that are at significant risk of conversion to row crop agriculture. The project also restored 92 acres jack pine, an increasingly rare tree species, in the project area.

### Process & Methods

During past decade there has been a significant loss of forest habitat within the Crow Wing River Watershed due to the conversion of that habitat to row crop agriculture and other development. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) estimates that about 42 square miles of pine forest have been cleared or are at elevated risk of being cleared and converted to croplands.

To slow the loss of forest lands and they habitat provided by them, the project protected by acquisition in fee 2,280 acres of high priority habitat within the Crow Wing River Watershed. To achieve the project goals, the acquired fee parcels were transferred to Cass and Hubbard Counties to hold in fee and manage.

This project also funded the restoration of 92 acres of jack pine to the landscape. The amount of jack pine within the project area has been significantly reduced through a combination of conversion to row crop agriculture or replacement with other forest cover types such as red pine plantation. Jack pine is a relatively rare forest type in Minnesota and provides habitat for many unique species. It is well-suited to the sandy soil types in the Crow Wing River Watershed. This project used several forest management tools to restore the jack pine that included site preparation, planting, bud capping and brush control. No herbicides were used for site preparation and brush control.

The acquisition of these parcels and the restoration of jack pine forest has provided significant value beyond the protection of key forest habitat. The project will also benefit water quality by conserving forest cover that helps to filter pollutants from percolating through the sandy soils that are prevalent in the Crow Wing River Watershed. It had provided increased public access for hunting and recreational activities. It has also enabled land managers of adjacent state and county lands to easily access those lands for forest management while providing wood fiber from the land to supply local mills. Water quality in the Crow Wing Watershed has become a top priority as a significant number of acres of forestland within the watershed has been converted to row crop agriculture and several irrigation pivots have been installed. By protecting these lands from conversion, this project will provide increased protection of the surface and ground water, as well as provide sufficient wildlife habitat throughout the area.

The Byron Township Land acquisition included approximately 686 acres. Through consolidation of lands into larger blocks, better habitat can be created. Combining these lands with the adjoining County and State management forest lands, a habitat block of nearly 5,800 acres has been permanently protected.

The Poplar Township Land acquisition included approximately 1,274 acres. Combining these lands with the adjoining County and State management forest lands, another habitat block of nearly 4,300 acres has been permanently protected. Approximately 1.25 miles of Farnham Creek habitat flows through the property. The acquisition also adjoins and buffers the Dry Sand Lake Wildlife Management Area

The Badoura Township land acquisition included approximately 240 acres and connects two large blocks of county

and state lands, including the Crow Wing Chain W. M. A., providing permanent protection to over 7,500 acres of quality wildlife habitat.

The Lake George Township land acquisition included approximately 80 acres of remote forestland that is completely surrounded by existing county-managed lands. This acquisition protects the 80 acre parcel from potential fragmentation and loss of public recreation.

### **How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?**

These forest lands provide critical habitat for many game and non-game animals, including rare and threatened species. Species that rely on this habitat include white-tailed deer, black bear, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, woodcock, wild turkey, bobcats, grey wolves and numerous others. Jack pine stands are interspersed throughout the project area but are becoming increasingly rare. These jack pine stands are home to several unique species including the Northern Goshawk, a species of special concern in Minnesota, and Blanding's turtle, a state listed threatened species.

The forests in the Crow Wing River Watershed also protect rivers, streams, lakes and ground water by acting as a buffer and a filter of pollutants and chemicals that degrade water quality

### **How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.**

MDHA used the best scientific data available from the MN DNR, USFWS and other sources to make informed decisions as to which parcels are the highest priority. MDHA, in partnership with Cass and Hubbard County evaluated the parcels for selection using the following criteria to prioritize those parcels to be included in the project:

- Habitat quality.
- Specific habitat cover-type with an emphasis on jack pine and mixed-age forest lands.
- Immediacy of threat of conversion; and
- Adjacency to other large forest blocks to maximize habitat benefits.

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

Project partners included The Conservation Fund (TCF) and the Ruffed Grouse Society. TCF assisted MDHA in the land acquisition process while MDHA worked directly with the counties throughout the project.

In developing this proposal, MDHA actively engaged the county boards for Cass and Hubbard Counties and sought their support. Each of the County Boards has expressed its endorsement of the project by unanimously passing a resolution supporting it and urging full funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

During the acquisition phase of this project, very strong local support was received from area townships and county board.

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

A unique aspect and challenge of this project was to obtain the local support from the Townships and Counties. The County acquired lands are removed from the tax base and are not eligible for the annual Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT). This contrasts with DNR acquired lands that are eligible for PILT. These acquisitions reflect a long term vision and commitment to wildlife habitat, clean water, forest management and recreation from the local units of government and communities.

**What other funds contributed to this program?**

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

The lands will be managed by the Land Departments as county forest lands per their forest management plans. The lands are open to public hunting and fishing while also providing clean water, wildlife habitat, forest products and other diverse recreational opportunities.

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$89,300	\$14,800	-	-	-	\$89,300	\$14,800
Contracts	\$153,100	\$126,200	\$58,000	-	Private	\$211,100	\$126,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$3,258,000	\$3,196,800	\$116,000	-	Private	\$3,374,000	\$3,196,800
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$52,200	\$12,500	-	-	-	\$52,200	\$12,500
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$17,400	\$100	-	-	-	\$17,400	\$100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,570,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</b>	<b>\$174,000</b>	-	-	<b>\$3,744,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grant Manager	0.17	3.0	\$11,500	-	-	\$11,500
Fiscal Agent	0.07	3.0	-	-	-	-
Project Manager	0.07	3.0	\$3,300	-	-	\$3,300

### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

MDHA and our partners The Conservation Fund and the Ruffed Grouse Society had anticipated that we would receive a private contribution in the form of a grant. In 2016 TCF applied for a Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant through the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities/EPA to assist with this project and was not awarded a grant to count as match. The project came in under budget as we did not incur as much expense as we had anticipated.

**Total Revenue:** \$0

**Revenue Spent:** \$0

**Revenue Balance:** \$0

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

- E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

## 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	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	1,800	2,280	0	0	1,800	2,280
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,280</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	-	-	-	-	\$150,000	\$69,900	-	-	\$150,000	\$69,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$3,420,000	\$3,285,500	-	-	\$3,420,000	\$3,285,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,570,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,570,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</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	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,800	2,280	1,800	2,280

Fee w/o State PILT Liability													
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<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>0</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>1,800</b>	<b>2,280</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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$150,000	\$69,900	\$150,000	\$69,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$3,420,000	\$3,285,500	\$3,420,000	\$3,285,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,570,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</b>	<b>\$3,570,000</b>	<b>\$3,355,400</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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$1,900	\$1,441	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

**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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability										
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,900	\$1,441
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

0

**Outcomes**

**Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *This acquisition project will promote habitat with the parcelization of the acquired parcels into a contiguous 17,600 acres.*



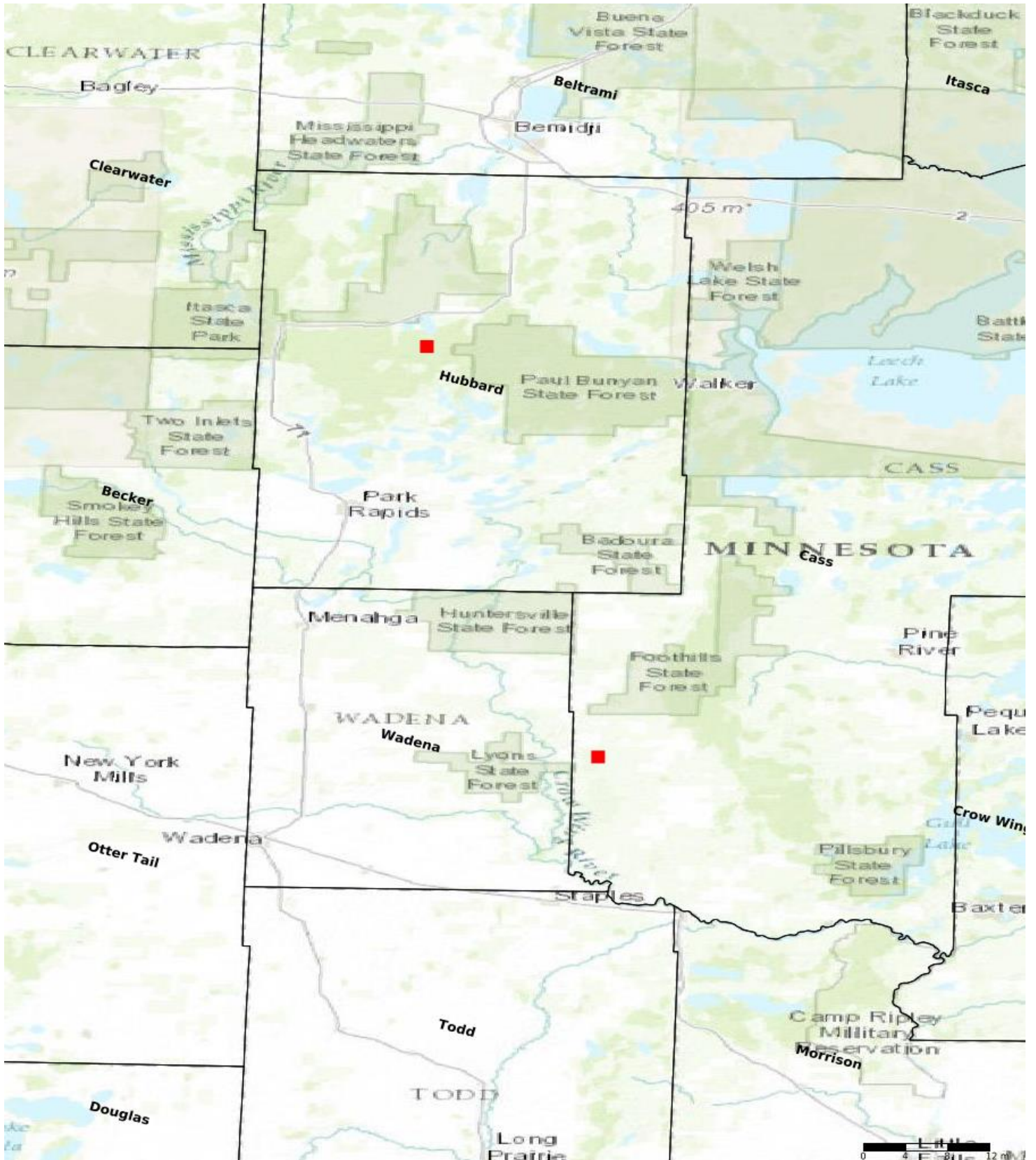
## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Cass County Parcel 81,83, 105,113,116,118,123	Cass	13632229	1,960	\$2,744,000	No
Hubbard Parcels 112 - 116	Hubbard	14334234	320	\$448,000	No



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

**Parcel Map**  
**Jack Pine Forest/Crow Wing River Watershed**  
**Habitat Acquisition**  
 (Data Generated From Parcel List)