



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

General Information

Date: 11/03/2020

Project Title: State Forest Acquisitions Phase III

Funds Recommended: \$1,000,000

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

Appropriation Language: \$1,000,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire lands in fee for wildlife habitat purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 7. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Hubbard, Wabasha, Houston and Aitkin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Protected through fee title acquisition 340 acres of priority forestland habitat in the northern and southeast ecological sections of the state. All parcels have been included in the DNR State Forest system; providing for long-term, ongoing protection and management of lands for the benefit of all Minnesotans.

Process & Methods

Working in collaboration with conservation partners, local government units, and ecological and wildlife professionals throughout the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry staff identified strategic opportunities for acquiring priority additions to our State Forest system. Parcels were selected from area land asset management plans, with priority given to those that improved public access to state lands, consolidated fragmented ownership boundaries, and provided protection of critical forest habitats.

In this third phase of the State Forest Acquisition project, we were able to successfully meet all our intended objectives of protecting 340 acres of high quality forested habitat, using only 80% of requested funds. In total four new State Forest additions were completed, providing a variety of benefits as described in brief below:

Watopa 1, Wabasha Co. – Protected 182 acres of high quality upland hardwood forest and vulnerable dry bedrock bluff prairie adjacent to existing state forest lands in the Snake Creek Unit of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. Acquisition of this parcel protects an important tributary critical to maintaining water quality from adjacent agricultural lands before emptying one mile downstream into Snake Creek, a designated trout stream.

Savanna 1, Aitkin Co. – Acquired a high priority 80 acre inholding in the Savanna State Forest that had been completely surrounded by existing state lands. Management boundaries were reduced by almost 8,000 feet, greatly improving our ability to manage these lands cost effectively, preventing future development fragmentation, and enhancing wildlife habitat continuity.

Crooked Creek 1, Houston Co. – Protection of these 37 acres allows for the restoration of 1,400 feet of sensitive shoreline along Crooked Creek trout stream just above where it enters into the Mississippi River. Land had been heavily grazed pasture, and is being actively restored to native hardwood bottomland forests. Protection and restoration of this previously degraded site will significantly reduce runoff erosion, improve water quality, and enhance critical riparian and riverine wildlife habitat along an important corridor adjacent to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. In addition this acquisition provides better public and management access to adjacent state forest lands, allowing for more hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities.

Steamboat 1, Hubbard Co. - Acquisition of this critical 40 acre inholding in the Paul Bunyan State Forest significantly reduces management boundaries by over 5,000 feet, greatly reducing management costs and fragmentation. This parcel was being divested by a large forest industry landholder (Potlatch), and was at risk of deforestation due to potential private acquisition and subsequent development to other land uses. Protection of this tract ensures it will remain permanently forested, improving the overall habitat value of the landscape by providing for large, continuous intact native forest communities.

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?

Project sites selected for protection contain important ecological landscape features and plant communities of high biodiversity significance, including sensitive trout stream tributaries, riparian forests, marshlands, and dry bedrock bluff prairies. These sites were prioritized in part for the critical habitat they provide for numerous state listed threatened and endangered species of concern; including: timber rattlesnakes, Blanchard's cricket frog, and the North American Racer.

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.

Project site prioritization included use of many existing science-based conservation habitat plans (MN Wildlife Action Plan), geospatial tools (MN Biological Survey, DNR Natural Heritage database, DNR Ecological Classification System); as well as ongoing consultation and collaboration with conservation professionals, wildlife habitat specialists, and ecologists throughout Minnesota.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

All parcel acquisitions received support from local conservation groups, county and township boards, and DNR staff in the Divisions of Ecological and Water Resources, Parks and Trails, and Fish and Wildlife. In the instance of the Watopa 1 parcel, the local county board had expressed concerns with the initial proposal boundary, which included the acquisition of some private agricultural lands that were enrolled in CRP. In hearing their concerns we responded by adjusting the project boundaries to exclude all agricultural lands, focusing instead on the upland forested areas.

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

Due in part to the shifting needs and outcompeting interests of the Line 3 energy pipeline in Aitkin County, we were unable to complete several parcels we had been working with landowners on protecting. These missed opportunities highlight the urgency of continuing efforts to protect important inholdings in our northern forested areas as development pressures continue to grow.

What other funds contributed to this program?

- Other : General Fund

How were the funds used to advance the program?

General fund dollars were used in part to fund DNR Division of Forestry staff in their efforts to identify, analyze, and prioritize important habitat project areas appropriate for this program. DNR staff time spent building support for specific projects with local conservation groups, landowners, local government units and other DNR staff was funded with General Fund monies.

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

All parcels acquired in this project have been fully incorporated into the DNR's State Forest system, and will be included in ongoing planning efforts to determine what/if any management needs exist to maintain and enhance these tracts to meet the multiple use needs of providing quality wildlife habitat, and natural resources based economic and recreational opportunities. Any future required management activities will be funded through the Forest Management Investment Account, and/or state bonding dollars.

Budget

Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	-	-	\$120,000	\$120,000	General Fund	\$120,000	\$120,000
Contracts	\$40,000	-	-	-	-	\$40,000	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$891,000	\$691,400	-	-	-	\$891,000	\$691,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$66,100	\$110,200	-	-	-	\$66,100	\$110,200
Direct Support Services	\$2,900	-	-	-	-	\$2,900	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,000,000	\$801,600	\$120,000	\$120,000	-	\$1,120,000	\$921,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Division Coordinator	0.4	4.0	-	\$120,000	General Fund	\$120,000

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Several project parcels had been worked on, though were never ultimately completed due to a variety of issues; including lower than expected appraisal values, and outcompeting interests due to Line 3 energy pipeline needs. Because of this professional services charges are slightly higher than would be otherwise expected for the outcomes achieved.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

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

- D. This is not applicable because the recipient is a state agency or department.

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	339	342	0	0	339	342
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	339	342	0	0	339	342

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$1,000,000	\$801,600	-	-	\$1,000,000	\$801,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$1,000,000	\$801,600	-	-	\$1,000,000	\$801,600

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	269	219	0	0	70	120	339	339
Protect in Fee w/o	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

State PILT Liability												
Protect in Easement	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
Total	0	0	0	0	269	219	0	0	70	120	339	339

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$804,000	\$712,700	-	-	\$196,000	\$88,900	\$1,000,000	\$801,600
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$804,000	\$712,700	-	-	\$196,000	\$88,900	\$1,000,000	\$801,600

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	-	-	-	-	\$2,949	\$2,343	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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	-	-	-	-	\$2,988	\$3,254	-	-	\$2,800	\$740

Liability										
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1400

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Protection from development and fragmentation in the northern forest region is measured by an acre count of parcels acquired in fee title and permanently protected through inclusion in the State Forest program of the MN's Outdoor Recreation System (MS 86A.05)*

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Forestlands and savannas are protected from parceliazation and fragmentation and accessible for resource management purposes ~ *Protection from development and fragmentation in the southeast forest region is measured by an acre count of parcels acquired in fee title and permanently protected through inclusion in the State Forest program of the MN's Outdoor Recreation System (MS 86A.05)*

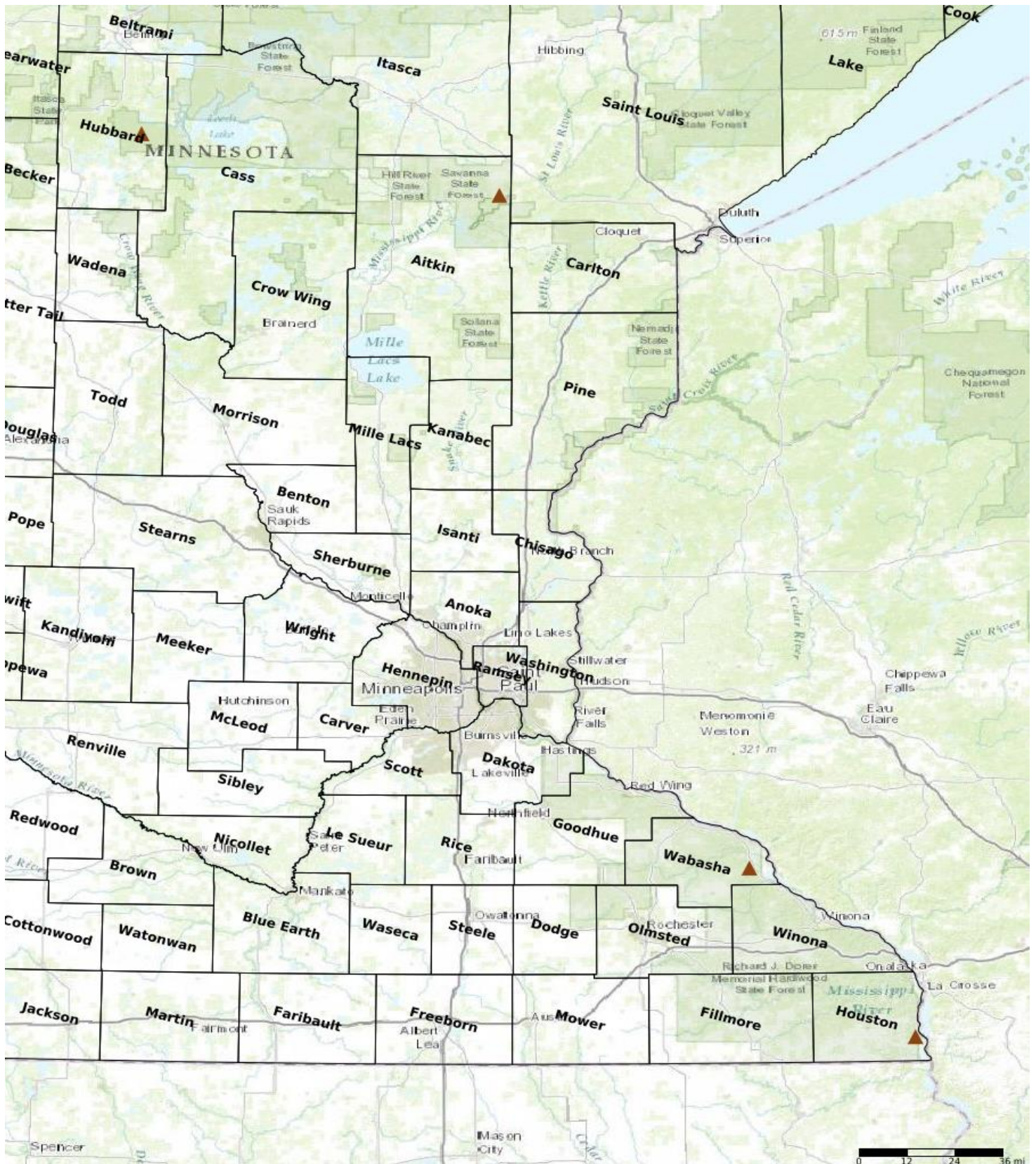
Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Savanna	Aitkin	05122227	80	\$31,000	No
RJD - Crooked Creek 1	Houston	10204235	37	\$120,000	No
Paulbunyan - Steamboat 1	Hubbard	14232219	40	\$60,000	No
RJD - Watopa 1	Wabasha	10910210	185	\$600,000	No



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

Parcel Map
State Forest Acquisitions Phase III
(Data Generated From Parcel List)