

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2017 / ML 2016 Request for Funding



Date: June 04, 2015

Program or Project Title: Fisheries Habitat Protection on Strategic North Central Minnesota Lakes: Phase II

Funds Requested: \$2,948,200

Manager's Name: Lindsey Ketchel

Title: Executive Director

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County Locations: Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Habitat

Abstract:

1,290 acres of critical shorelands and diverse forest habitat will be permanently protected in strategic North Central Minnesota watersheds through targeted conservation easements and fee title acquisitions. This program will help sustain high-quality fish habitat and a healthy sport fishery in Minnesota.

Design and scope of work:

A recent survey of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported 32 percent of Minnesotans participated in sport fishing, contributing \$2.4 billion to the state economy in 2011. Sport fishing is a powerful economic engine in Minnesota and important to its residents' quality of life. Sustaining a strong angling heritage revolves largely around protecting fisheries habitat necessary for healthy sport fish populations in the near- and long-term future with resurging shoreland development pressures and looming climate changes. This project will focus on fisheries habitat protection on lakes that have the best biological integrity for a sustained sport fishery in light of these changes. These lakes are known collectively as "tullibee refuge lakes."

Tullibee (aka cisco) is the preferred forage fish for walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, and lake trout. They require cold, well-oxygenated waters—a condition most common in lakes with deep water and healthy watersheds. Tullibee populations are the "canary in the coalmine" for three significant collective threats to Minnesota's sport fishery: shoreline development, watershed health, and climate warming. Deep, cold water tullibee lakes with high quality, well-oxygenated waters and natural, undisturbed land cover along the shorelines and within their watersheds will have the best chance to sustain tullibee populations in the face of these threats and will serve as a "refuge" for the tullibee if annual temperatures increase.

Minnesota DNR Fisheries researchers studied tullibee lakes and designated 68 lakes in Minnesota as the primary "refuge lakes" for tullibee that need protection. Thirty-eight (38) of these refuge lakes—58 percent—are located in Hubbard, Crow Wing, Cass, and Aitkin counties. Many are also Minnesota's premier recreation lakes. The next 10 years are a critical window of opportunity to protect some of the "best of the best" sport fishery lakes in Minnesota. While recent economics slowed shoreland development, realtors now report a resurgence of shoreland property sales. Growth will be driven by retiring baby boomers and technology that allows landowners to live,

work, and play from the same location. With land values rising in the region, now is the time to protect these tullibee refuge lakes and maximize the effectiveness of this fisheries habitat protection project.

Scope of Project:

Conservation easements will be used to achieve permanent conservation of fisheries habitat on strategic parcels primarily in the watersheds of the 38 tullibee refuge lakes in Hubbard, Cass, Crow Wing, and Aitkin counties. Protection will be targeted to shoreland parcels and key private forested parcels within these lake's watersheds. This proposal is a continuation of Phase I of the Fisheries Habitat Protection Program funded by the OHF.

MN DNR Fisheries research recommends that 75% of a lake's watershed be in permanent protection to insure sustained water quality. Tullibee refuge lakes near this threshold will be the highest priority for protection. In addition, the DNR's Sensitive Shoreland data will help identify priority lakes where conservation investments can be maximized. Landowner recruitment will focus on parcels in close proximity to protected land and also have a high potential to expand upland and aquatic habitat complexes. Landowner applications will be evaluated based on criteria established by the project's technical team. To ensure the best conservation return on the state's investment, landowner willingness to donate a portion of the easement value will be a key component of the parcel evaluation. Best available data (state and county) will be used to prioritize projects and maximize outcomes. The 2013 Minnesota DNR Fish Habitat Plan will provide strategic guidance.

Per the Fish Habitat Plan, nearshore fish habitat in lakes is largely affected by shoreline disturbance and the water quality habitat is determined by the water's oxygen level and nutrient content. Lakeshore development decreases a lake's ability to function as a healthy ecosystem for sport fish and their forage, not only by allowing increased runoff, but also through physical fish habitat alteration by lakeshore owners.

Fisheries research has shown that healthy watersheds with intact forests are fundamental to good fish habitat. If a lake's watershed has less than 25% land disturbance and 75% or more of its landscape remains forested and permanently protected, the lake has a high probability of sustaining a healthy lake ecosystem. The 38 tullibee refuge lakes in North Central Minnesota all have less than 25% land disturbance in their watersheds and already have some degree of watershed protection.

While fisheries habitat protection is the primary focus of this project, creating strategic conservation complexes is an added benefit of permanent protection of forested, non-riparian lands within a tullibee refuge lake's watershed. A conservation easement or fee title acquisition added adjacent to other protected land will increase the overall conservation impact by creating larger permanently protected complexes of diverse habitat that benefit many species. This project proposes to acquire a 290-acre parcel in the MNDNR Forest Stewardship "Tullibee Watershed Project" area. The DNR will have permanent ownership as a WMA. The parcel is adjacent to another 192-acre conservation easement currently in process with Phase I funding and a large complex of county-administered tax forfeited and state land. It has prime waterfowl and wildlife habitat and is a high priority parcel for the DNR. When acquired, this proposed WMA will create a five mile habitat protection corridor in a developing area of Cass County.

LLAWF's role will continue as outlined in Phase I: targeted landowner recruitment, facilitating technical team and grant administration. MLT will provide technical support, work with landowners to draft conservation easements and provide long-term stewardship of the easements.

This project will protect approximately 1,290 acres:

☐ Up to 12 conservation easements on approximately 1,000 acres of shoreline and private forest lands within tullibee refuge lakes' watersheds. The project will maximize the State's financial leverage by securing donated easements from willing landowners when possible and providing compensation based on the fair market easement value as set by an appraisal.

☐ A fee-title acquisition of 290 acres in Ponto Lake Township of Cass County to establish a WMA and create a diverse habitat protection complex.

Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories:

The 2013 Minnesota DNR Fish Habitat Plan concluded that nearshore fish habitat in lakes are largely affected by shoreline disturbance and the water quality is determined by the water's oxygen level and nutrient content. Shoreline disturbance reduces physical habitat that fish need for food production, spawning, and cover from predation. Run-off from disturbed land can contribute oxygen-depleting

nutrients which are especially harmful to sensitive species like tullibee that need high oxygen levels. Lakeshore development decreases a lake's ability to function as a healthy ecosystem.

Fisheries research has shown that healthy watersheds with intact forests are fundamental to good fish habitat. If a lake's watershed has less than 25% land disturbance and 75% or more of its landscape remains forested and permanently protected, the lake has a high probability of sustaining a healthy lake ecosystem to support fish. The undisturbed forest cover allows water to infiltrate into the ground rather than running off directly to the lake. The 38 tullibee refuge lakes in North Central Minnesota all have less than 25% land disturbance in their watersheds and already have some degree of watershed protection. Our project will strategic reduce shoreline development and watershed disturbance through easements and acquisition.

What is the nature of urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

Sport fishing is a powerful economic engine in Minnesota and important to its resident's quality of life and our regional economy. Sustaining a strong angling heritage revolves around protecting fisheries habitat necessary for healthy sport fish populations in the near- and long-term future with resurging shoreland development pressures.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Program evaluation will include number of strategic acres placed into conservation easements, impact on moving Tullibee Refuge lakes toward a 75 % protection status, establishment of a WMA and increase in the number and size of conservation complexes in the North Central Minnesota lake region.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Northern Forest:

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

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund

In 2010 LLAWF helped implement an LCCMR grant titled "Protecting Sensitive Shorelands in Cass County". The project was focused on identifying landowners along sensitive Shoreland and recruiting landowners to donate conservation easements. This grant developed effective tools to conduct targeted landowner outreach using lake maps and lake association contacts.

LLAWF in partnership with BWSR will be awarded a grant in July 2015 titled "Multi-benefit Watershed Scale Conservation on North Central Lakes". This pilot will evaluate the effectiveness of RIM conservation easements in a watershed protection context. Landowner interest in this project will help gauge whether BWSR should consider developing a statewide program aimed at shoreland and watershed protection. This program also will help BWSR and its partners understand whether landowners are willing to accept less than the standard RIM rates set by the BWSR Board. All landowner outreach related to this pilot will complement and support the current Phase I OHF grant and this Phase II grant application.

LLAWF has been contracted by Cass County to help implement a MPCA Clean Water Fund grant for the Leech Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Project (WRAP). When completed in 2016, this WRAP will be one of the first protection-oriented WRAPS in the state.

How does this proposal accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF), the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resource are partners in other projects to place conservation easements on priority shorelands in North Central Minnesota, including Phase I of this program. LLAWF has established relationships with regional governments, land owners, lake associations and other regional entities for effective outreach and landowner relationships and provides technical assistance to landowners. MLT is a nationally accredited land trust that is qualified to hold and perpetually manage the easements. This proposal is a continuation of the FY2012 OHF funded project "Protecting Priority Shorelands in North Central Minnesota" with donated conservation easements in a similar geography and the FY2014 OHF funded Phase I project "Fisheries Habitat Protection on Strategic North Central Minnesota Lakes."

This project will build on previous landowner outreach efforts and an existing application pool from Phase I recruitment. Additionally we will continue to work in partnership with DNR on tullibee lake watershed protection to provide significant watershed level protection to several key lake watersheds.

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2010	ENRTF- LLAWF Protecting Sensitive Shoreland Cass Cty	76,200

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

The majority of financial support for both LLAWF and MLT must be raised on an annual basis. The work in this proposal allows both organizations to enhance and accelerate ongoing conservation efforts in North Central Minnesota; these grant funds will not substitute for or supplant other funding sources.

The fee-title acquisition of the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) will be State owned and managed by the Minnesota DNR. As such it will be permanently maintained according to DNR standards and procedures for public land. The Minnesota Land Trust will hold all the conservation easements acquired. The land protected through these conservation easements will be sustained through the best standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2016 and beyond LLAWF	Other State and local funds	DNR will maintain land as needed		
2016 and beyond MLT	Outdoor Heritage Fund and MLT funds	Secure easement and associated documents, including habitat management plans where appropriate	Establish individual monitoring plans, annually monitor easements	Enforce easements through MLTs Stewardship program as necessary

Activity Details:

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

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition - **Yes**

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

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing - **No**

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

The Krukow Wildlife Management Area will be managed by DNR as part of the WMA system and will be open to hunting and fishing as allowed within the WMA rules.

Will the eased land be open for public use - **Yes**

Though public access is not the primary goal of this project, the Land Trust will explore the potential for public access with landowners on a case-by-case basis. The majority of easement projects will be adjacent to public waters, where anglers will be able to fish along the protected shoreline. It is not uncommon that lands under conservation easement become open to the public in the future as the ownership changes. In total, nearly 20% of the Land Trust's conservation easements have public or semi-public access.

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

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Fee Title Acquisition of 290 acres WMA, conveyed to MNDNR	October 2017
Landowner outreach, consultation, technical assistance and easement preparation	ongoing through June 30, 2019
Manage, monitor and enforce conservation easement	ongoing to perpetuity
Protect 1,000 acres of targeted riparian parcels and forested watershed parcels via easements	June 30, 2019

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

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

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$2,948,200

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$260,200	\$0		\$260,200
Contracts	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$630,000	\$63,000	Landowner Donation and local fundrasing	\$693,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$1,400,000	\$700,000	Landowner donation of easement value	\$2,100,000
Easement Stewardship	\$240,000	\$0		\$240,000
Travel	\$18,000	\$0		\$18,000
Professional Services	\$272,000	\$0		\$272,000
Direct Support Services	\$59,000	\$0		\$59,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$14,000	\$0		\$14,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,948,200	\$763,000		\$3,711,200

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
LLAWF - ED	0.10	1.00	\$9,000	\$0		\$9,000
LLAWF - ED - CE	0.20	3.00	\$73,000	\$0		\$73,000
MLT - Legal and Conservation Personnel	0.66	3.00	\$178,200	\$0		\$178,200
Total	0.96	7.00	\$260,200	\$0		\$260,200

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	LLAWF	\$82,000	\$0		\$82,000
Contracts	LLAWF	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	LLAWF	\$630,000	\$63,000	Landowner Donation and local fundrasing	\$693,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	LLAWF	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
Professional Services	LLAWF	\$52,000	\$0		\$52,000
Direct Support Services	LLAWF	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	LLAWF	\$14,000	\$0		\$14,000
Capital Equipment	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	LLAWF	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	LLAWF	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$854,000	\$63,000		\$917,000

Personnel - LLAWF

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
LLAWF - ED	0.10	1.00	\$9,000	\$0		\$9,000
LLAWF - ED - CE	0.20	3.00	\$73,000	\$0		\$73,000
Total	0.30	4.00	\$82,000	\$0		\$82,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$178,200	\$0		\$178,200
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0

Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Minnesota Land Trust	\$1,400,000	\$700,000	Landowner donation of easement value	\$2,100,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$240,000	\$0		\$240,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$12,000	\$0		\$12,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$220,000	\$0		\$220,000
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$39,000	\$0		\$39,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$2,094,200	\$700,000		\$2,794,200

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT - Legal and Conservation Personnel	0.66	3.00	\$178,200	\$0		\$178,200
Total	0.66	3.00	\$178,200	\$0		\$178,200

Amount of Request: \$2,948,200

Amount of Leverage: \$763,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 25.88%

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	290	290
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	1,000	1,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	1,290	1,290

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	\$683,000	\$683,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,265,200	\$2,265,200
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,948,200	\$2,948,200

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	290	290
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	1,000	1,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,290	1,290

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	\$683,000	\$683,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,265,200	\$2,265,200
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,948,200	\$2,948,200

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	\$2,355
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,265
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	\$2,355
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,265
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

6

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?
Cedar Lake	04727231	0	\$0	no	no	No
Cedar Lake	04727231	0	\$0	No	No	No
Hill Lake	05226212	0	\$0	no	no	no
Long Lake	04625210	0	\$0	no	no	no
Round Lake	04923225	0	\$0	no	no	No

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Bass Lake	14026227	0	\$0	no	no	No
Cooper	14028211	0	\$0	No	No	No
Deep Portage	13929207	0	\$0	no	no	No
Girl Lake	14128233	0	\$0	no	no	No
Hattie Lake	13929231	0	\$0	no	no	No
Long Lake	14128223	0	\$0	no	no	No
Long Lake	14231233	0	\$0	no	no	No
Mann Lake	14029204	0	\$0	no	no	No
Pleasant Lake	14030221	0	\$0	no	no	No
Ten Mile Lake	14131206	0	\$0	no	no	No
Thunder Lake	14026209	0	\$0	no	no	No
Washburn Lake	13926209	0	\$0	no	no	No
Women Lake	14028206	0	\$0	no	no	No

Crow Wing

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Big Trout	13728223	0	\$0	no	no	No
Borden Lake	04428215	0	\$0	no	no	No
Crooked Lake	04528216	0	\$0	no	no	No
Kenny Lake	04428202	0	\$0	no	no	No
Lower Hay Lake	13729225	0	\$0	no	no	No
Ossawinamakee Lake	13628204	0	\$0	no	no	No
Pelican Lake	13628227	0	\$0	no	no	No
Roosevelt Lake	13826208	0	\$0	no	no	No
Star Lake	13728226	0	\$0	no	no	No
Whitefish Lake	13728207	0	\$0	no	no	No

Hubbard

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Big Mantrap Lake	14233232	0	\$0	no	no	No
Big Sand Lake	14138228	0	\$0	no	no	No
Eleventh Crow Wing Lake	14132215	0	\$0	no	no	No
Kabekona Lake	14332230	0	\$0	no	no	No
Ninth Crow Wing Lake	14032206	0	\$0	no	no	No
Spearhead Lake	15434223	0	\$0	no	no	No

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Cass

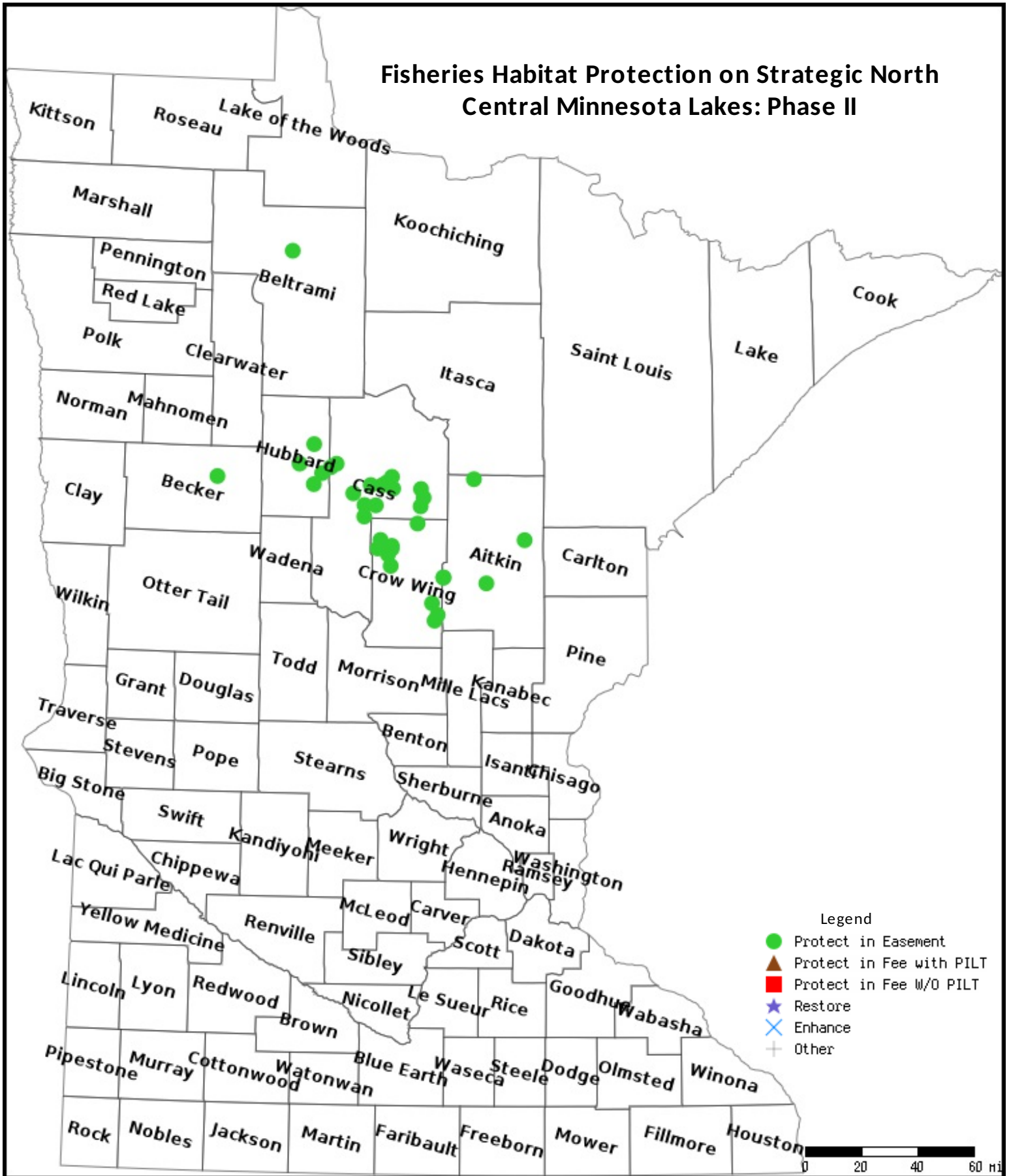
Name	TRDS	Acres	EstCost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Krukow WMA	13929211	290	\$680,000		we plan to have them removed and or excluded from the transation	\$	

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

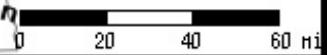
No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

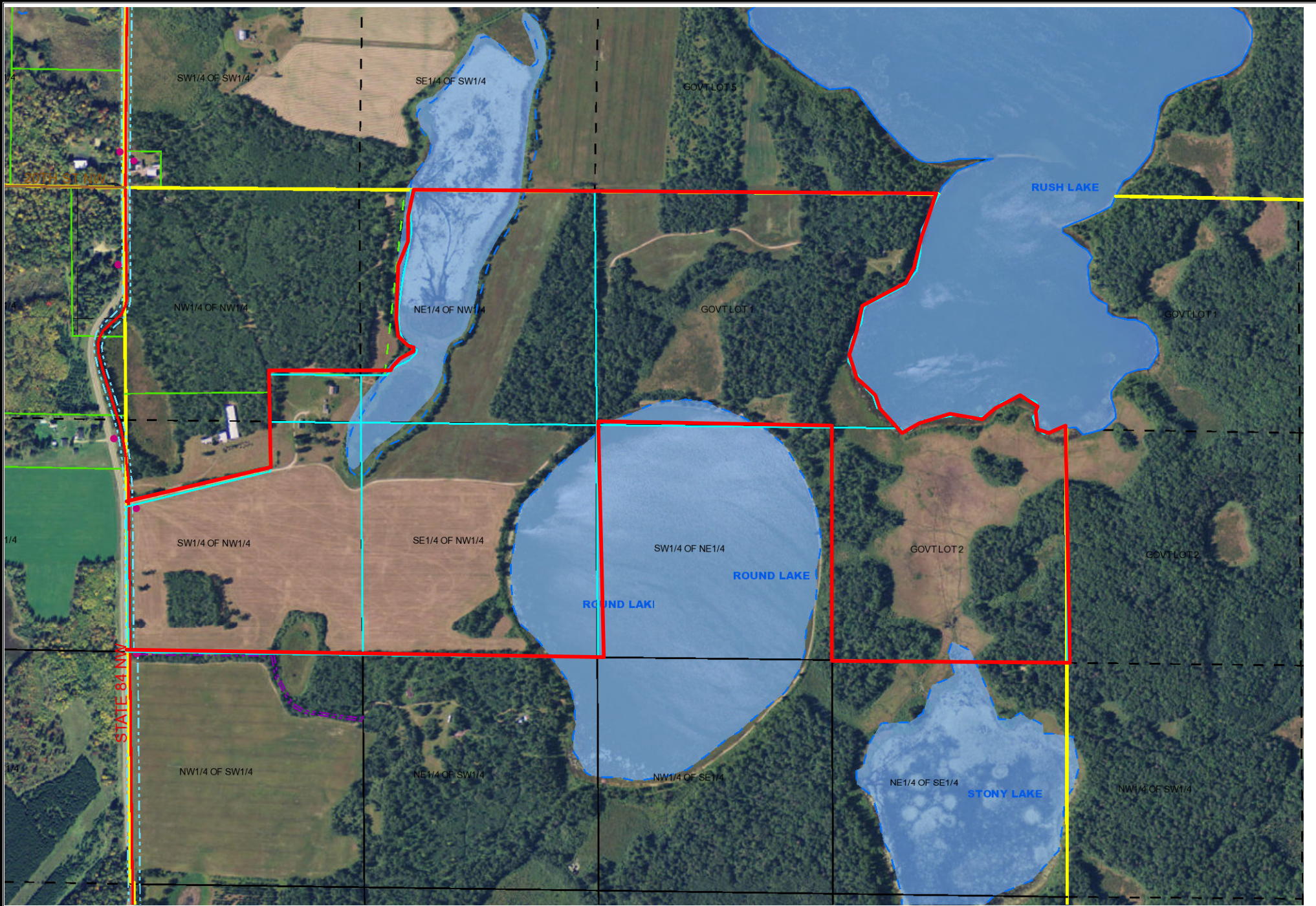
Fisheries Habitat Protection on Strategic North Central Minnesota Lakes: Phase II



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



Data Generated From Parcel List



These data are provided on an "AS-IS" basis, without warranty of any type, expressed or implied, including but not limited to any warranty as to their performance, merchantability, or fitness for any particular purpose.

Proposed Kruckow WMA

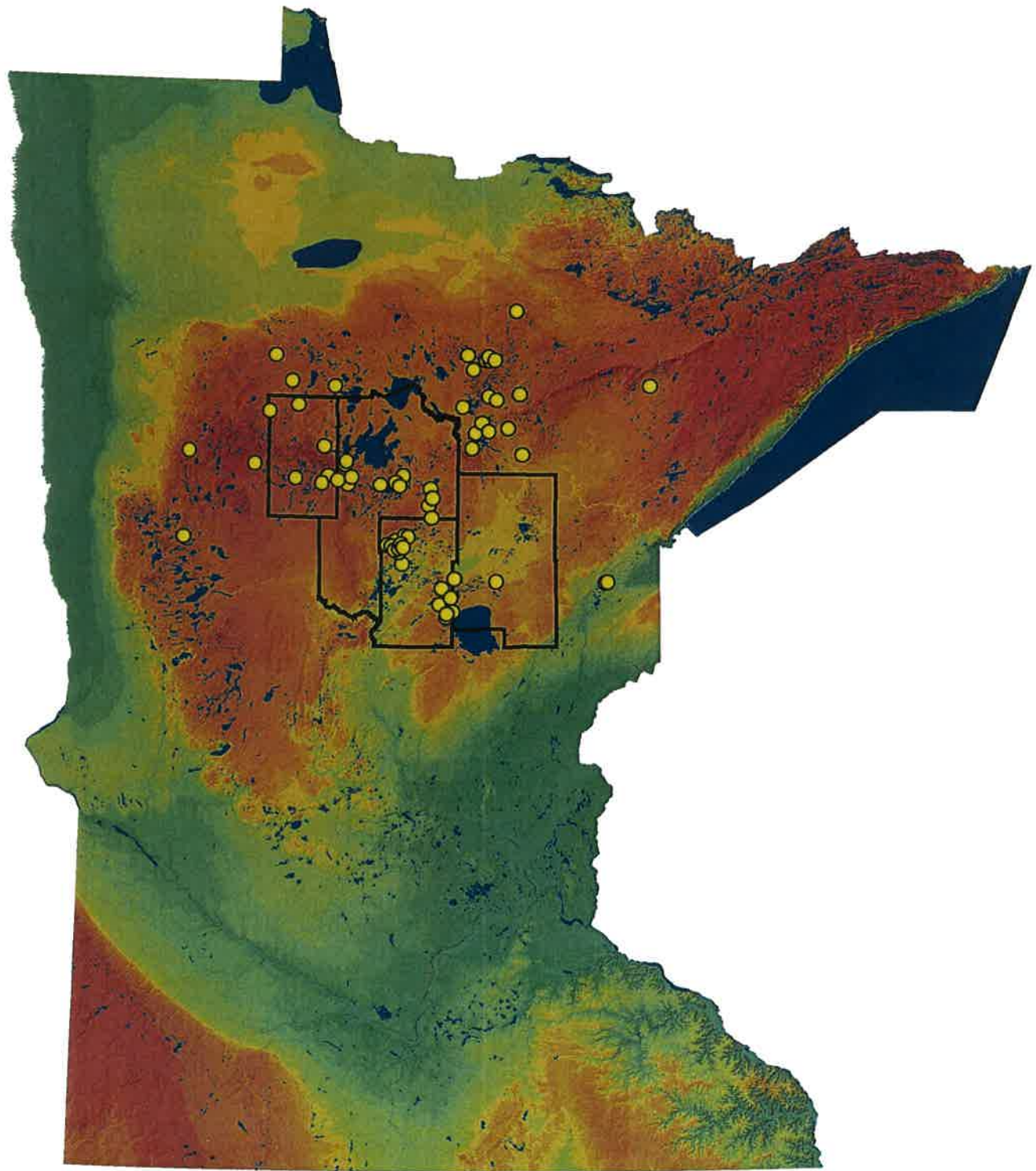
Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation

This map is not a substitute for accurate field surveys or for locating actual property lines and any adjacent features.



Date: 6/3/2015

High Quality Tullibee Lakes Targeted for Protection



Lakes identified by DNR Fisheries that are good candidates for protecting important populations of cisco (tullibee) through watershed protection efforts in the proposed project geography of Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard counties.

leech lake area WATERSHED FOUNDATION

Protecting Waters, Woods, and Wildlife for Future Generations to Enjoy

CLEAN WATER & CRITICAL HABITAT PROTECTION PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?

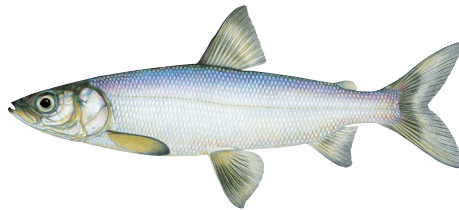
The Clean Water and Critical Habitat Protection Program is focused on protecting high priority critical fish habitat and the surrounding watersheds in Minnesota's North Central Lakes region by securing permanent conservation easements. We will work with landowners to permanently protect approximately 400 acres through a ranking system that guides our selection process for purchasing conservation easements. Funding for this program is provided by a grant from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.



Fisheries research has shown that healthy watersheds with intact forests are fundamental to good fish habitat. If a lake's watershed has less than 25% land disturbance and 75% or more of its landscape remains forested and permanently protected, the lake has a high probability of sustaining clean water and healthy lake ecosystem to support fish. Projects that can simultaneously reduce shoreline development and watershed disturbances can yield the greatest conservation return.

We will focus our protection strategy on 38 Tullibee Refuge Lake and their watersheds. Tullibee are the proverbial "canary in the coal mine" fish species due to their sensitivity to even slight changes in water temperature and oxygen levels. A decrease in tullibee population can signal deterioration of the lake's water quality. Protecting lakes from excess nutrients such as phosphorus

is critical to maintaining sufficient oxygen levels. Forestland plays a key role in ensuring quality habitat, acting like a sponge to absorb and hold rainfall and reduce runoff to the surface waters of lakes and streams. Tullibee is an important food source for lake trout, northern pike, muskie and walleye. This program will also benefit habitat for many wildlife and water fowl species.



The conservation easement program will focus on critical shoreland and forested parcels. The 38 refuge Tullibee lakes in North Central Minnesota all have less than 25% land disturbance in their watersheds and already have some degree of watershed protection. With strategic effort, it is feasible to reach permanent 75% watershed protection for many of these lakes. Additionally, we will develop conservation complexes that can act as corridors, connecting existing protected land and expanding their impact.

PROJECT PARTNERS



Cass, Crow-Wing, Hubbard and Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation Districts

HOW WILL PROJECTS BE CHOSEN FOR THIS PROGRAM?

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and the Minnesota Land Trust are opening a competitive application process to select conservation easements for funding on private lands within Minnesota's North Central lake region which includes Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard and Aitkin Counties. Using a multi-faceted approach to prioritizing easements, a technical committee comprised of County and State agencies and project partners will weigh the overall habitat benefits of the property against the costs of acquiring the easement.



Funding will be focused on lands within the Tullibee Refuge Lake watersheds although special project applications outside the focus area will also be accepted and evaluated for their potential to protect critical fish habitat. A complete list of current lakes is at the end of this application. A second round of applications will be considered in 2016 using a similar application process.

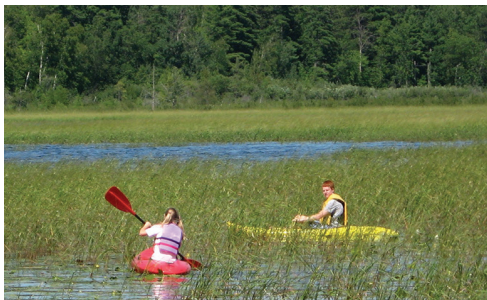
Initial applications are non-binding. Landowners and project partners are not legally bound to a conservation easement until both parties agree to and sign final conservation easement documents.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Each landowner will have their land scored based on a set of established habitat value factors. This habitat value score takes into account the size of the parcel, ecological features, amount of shoreline, protection of water quality, location in relation to other protected lands, etc.



To ensure we maximize our ecological impact, we are asking landowners to consider taking less than full compensation. This will allow us to increase the total number of acres protected and help create a competitive process. A landowner's willingness to take less than full appraised value of the easement will be taken into consideration when applications are reviewed, but will not be the sole determining factor. You may choose to be fully compensated, partially compensated, or to donate the easement.



The applications will then be ranked based on the tract's habitat value. Examples of criteria include; feet of sensitive shoreland, percentage of wetland, percentage in forest, and proximity to public or other protected lands. Existence of forest management plans and the number of additional homesites the applicant would like to retain will also be factored and rated. After all the applications have been received, a compilation of scores with rankings will be assembled and used to guide the selection process.

Easements will be funded in order of highest project value rating to lowest. After the highest rated project is selected, the application with the next highest rating will be selected in order until all available funds have been assigned to selected projects. If for any reason a conservation easement does not move forward or the application is withdrawn, the next highest rated project may be selected.



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

Conservation easements are individually tailored agreements through which landowners limit the use and development of their property to permanently preserve its natural or scenic features. These features – called conservation values – might include significant wildlife and plant habitat, lake or river shoreline, wetlands or important scenic or cultural lands which benefit the public. Conservation easements targeted at sensitive shoreland and private forest within Tullibee Refuge Lake watersheds are an effective approach to protecting water quality.

In order to protect these conservation values, certain restrictions regarding use of the property and the reserved rights of the landowner are detailed in a conservation easement, which is conveyed to a non-profit conservation organization or government agency qualified to hold and enforce easements. In this program the Minnesota Land Trust will be holding acquired easements. Once the easement is signed by the landowner and the easement holder, the document is filed with the local county land records.



Most conservation easements, including all of those by the Minnesota Land Trust, are perpetual. They apply to the current and all future landowners, permanently protecting the property. Each conservation easement is unique and is individually crafted to reflect the special characteristics of the land and the particular situation of the landowner.

PROGRAM FUNDED BY



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