

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Fiscal Year 2017 / ML 2016 Request for Funding



**Date:** June 04, 2015

**Program or Project Title:** Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley Phase II

**Funds Requested:** \$7,885,100

**Manager's Name:** Eran Sandquist

**Title:** State Coordinator - MN

**Organization:** MN Prairie Chicken Society / Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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**County Locations:** Becker, Clay, Mahnomen, Norman, Polk, and Red Lake.

**Regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Prairie

### Abstract:

The Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership will permanently protect, restore, and enhance 2,250 acres of prairie chicken habitat in the Southern Red River Valley of Northwest Minnesota. Land protected will become either WMA or WPA and open to public recreation.

### Design and scope of work:

Problem addressed and Scope of work

This grant is a partnership with the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society and Pheasants Forever to protect and restore grasslands in the Southern Red River Valley of Northwestern Minnesota. While the Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society and Pheasants Forever are most interested in their namesake birds, both groups are also concerned with prairies and prairie wildlife in general. Efforts to protect native prairie and restore prairie will help dozens of non game and game species, insects, and plants. Many of the tracts proposed for acquisition under this grant contain native prairie. Conserving these last tracts of native prairie is one of the primary goals of the MN Prairie Conservation Plan (MPCP). By protecting and restoring grasslands and wetlands, we will also help serve other goals of the MPCP such as increasing the abundance and diversity of wildlife.

Prairie chickens, and other prairie grouse, are most famous for their spring mating rituals on leks every spring. Some hotel owners in northwest Minnesota can tell when the prairie chickens are mating as they see an increase in business from birders wanting to watch the prairie chickens. The prairie chicken hunting season was closed in 1943 due to small populations, but a limited season was reopened in 2003 and continues today.

Prairie chickens were once found across ninety percent of Minnesota. Hunters reported harvesting wagon loads of birds over the course of a day or two. Today, with the loss of their grassland habitat across the state, prairie chickens are restricted to the Agassiz Beach Ridges in northwest Minnesota. In the last 2-3 years an additional sixty leks have been located to the north and east of the Beach Ridges. In the spring of 2014 three new leks were found in Lincoln and Pipestone Counties. Even with the increase in known

birds, the state's prairie chicken population is relatively small and could suffer from inbreeding and other genetic problems. One severe winter storm in the northwest could dramatically reduce their population. Therefore it is imperative that we protect as much habitat as possible within their current range to maintain the population at current levels. In the long-term, it is hoped that MPCP can protect enough habitat within the state to allow the birds to move into areas such as the Glacial Lakes core area and down into the Big Stone and Coteau region of Southwest Minnesota.

Prairie chickens require large blocks of grassland, with a minimum 320 acres. The MPCP is ideally suited for prairie chicken management with core areas containing large contiguous blocks of grassland and smaller grassland patches scattered across the landscape that allow birds to maintain populations outside the core areas as well as move across the regional landscape. This grant will benefit grassland birds by adding onto existing WMAs and or WPAs and making them larger. In some cases, these tracts will connect WMAs or WPAs creating one large tract from several small tracts of public land. In addition to grassland conservation, most tracts have extensive wetlands. Restoring and maintaining these wetlands will have several benefits. These tracts sit on the edge of the flood-prone Red River Valley. These wetlands will store water during flood periods. Additionally, wetlands and grasslands are both very good at sequestering and storing carbon. These tracts will provide ecosystem benefits to society in addition to wildlife habitat.

How priorities were set / parcel selection and scoring process

We developed a scoring priority based on six criteria. These included distance to the nearest prairie chicken lek, location in or outside of a core area from the MPCP, distance to the nearest public hunting lands (WMA or WPA), tract size, current grassland type (native prairie, restored prairie, brome, or rowcrop), wetland density, and predicted waterfowl breeding pairs based on the USFWS's 'Thunderstorm' maps.

Habitats affected - restored, enhanced, protected

This proposal will protect native and restored prairies, sedge meadows, and wetlands. Funds will be used to do any immediate restoration or enhancement activities on the sites using local ecotype seed while following pollinator BMPs. In the long-term, the DNR or Fish & Wildlife Service will be able to better manage and enhance the property for wildlife once they have direct management abilities on the sites for activities such as prescribed fire and brush/tree control. Most of these sites are already in grass. However, some of them are currently in row crop production. These acres will be restored as part of the grant activity.

Stakeholder opposition and involvement

No stakeholder opposition has been encountered. These tracts were placed on the list because the landowners contacted the DNR about selling their land to the state to preserve the wildlife value of those acres. This proposal is driven by the interest of MPCS and PF to maintain the habitats, wildlife, and the hunting traditions in this area. Local government has been or will be contacted and their support sought.

## Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife. This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. There are no immediate plans to use farming for winter food on any of the parcels in this proposal.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **Yes**

## 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:

There are a number of game, non-game, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that will benefit from all of these grassland projects. Grasslands are the most threatened habitat in Minnesota and the Midwest, and grassland wildlife are also threatened. SGCN the MN DNR lists for this region include eight mammals, 54 birds, three reptiles, and ten insects. Of those, all eight mammals and ten insects, as well as 38 of the bird species could potentially benefit from these activities. Additionally, almost every game species in the

area will benefit, including deer, all species of waterfowl that breed in and migrate through Minnesota, woodcock, snipe, rails, and wild turkey. Many of these tracts have native prairie on them that have been mapped by the Biological Survey. These native tracts can potentially have a number of T&E prairie dependent species them.

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

These tracts continue to face threats of drainage, plowing, and conversion to row crops due to a strong agricultural economy. Habitat conversion results in the elimination of prairie chicken leks, detrimental to the future success of this native game bird.

**Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:**

This proposal is fully integrated into the MPCP. Most of the tracts listed are within core areas, have native prairie on them, and are adjacent to existing WMA/WPA allowing us to build on past conservation efforts. Most tracts are within less than a half mile of known prairie chickens.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation

**Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:**

- Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

**Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:**

**Prairie:**

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

**Forest / Prairie Transition:**

- 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

**Relationship to other funds:**

- Not Listed

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

This proposal will focus conservation work in the Beach Ridge area. In the past, the MPCS has received CPL funds for enhancement projects.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
Annual		None

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

All lands will be enrolled into the state Wildlife Management Area system or the federal Waterfowl Production Area System and will be managed in perpetuity by the Minnesota DNR or U.S. Fish and Wildlife service respectively. Providing high quality habitat and keeping future management concerns in mind, all acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the belief that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. In addition, our local Pheasants Forever chapter members and volunteers maintain a high interest in seeing the habitat and productivity of acquired parcels are at high-quality levels. MPCS, PF, and partners including the DNR and USFWS will develop an ecological restoration and management plan for each parcel. Grant and partner dollars will be used to for the initial site development and restoration/enhancement work.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer - WMA	DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Standard long-term maintenance; fire, invasives control, etc		
Post Transfer - WPA	USFWS - Federal	Standard long-term maintenance; fire, invasives control, etc		

### 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 - **No**

Current DNR language requires acquisition partners to notify local government of acquisition. However, where local government approval is already required, or if DNR guidance was to change, we will adhere to all requirements and seek approval.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **No**

Because we are working within priority habitat areas, it is possible that parcels could have perpetual easements on a portion of them. If a parcel has a perpetual easement and is deemed a high priority by the partners, we will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the protected portion of the property.

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

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

No variation from State of MN regulations for WMA acquisitions.

All WPA acquisitions will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

### Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2016
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2017
Purchase agreements	02/01/2017
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2017
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2017
Purchase agreements	07/01/2018
Close on tracts	01/01/2019
Restorations completed	06/30/2021

### Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **Yes**

Are the funds confirmed - **No**

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds - **07/01/2016**

### 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 *Number of acres of uplands protected and restored.*

#### Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *Most parcels are within core areas as defined by the MPCP. Most also abut existing WMAs or WPA which will create larger blocks of contiguous habitat. Most tracts have some remaining native prairie on them meeting*

*a second goal of the MCP of protecting remaining native prairie. Percent increase of core protected areas measured.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$7,885,100**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$135,000	\$0		\$135,000
Contracts	\$700,000	\$0		\$700,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$5,150,000	\$50,000	Federal, Private	\$5,200,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,600,000	\$50,000	Federal, Private	\$1,650,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Direct Support Services	\$35,100	\$0		\$35,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$35,000	\$0		\$35,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$7,885,100	\$100,000	-	\$7,985,100

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
State Coordinator - MN	0.19	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
PF Field Staff	0.28	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
PF Grants Staff	0.23	3.00	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
Total	0.70	9.00	\$135,000	\$0	-	\$135,000

Amount of Request: \$7,885,100

Amount of Leverage: \$100,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 1.27%

## 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	1,733	0	0	1,733
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	517	0	0	517
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	2,250	0	0	2,250

**Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?**

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	40
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	40

**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	\$6,071,500	\$0	\$0	\$6,071,500
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$1,813,600	\$0	\$0	\$1,813,600
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$7,885,100	\$0	\$0	\$7,885,100

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	225	0	1,508	0	1,733
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	517	0	517
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	225	0	2,025	0	2,250

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$788,500	\$0	\$5,283,000	\$0	\$6,071,500
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,813,600	\$0	\$1,813,600
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$788,500	\$0	\$7,096,600	\$0	\$7,885,100

**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	\$3,503	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$3,508	\$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	\$3,504	\$0	\$3,503	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,508	\$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

#### Becker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Kent WPA addition	14241215	240	\$500,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Kent WPA addition	14241215	240	\$500,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

#### Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Hoykens WPA addition	14045225	282	\$958,800	No	Full	Not Applicable
Hoykens WPA addition	14045225	282	\$958,800	No	Full	Not Applicable
Malakowski WPA addition	14044230	160	\$544,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Malakowski WPA addition	14044230	160	\$544,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
TBD WMA/WPA	14245221	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
TBD WMA/WPA	14245221	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

#### Mahnomen

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Coburn WMA addition	14342231	160	\$416,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Coburn WMA addition	14342231	160	\$416,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Jason Barker WPA addition	14542225	230	\$598,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Jason Barker WPA addition	14542225	230	\$598,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Paul Sr. WPA addition	14441233	80	\$96,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Paul Sr. WPA addition	14441233	80	\$96,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Santwire WMA addition	14341205	280	\$728,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Santwire WMA addition	14341205	280	\$728,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Skoo g WPA addition	14342212	80	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Skoo g WPA addition	14342212	80	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vanose WMA addition	14341225	309	\$650,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vanose WMA addition	14341225	309	\$650,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vanose WMA addition	14641236	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vanose WMA addition	14641236	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Waubun WMA addition	14342228	160	\$416,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Waubun WMA addition	14342228	160	\$416,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

**Norman**

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Agassiz Olson WMA addition	14645233	120	\$240,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Agassiz Olson WMA addition	14645233	120	\$240,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Dalby WMA addition	14345210	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Dalby WMA addition	14345210	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Dalby WMA addition	14345211	200	\$400,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Dalby WMA addition	14345211	200	\$400,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443225	80	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443225	80	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443226	200	\$400,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443226	200	\$400,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443235	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Faith WMA Addition	14443235	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Meadow Lark WPA addition	14644232	595	\$350,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Meadow Lark WPA addition	14644232	595	\$350,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Meadow Lark WPA addition	14644233	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Meadow Lark WPA addition	14644233	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344218	320	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344218	320	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344219	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344219	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344219	20	\$40,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344219	20	\$40,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Prairie Dunes WMA addition	14644221	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Syre WMA addition	14344234	155	\$465,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Syre WMA addition	14344234	155	\$465,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Twin Valley WMA addition	14344228	320	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Twin Valley WMA addition	14344229	0	\$0	No	Full	Not Applicable
Twin Valley WMA addition	14344229	40	\$80,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition	14344202	40	\$60,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition	14344202	40	\$60,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition	14344202	60	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition	14344202	60	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

**Polk**

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Polk WMA Addition	14942223	114	\$80,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Polk WMA Addition	14942223	114	\$80,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

**Red Lake**

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Crane WMA addition	15140213	319	\$340,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Crane WMA addition	15140213	319	\$340,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Marco ux WMA addition	15043223	38	\$183,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Marco ux WMA addition	15043223	38	\$183,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

## Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

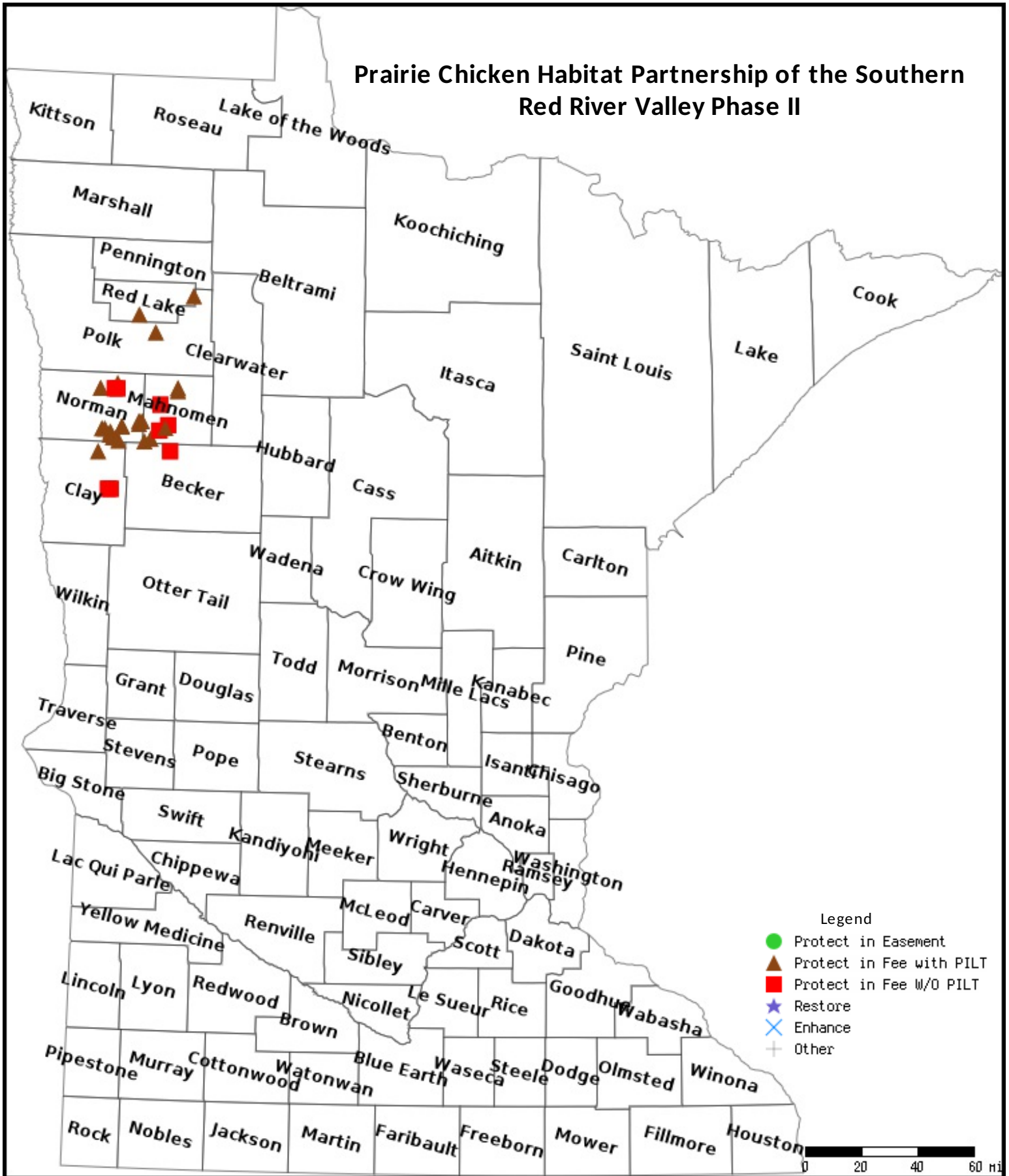
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

## Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

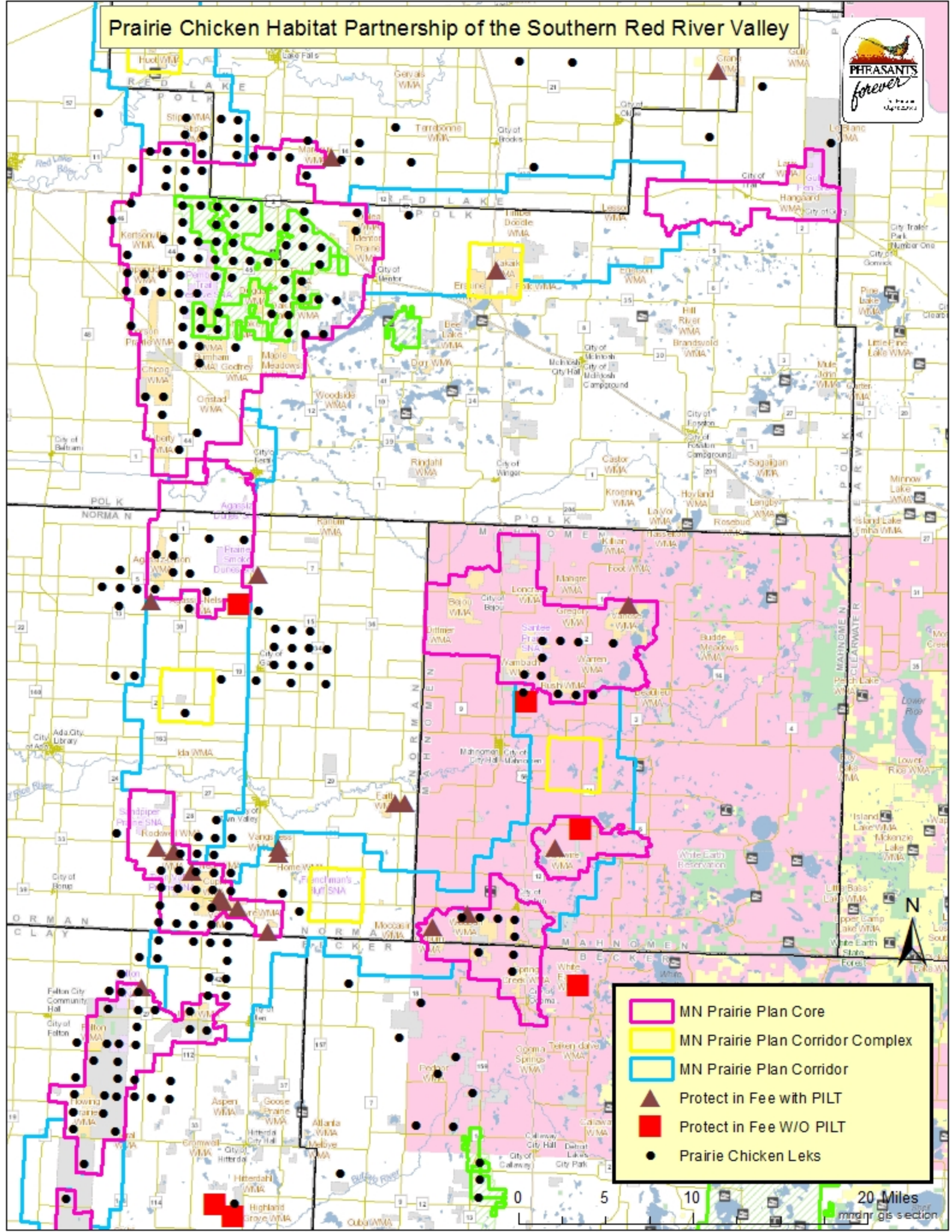
# Parcel Map

## Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley Phase II



Data Generated From Parcel List

# Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley



- MN Prairie Plan Core
- MN Prairie Plan Corridor Complex
- MN Prairie Plan Corridor
- Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- Prairie Chicken Leks

20 Miles  
mnr/gis section