



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Wetlands - Phase VIII
Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 12/18/2023

Project Title: RIM Wetlands - Phase VIII

Funds Recommended: \$10,398,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 4(c)

Appropriation Language: \$10,398,000 in the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore wetlands and native grassland habitat under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.515. Of this amount, up to \$306,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sharon Doucette

Title: Easement Section Manager

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Location Information

County Location(s): Brown, Carver, Freeborn, Blue Earth, Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Wilkin, Traverse, Swift, Steele, Rice, Renville, Nicollet, Meeker, Martin, Grant and Cottonwood.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Under the CREP partnership with USDA, 38 easements were recorded on a total of 2,732 acres to restore previously drained wetlands and adjacent uplands. One easement is a flowage easement that was required to complete wetland restoration work on an adjacent easement secured with 2017 Wetlands funding. The landowner did not receive a payment, but costs were incurred for district time, and recording of the easement and NoFR. The easements were accomplished with local implementation done by SWCD, NRCS and FSA staff within the 54 county CREP area and leveraged federal funds for landowner payments and conservation practice installation.

Process & Methods

The sites enrolled were generally drained and farmed wetlands and associated upland habitat. These sites originally offered limited ecological benefits. Through a combination of a scoring and ranking process and eligibility screening, each application was evaluated, with the applications that provided the greatest habitat and environmental benefits after restoration and protection being selected for funding. RIM Wetlands Phase 8 protected and restored wetlands and adjacent upland area to prairie using the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The project area consisted of the 54 counties within the CREP area with 2,732 acres of permanently protected and restored wetlands and uplands on 38 easements. These acres provide a healthy and plentiful supply of habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, especially for waterfowl and upland birds. CREP utilizes both a 15-year CRP contract and a permanent RIM easement.

RIM Wetlands Phase 8 was a local-state-federal partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and BWSR. In addition, the CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies. BWSR staff coordinated with federal partners on the overall CREP process and program oversight. In addition, BWSR staff were responsible for the easement acquisition process. Local staff promote CRP contracts and RIM easements, assist with easement processing and provide key essential technical assistance and project management services.

Some highlights of the easements funded through this project include:

The largest easement funded in this project, 84-04-19-01 in Wilkin County, included 9 wetland basins on almost 50 acres and 150 acres of existing grasses established with CRP. The parcel had an existing USFWS easement that was not included in the CREP easement but the CREP easement created additional connected habitat expanding the protected area of the parcel from the USFWS easement.

Three of the 5 easements in Carver County, for a total of 113 acres, are a joint restoration project on over 80 acres of wetland. There is an additional 56 acre easement to the east of this project that was paid for and restored using Clean Water Funds.

The payment rates were consistent throughout this appropriation but CRP annual rental rates fluctuated, so the state's contribution to the overall easement cost varied in reaction to the CRP rate.

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?

An expansion of wetland and prairie habitat through this program alleviates pressure on those species that are most sensitive to habitat changes occurring on the landscape. The project targeted wetlands and prairies, two of the three most important habitats used by the Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Of the nearly 1200 known wildlife species in Minnesota, 292 species, or approximately one-fourth, are at risk because they are rare; their populations are declining due to loss of habitat. SGCN in the RIM Wetlands area include the Five-lined Skink, Blanding's Turtle, Two-spotted Skipper, Northern Pintail, American Black Duck, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Western Grebe. In addition to the SGCN, the threatened or endangered species include the Dakota Skipper and Poweshiek Skipperling.

Diverse vegetation, access to water resources, and protection from pesticides are important to Minnesota's native pollinator species. BWSR's native vegetation guidelines and pollinator initiative protect native pollinators.

Complexes and corridors targeted through RIM Wetlands provide areas that are safe from pesticides and natural passageways for pollinators. Targeted pollinator species include the Monarch Butterfly and bee species.

Prairie wetlands are important for migratory waterfowl. The Prairie Pothole region contains only about 10% of the waterfowl nesting habitat on the continent but it produces 70% of all North American waterfowl. The loss of Minnesota's prairie and wetland habitat in the prairie pothole region has led to the decline of many wildlife and plant species. RIM Wetlands has protected and restored this habitat over many years and continues to do this important work using CREP.

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.

Through a combination of targeted outreach, a scoring and ranking process, and eligibility screening, RIM Wetlands evaluated each application on its potential to restore wetland/upland functions and values (optimize wildlife habitat benefits) and to provide other benefits including water quality. Each site's benefit to the surrounding landscape, ability to build upon existing corridors and complexes, and site-specific features were evaluated. During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size was conducted to indicate a site's usefulness as a corridor or extension to an existing habitat complex. Other examples of the science-based targeting used include evaluation of the proximity to T&E Species, contributing watershed area, proximity of drainage to DNR Protected Waters, and the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)-developed GIS Wildlife Habitat Potential Model for environmental evaluation. The HAPET model is a consolidation of models representing an array of migratory birds that use the Minnesota Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) for breeding or migration.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

RIM Wetlands is a local-state-federal partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and BWSR. The CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies.

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

The Council approved the following substantial amendment changes at the October 7, 2021 Council meeting:

- reduces acres from 4,137 to 2,700

- reduces # of easement from 46 to 37
- reduces leverage from \$20.7 million to \$13.9 million
- adds 4 parcels to the list

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- Clean Water Fund
- Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Other : Bonding and federal funds

How were the funds used to advance the program?

CBF, ENRTF and bonding dollars were all used to support CREP wetland restoration projects within the 54 county CREP area. In addition, federal funds were provided to landowners in the form of annual CRP payments, incentive payments, and cost share for practice installation per the CREP agreement.

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

BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring of RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its easements. Easements are inspected each of the the first five years beginning 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. SWCDs document findings of each site inspection conducted and report to BWSR . A non-compliance procedure is implemented when problems or potential violations are identified. Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs were calculated at \$6,500 per easement at the time this accomplishment plan was approved and funded. This value was based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner communication and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship cover costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight and future enforcement if necessary.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$748,000	\$748,000	\$732,900	-	-	-	\$748,000	\$732,900
Contracts	\$480,200	\$480,200	\$200,500	-	-	-	\$480,200	\$200,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$8,704,400	\$8,704,400	\$8,696,700	\$20,796,000	\$11,826,000	USDA-FSA-CRP	\$29,500,400	\$20,522,700
Easement Stewardship	\$299,000	\$299,000	\$247,000	-	-	-	\$299,000	\$247,000
Travel	\$18,200	\$18,200	\$13,900	-	-	-	\$18,200	\$13,900
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$114,400	\$114,400	\$68,400	-	-	-	\$114,400	\$68,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$26,000	\$26,000	\$4,700	-	-	-	\$26,000	\$4,700
Supplies/Materials	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$4,100	-	-	-	\$7,800	\$4,100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$10,398,000	\$10,398,000	\$9,968,200	\$20,796,000	\$11,826,000	-	\$31,194,000	\$21,794,200

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	5.0	\$134,800	-	-	\$134,800
Easement Processing	0.59	3.0	\$121,700	-	-	\$121,700
Engineering/Eco Services	1.47	3.0	\$476,400	-	-	\$476,400

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The federal match is likely more than reported. The total leverage listed includes all CRP payments but practice payments may not be fully paid yet via FSA nor do SWCDs always receive accurate practice payment information. If the acquisition line excluded title and practice payment, the federal to state match for CRP vs easement payment to the landowner was approximately 1.6:1.

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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	1,407	911	2,730	1,821	0	0	0	0	4,137	2,732
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1,407	911	2,730	1,821	0	0	0	0	4,137	2,732

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	\$939,100	-	\$1,822,900	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,762,000	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$2,596,200	\$3,389,200	\$5,039,800	\$6,579,000	-	-	-	-	\$7,636,000	\$9,968,200
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$3,535,300	\$3,389,200	\$6,862,700	\$6,579,000	-	-	-	-	\$10,398,000	\$9,968,200

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 Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	207	184	414	65	207	0	3,309	2,483	0	0	4,137	2,732
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	207	184	414	65	207	0	3,309	2,483	0	0	4,137	2,732

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 Fore st (Fina l)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Fore st (AP)	N. Fore st (Fina l)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	\$138,100	-	\$276,200	-	\$138,100	-	\$2,209,600	-	-	-	\$2,762,000	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liabilit y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liabilit y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easeme nt	\$381,800	\$671,400	\$763,600	\$237,200	\$381,800	-	\$6,108,800	\$9,059,600	-	-	\$7,636,000	\$9,968,200
Enhanc e	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$519,900	\$671,400	\$1,039,800	\$237,200	\$519,900	-	\$8,318,400	\$9,059,600	-	-	\$10,398,000	\$9,968,200

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

The accomplishment plan was amended in October 2021. The final acres achieved slightly exceed the amended accomplishment plan.

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Improved aquatic habitat indicators ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing sites that best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also prioritized, removing the threat of conversion. The increased storage of restored wetlands reduces flood potential and improves aquatic habitat. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*
- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing sites that best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also prioritized, removing the threat of conversion. The increased storage of restored wetlands reduces flood potential and improves aquatic habitat. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing sites that best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also prioritized, removing the threat of conversion. The increased storage of restored wetlands reduces flood potential and improves aquatic habitat. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing sites that best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also prioritized, removing the threat of conversion. The increased storage of restored wetlands reduces flood potential and improves aquatic habitat. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing sites that best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also prioritized, removing the threat of conversion. The increased storage of restored wetlands reduces flood potential and improves aquatic habitat. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*

Parcels

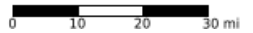
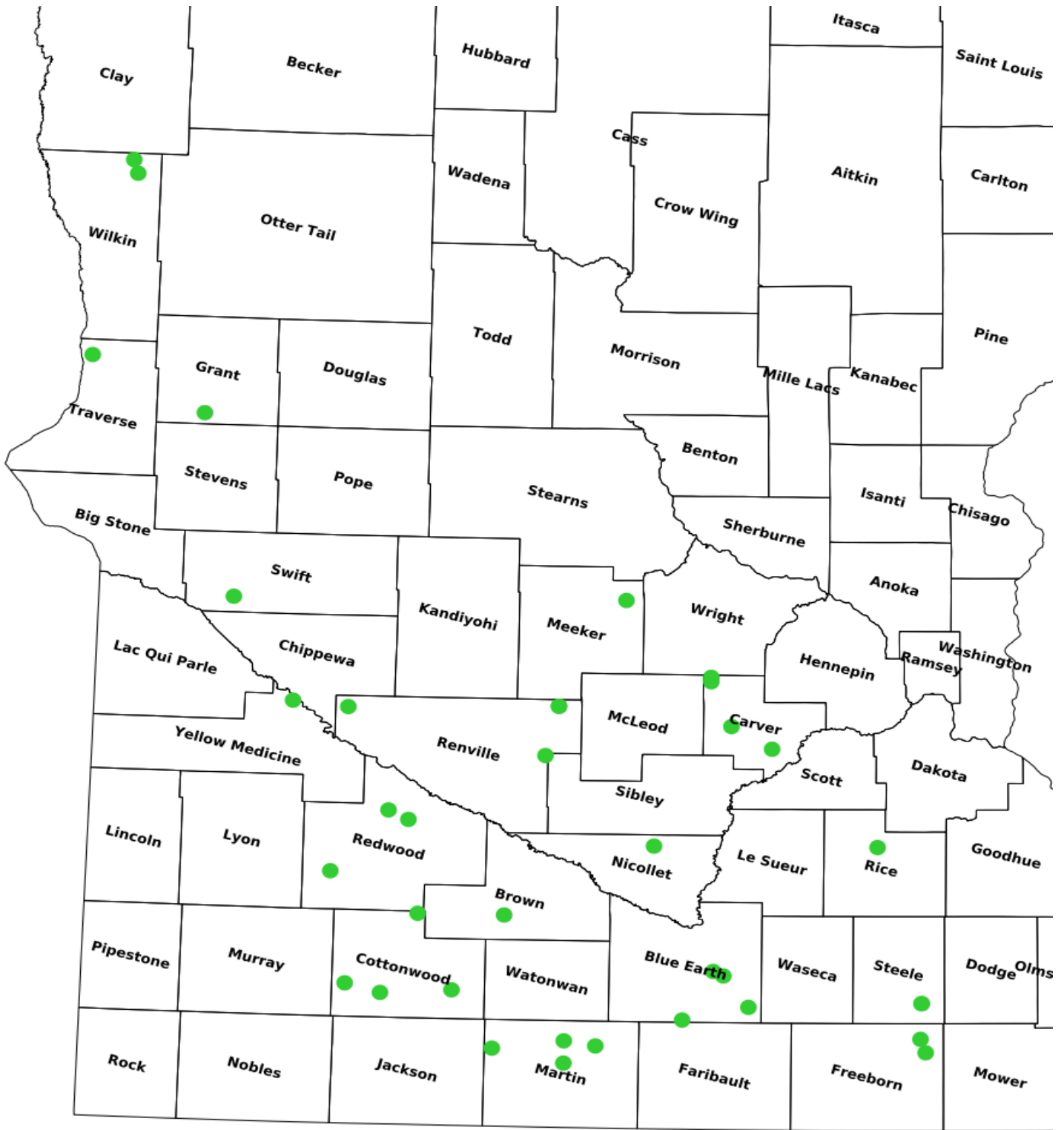
Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
07-01-20-01--	Blue Earth	10626204	121	\$487,876	No
07-04-17-01--	Blue Earth	10527233	49	\$147,400	No
07-03-18-01--	Blue Earth	10626211	14	\$63,418	No
07-01-19-01--	Blue Earth	10525215	32	\$99,149	No
08-04-21-01--	Brown	10833203	117	\$499,984	No
10-02-20-01--	Carver	11726208	105	\$332,107	No
10-02-19-01--	Carver	11626236	59	\$201,514	No
10-01-18-01--	Carver	11524229	14	\$65,104	No
10-04-20-01--	Carver	11726205	7	\$25,338	No
17-05-18-01--	Cottonwood	10638228	70	\$207,400	No
17-04-18-01--	Cottonwood	10537203	45	\$200,400	No
17-06-18-01--	Cottonwood	10635236	58	\$257,900	No
17-02-19-01--	Cottonwood	10836202	45	\$181,466	No
24-04-19-01--	Freeborn	10419220	67	\$152,687	No
24-03-19-01--	Freeborn	10319204	153	\$269,716	No
26-01-19-01--	Grant	12743222	37	\$135,465	No
46-06-19-01--	Martin	10331222	38	\$116,421	No
46-06-18-01--	Martin	10333205	55	\$86,408	No
46-10-18-01--	Martin	10430234	43	\$132,800	No
46-08-19-01--	Martin	10431227	120	\$367,718	No
47-04-18-01--	Meeker	12029209	65	\$45,461	No
52-02-19-01--	Nicollet	11128216	65	\$277,208	No
64-04-20-01	Redwood	11039224	45	\$176,962	No
64-04-18-01--	Redwood	11237211	75	\$159,400	No
64-03-19-01--	Redwood	11236221	81	\$280,034	No
65-07-18-01--	Renville	11432201	45	\$111,547	No
65-14-18-01--	Renville	11631208	102	\$290,312	No
65-03-19-01--	Renville	11631208	34	\$101,626	No
65-04-19-01--	Renville	11638216	87	\$182,164	No
66-01-19-01--	Rice	11121214	123	\$282,251	No
74-01-18-01--	Steele	10519208	111	\$286,982	No
74-02-18-01--	Steele	10519208	138	\$308,269	No
76-01-18-01--	Swift	12042215	63	\$107,241	No
78-01-19-01--	Traverse	12947224	156	\$459,816	No
84-04-19-01--	Wilkin	13645207	194	\$113,899	No
84-02-18-01--	Wilkin	13645229	56	\$50,629	No
87-03-18-01--	Yellow Medicine	11640210	48	\$135,239	No

Parcel Map



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