



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project - Phase III

Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 02/28/2023

Project Title: Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project - Phase III

Funds Recommended: \$2,396,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(a)

Appropriation Language: \$1,617,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire lands in fee and restore wildlife habitat in the Mississippi headwaters and for agreements as follows: \$60,000 to the Mississippi Headwaters Board and \$1,557,000 to The Trust for Public Land. \$779,000 the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire lands in permanent conservation easements and to restore wildlife habitat. Up to \$59,000 to the Board of Water and Soil Resources 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 proposed acquisitions must be included as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Tim Terrill

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Location Information

County Location(s): Aitkin and Crow Wing.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie
- Forest

[Narrative](#)

Summary of Accomplishments

The Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project Phase III (ML 17) achieved permanent protection of 1,694 acres of critical fish and wildlife habitat, including 14.5 miles of shoreland on the Mississippi River and adjacent lakes/tributaries. This accomplishment exceeded the appropriation goal by over 200%. Fee-title acquisitions and RIM conservation easements adjacent to public land created or expanded large habitat protection complexes, including a new 232 acre WMA in Crow Wing County. The project is a partnership of the Mississippi Headwaters Board, Trust for Public Land, BWSR and 7 Headwaters county SWCD.

Process & Methods

The Mississippi River is known as “America’s greatest river”, one of the largest in the world. It provides critical habitat for fish, wildlife and migratory waterfowl along its first 400 miles—its Headwaters that course through 8 Minnesota Counties from Itasca State Park to southern Morrison County. It also provides drinking water for St Cloud and the Twin Cities plus varied recreation opportunities for millions of people. Protecting the Headwaters' water quality and adjacent shoreland habitats through strategically placed permanent land protection is critical to maintaining fish, game, and non-game wildlife habitat as well as food and shelter for millions of migratory waterfowl annually on the Mississippi Flyway.

This Project’s funding has been expanded beyond the ML17 appropriation to funding through through Phase Six (ML 22) resulting in the cumulative protection to date of 6,356 acres and over 50 miles of shoreland on the Mississippi River, major tributaries, and contributing headwaters lakes (continuing to exceed appropriation goals by over 200%).

Public lands adjacent to the Mississippi River are increasingly in danger of losing habitat connectivity as private lands are under more development pressure potentially causing fragmentation of forests and critical upland and shoreland habitats. This Project’s goal is creating or enlarging permanently protected upland habitat complexes to insure game and non-game wildlife have a secure place to raise their young, seek shelter and food, and move around without disturbance; the protection of water quality as a necessary fish habitat; and food and shelter for migratory waterfowl. At the same time, the Project opens up new opportunities for public recreation along the Mississippi Headwaters and within its major watershed.

Fee-title acquisition with final public ownership (either the DNR or a Headwaters' county) and RIM conservation easements, held in perpetuity by BWSR, were the land protection tools used in strategic locations to create or expand permanently protected habitat corridors. (see answers to questions below for the scientific methodology used to select priority parcels for land conservation). The targeted geography for the project was the minor watershed corridor of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River, its major tributaries, and headwaters lakes.

Project partners (MHB, TPL, and BWSR) defined initial priorities for the project that guided the implementation of Phase III (ML17) and subsequent phases for the Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project. A Technical Committee comprised of partner representatives, the DNR, and The Nature Conservancy reviewed proposed fee-title acquisitions and easements and approved those utilizing ranking criteria related to habitat quality, public

access, location, size and supporting conservation. This process insures that critical habitat value was achieved with the funding appropriated.

Completion of Phase III (ML17) resulted in the permanent protection of 1,674 acres and 14 miles of shoreland achieved through 7 RIM conservation easements with private landowners and four fee-title acquisitions that included one addition to a state forest, two additions to county forests, and the creation of a 232 acre DNR WMA (also utilizing ML16 funding).

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?

The science-based targeting described in the next paragraph utilized the Minnesota Wildlife Action Network's data along with other state data sets, including The MN County Biological Survey, to identify priority areas for permanent fish and wildlife protection within the minor watershed of the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River--its Headwaters-- or along major tributaries. The Wildlife Action Network was developed to help implement the 2015-2025 MN Wildlife Action Plan, which identified species of greatest conservation need and rare, threatened and endangered species. The project's geographic targeting also considered specific areas of species richness and/or biodiversity importance and areas where aquatic and terrestrial habitats have been compromised. Many of these identified priority areas were the focus geography in selecting parcels for permanent land protection using fee-title acquisition or RIM conservation easements.

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.

A science-based parcel screening tool—RAQ—was used to identify the highest priority, privately owned lands for permanent land protection that would create or enhance large protected wildlife habitat corridors/complexes or provide key shoreland protection for fish habitat and migratory waterfowl. The RAQ tool scores private, forested parcels 20 acres or larger in the following manner: "R" ranks whether the parcel is riparian--next to the Mississippi river, a tributary, or a lake. "A" ranks the parcel's adjacency to existing public land (state, county or federal). "Q" ranks habitat quality using a number of existing data sets including the Minnesota Biological Survey, Minnesota Wildlife Action Network priorities, DNR areas of outstanding or high biodiversity, priority waterfowl lakes, DNR rare species and old growth forest data, and Audubon's important bird areas. The Nature Conservancy's multi-benefits (habitat, water quality and groundwater resources) science-based analysis of the Upper Mississippi River Basin was also considered in the "quality" ranking of parcels. Parcels with an overall RAQ score of 6 or better out of 10 maximum points were identified as priority prospects for landowner outreach and land protection. Using this tool helped to narrow and prioritize privately owned parcels within the minor watershed of the river to a more manageable priority parcel list. DNR and County Land Department priorities were also considered primarily for fee-title acquisition projects.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

The Project is a partnership of the Mississippi Headwaters Board (administration, coordination, and LGU relationship building), The Trust for Public Land (fee-title acquisitions with and without PILT) and BWSR (RIM conservation easements). Supporting organizations included: 7 Headwaters County SWCDs (Beltrami, Itasca, Hubbard, Cass, Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Morrison counties) who provided conservation easement outreach and processing in cooperation with BWSR, the final easement holder. The Nature Conservancy provided technical support along with GIS-based habitat quality analysis; and the Minnesota DNR assisted with technical and land ownership support. A Technical Committee consisting of all project partners, supporters, and participating SWCDs developed ranking criteria for potential acquisitions and easements and reviewed and approved projects. There was strong local government support for fee-title acquisitions since the project obtained initial county board

support for an acquisition before proceeding with due diligence and final county board support before completing an acquisition.

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

The Headwaters of the Mississippi River includes land in the minor watershed of the river, along with its tributaries and headwaters lakes. The Headwaters flow through 8 Minnesota Counties starting at Itasca State Park in Clearwater County to the Southern border of Morrison County. With such a large geography that includes high quality forests, pristine waters, and a critical part of the Mississippi flyway for migratory waterfowl, there were abundant opportunities for excellent fish and wildlife habitat protection, The challenge was identifying the highest priority lands for protection yet manageable for landowner outreach. This was addressed through the RAQ screening process previously described. The project not only met its original expectation for acres of protection, it exceeded it by over 200% with a waiting list of interested landowners. A unique aspect of this program was the establishment of strong LGU support and relationships that have continued throughout additional phases.

What other fund may contribute to this program?

- Other : Trust for Public Land provided private funding match of 50% of direct support services and travel expenses; TPL is a funding partner in this program.

How were the funds used to advance the program?

Funds were used to provide the support services and travel necessary to accomplish fee-title acquisition projects.

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

The lands acquired in fee-title will be managed according to the permanent land holder's (DNR or County) land management plans. Lands placed in RIM conservation easements will be monitored for easement compliance by the appropriate County SWCD according to BWSR's monitoring timetable. Ultimately, BWSR will be responsible for the ongoing stewardship of the conservation easement lands and enforcement of violations if necessary.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022 and ongoing	OHF Easement Stewardship Funds	SWCDs under contract to BWSR will conduct conservation easement onsite inspections for 5 consecutive years and every three years thereafter.	BWSR will enforce any violations noted by onsite inspection	BWSR will do required stewardship fund reporting to LSOHC.
2022 and ongoing	County Land Management Funds	Land acquired by Counties via TPL conveyance after purchase with OHF funds will be maintained and managed according to their county land management policies.	Land will remain open to the public in accordance with conveyance terms.	County ongoing management.
2023 and ongoing	DNR Land Management Funds	Property acquired by the DNR via conveyance by TPL will be managed	DNR lands acquired in fee-title will remain permanently protected and open to	Ongoing DNR management

		according to DNR land management policies.	the public.	
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Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$192,100	\$192,100	\$168,100	\$52,800	\$52,800	-, Private	\$244,900	\$220,900
Contracts	\$71,000	\$71,000	\$61,800	-	-	-	\$71,000	\$61,800
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	-	-	-	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	-	-	-	\$130,000	\$130,000
Easement Acquisition	\$636,500	\$636,500	\$610,500	-	-	-	\$636,500	\$610,500
Easement Stewardship	\$58,500	\$58,500	\$45,500	-	-	-	\$58,500	\$45,500
Travel	\$4,300	\$4,300	\$1,900	-	-	-	\$4,300	\$1,900
Professional Services	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	-	-	-	\$50,000	\$50,000
Direct Support Services	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$29,300	\$31,000	\$29,300	-, Private	\$62,000	\$58,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$2,200	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$2,200
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$1,300	\$1,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,300	-
Supplies/Materials	\$1,300	\$1,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,300	-
DNR IDP	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$14,400	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$14,400
Grand Total	\$2,396,000	\$2,396,000	\$2,283,700	\$83,800	\$82,100	-	\$2,479,800	\$2,365,800

Partner: BWSR

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$62,100	\$62,100	\$45,400	-	-	-	\$62,100	\$45,400
Contracts	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$14,000	-	-	-	\$18,000	\$14,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$636,500	\$636,500	\$610,500	-	-	-	\$636,500	\$610,500
Easement Stewardship	\$58,500	\$58,500	\$45,500	-	-	-	\$58,500	\$45,500
Travel	\$1,300	\$1,300	\$100	-	-	-	\$1,300	\$100
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$1,300	\$1,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,300	-
Supplies/Materials	\$1,300	\$1,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,300	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$779,000	\$779,000	\$715,500	-	-	-	\$779,000	\$715,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Manager	0.15	3.0	\$23,100	-	-	\$23,100
Easement Processing	0.1	3.0	\$22,300	-	-	\$22,300

Partner: MHB

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$12,700	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$12,700
Contracts	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$39,800	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$39,800
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$52,500	-	-	-	\$60,000	\$52,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Administration	0.1	3.0	\$12,700	-	-	\$12,700

Partner: TPL

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$52,800	\$52,800	Private	\$162,800	\$162,800
Contracts	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$8,000	-	-	-	\$13,000	\$8,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000	-	-	-	\$1,170,000	\$1,170,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	-	-	-	\$130,000	\$130,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$1,800	-	-	-	\$3,000	\$1,800
Professional Services	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	-	-	-	\$50,000	\$50,000
Direct Support Services	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$29,300	\$31,000	\$29,300	Private	\$62,000	\$58,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$2,200	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$2,200
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$14,400	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$14,400
Grand Total	\$1,557,000	\$1,557,000	\$1,515,700	\$83,800	\$82,100	-	\$1,640,800	\$1,597,800

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL- Personnel	0.32	3.0	\$110,000	\$52,800	Private	\$162,800

Direct Support Services

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

The Trust for Public Land's DSS request is based upon their federally approved indirect rate, which has been approved by the DNR. 50% of these costs were requested from the grant, and 50% was contributed as leverage.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

No unanticipated budget challenges. Excellent habitat protection opportunities resulted in spending almost all of the appropriated OHF funds for permanent land conservation.

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	334	671	0	0	334	671
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	38	41	0	0	38	41
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	360	982	0	0	360	982
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	732	1,694	0	0	732	1,694

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	-	-	-	-	\$1,446,700	\$1,387,000	-	-	\$1,446,700	\$1,387,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$170,600	\$154,900	-	-	\$170,600	\$154,900
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	\$778,700	\$741,800	-	-	\$778,700	\$741,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$2,396,000	\$2,283,700	-	-	\$2,396,000	\$2,283,700

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	334	671	334	671
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	41	38	41
Protect in Easement	0	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	324	982	360	982
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	696	1,694	732	1,694

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,446,700	\$1,387,000	\$1,446,700	\$1,387,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$170,600	\$154,900	\$170,600	\$154,900
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$77,900	-	-	-	-	-	\$700,800	\$741,800	\$778,700	\$741,800
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$77,900	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,318,100	\$2,283,700	\$2,396,000	\$2,283,700

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

14.5 miles

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Rivers and streams provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west ~ *This appropriation achieved permanent protection of 1,694 acres of fish and wildlife habitat. The outcome is measured by the actual amount of land acquired in fee-title (712 acres) and recorded in a RIM conservation easement (982 acres). Limiting development on these highly forested lands and shorelands in North Central Minnesota maintains and improves the forest integrity. In selecting projects, emphasis was placed on those that would adjoin or add to public land to create habitat protection corridors and complexes.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors ~ *This appropriation achieved permanent protection of 1,694 acres of fish and wildlife habitat. The outcome is measured by the actual amount of land acquired in fee-title (712 acres) and recorded in RIM conservation easements (982 acres). Limiting development on these highly forested lands in North Central Minnesota maintains and improves the forest integrity. In selecting projects, emphasis was placed on those that would adjoin or add to public land to create habitat protection corridors and complexes along or near the Mississippi River.*

Parcels

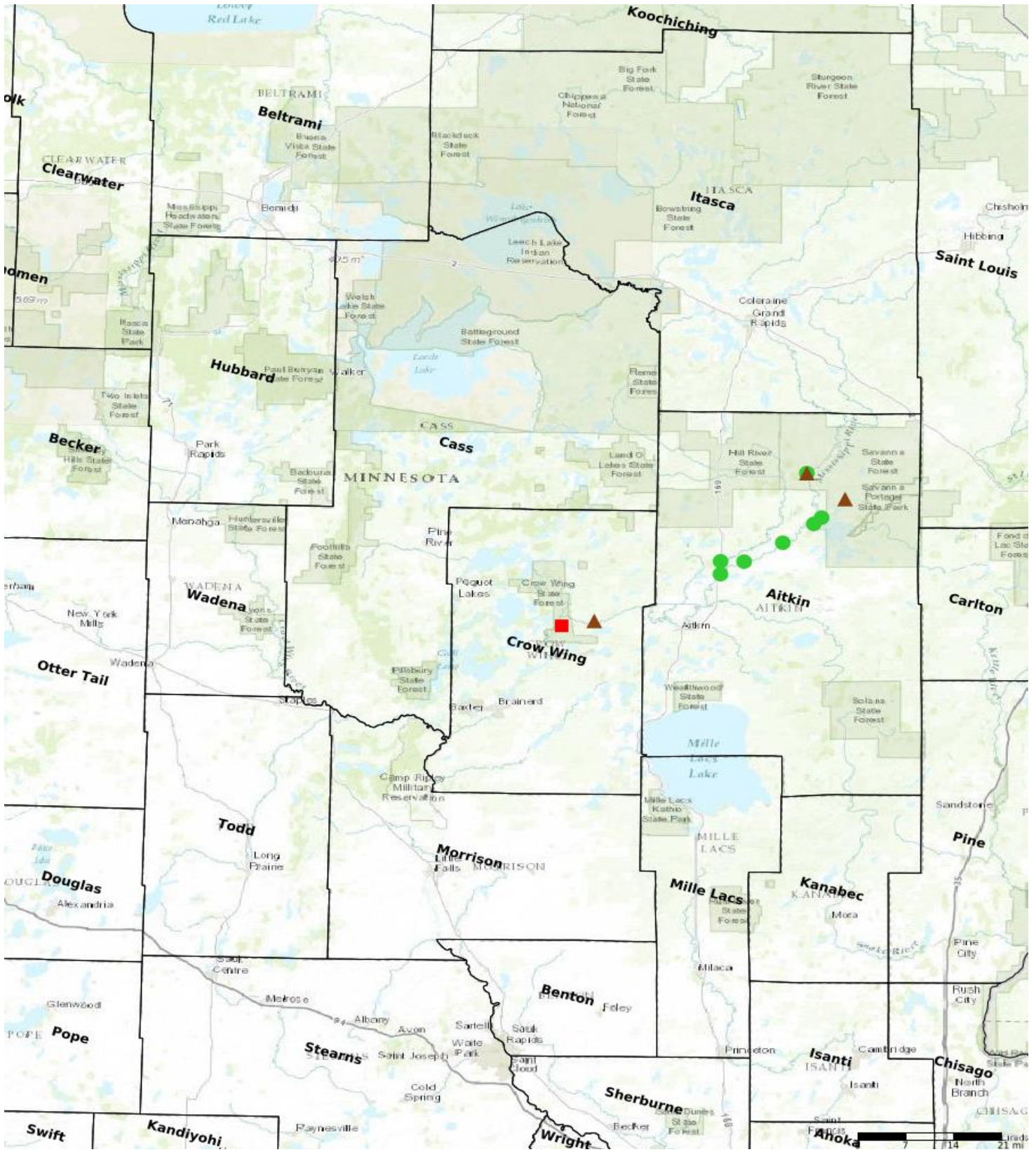
Sign-up Criteria?

No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
01-13-18-13- -	Aitkin	05024235	106	\$66,000	No
01-12-18-13- -	Aitkin	05124222	78	\$53,500	No
01-08-18-13- -	Aitkin	04826211	326	\$202,400	No
01-06-18-13- -	Aitkin	04925232	117	\$64,000	No
01-04-18-13- -	Aitkin	04924218	211	\$132,000	No
01-03-18-13- -	Aitkin	05024225	89	\$49,500	No
01-05-18-13- -	Aitkin	04926235	55	\$37,500	No
Savanna Esker	Aitkin	05023209	379	\$511,626	No
Savanna State Forest Addition	Aitkin	05124222	171	\$232,000	No
Crow Wing Forest North	Crow Wing	04729220	41	\$130,000	No
Indian Jack Lake WMA	Crow Wing	13626234	121	\$423,300	No

Parcel Map



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