

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Fiscal Year 2018 / ML 2017 Request for Funding



**Date:** June 17, 2016

**Program or Project Title:** Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitats in Cass County - Phase VIII (FA06)

**Funds Requested:** \$1,404,000

**Manager's Name:** Kirk Titus  
**Title:** Land Commissioner  
**Organization:** Cass County  
**Address:** PO Box 25  
**City:** Backus, MN 56435  
**Office Number:** 218-947-7501  
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**County Locations:** Cass

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

- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest

### Abstract:

This project will protect forest wildlife habitat in central Minnesota through fee title acquisition of key forest tracts. Title of lands acquired will be held by Cass County in fee.

### Design and scope of work:

Central Minnesota, especially the area in Cass County from Brainerd/Baxter to Walker, has and will continue to some of the fastest human population growth in Minnesota. This growth will lead to increased demands/use of this area, its natural resources and related public land base that needs to support this growth. Development of these parcels has resulted in the loss of Jack Pine barrens and forested lakeshore in the landscape of southern Cass County. Forest tracts currently undeveloped, held by private property owners, are currently be sold to private developers. These lands often provide access to existing public lands for resources management, are in holdings in otherwise unfragmented landscapes, create contiguous wildlife corridors, and protect larger blocks of land especially useful for stand level management of habitat.

Opportunity: Key industrial forest tracts (i.e. in-holdings in large public land tracts, management access issues, etc.) are being considered or currently being offered for sale by a large industrial forest owner (Potlatch) in this area. Market conditions and a willingness by this industrial forest owner to sell at this time is an opportunity that should be addressed now since it is narrow and may close (properties sold) at any time. The strategy is to acquire lands that consolidate unfragmented landscapes, avoid incompatible in holding development and create habitat corridors. The land acquired has existing forest access roads that have been used for management access for years. The sale of these lands to private individuals has resulted in the loss of access for resource management on public lands. The acquired lands are not being pursued for convenience of management.

The identified parcels play a key role in future management plans of the Jack Pine Barrens including the role of fire as a management tool. The loss of these parcels to private ownership will result in lost access. Management of adjacent public lands will be limited to frozen ground conditions. This will eliminate important management tools such as site preparation, aerial seeding and prescribed burning for Jack Pine regeneration. Year round access is required for these types management tools as well as protecting habitat in and

around the surrounding areas.

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible to protect management access. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land and local unit of government input on all purchases and land sales. This project meets the requirements of both plans and will require stakeholder input as part of the project. The local units of government with the private industrial lands to be purchased will be contacted for input before any acquisitions are made. Recent purchases have been supported by both the County and local units of government. The Cass County Board of Commissioners has a strong history of supporting land sales and acquisitions that have local unit of government support.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

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

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan

### **Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:**

The Cass County Forest Resource Management Plan directs the County to acquire lands of this nature whenever possible. The Cass County Comprehensive plan requires no net loss of acres of public land and local unit of government input on all purchases and sales of land. Priorities supported in these plans that are accomplished in this project include: access to inaccessible public land, consolidation of ownership, management for wildlife habitat, and landscape level management between multiple land management agencies.

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

#### **Northern Forest:**

- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

### **Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:**

These priorities include providing access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement.

### **Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:**

With the consolidation of these lands through targeted acquisition, corridors are expanded, fragmentation is reduced, while conserving biological diversity.

### **How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species:**

This request is targeting land that has been historically open to public hunting and fishing or land that has been used to access public land that has been open to public hunting and fishing. This request also targets lands with a high potential for rare, threatened and endangered species. These species include but are not limited to the Northern Long Eared Bat and Blanding's Turtle.

### **Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:**

Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) are found in upland forests statewide; typically in relatively mature forest but can also be found in younger forests. While territories vary in size and may overlap, an average of 10 pairs for every 10 hectares may be translated to roughly 16 pairs for every 40 acres.

Golden-winged Warblers are often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers (a matrix of shrubby wetlands and uplands, regenerating forests, and

mature forests). While territories vary in size, an average of 4 pairs for every 10 hectares , may be translated to roughly 6 pairs for every 40 acres.

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) use a wide variety of forested habitats, are found throughout Minnesota, and are an important game species in the state. In the 33 forested deer permit areas for which deer densities are estimated, covering most of the LSOHC Northern Forest section, the six-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per square mile of land (excluding water). This translates to 0.02 deer (pre-fawning) per acre of forest land habitat or roughly 1 deer (pre-fawning) for every 50 acres of land.

## Outcomes:

### Programs in the northern forest region:

- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers *This outcome is measured by the number of miles of public property line that are eliminated, the number of land locked public land arcs that are opened to the public, and the number of acres of public land that opened for year round management access.*

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

The Cass County Land Department manages all County Administered lands under our Forest Resource Management Plan. This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. Cass County has a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by Cass County and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2018	Cass County	Forest Inventory Update	Update the 10 year work plan	
2020	Cass County	Manage Timber under current 10 year work plan		
2025	Cass County	Plant trees as needed		

## What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

Forest land conversion to center pivot agriculture use has created a urgent need for public funds to purchase strategic parcels. The parcels acquired will protect shallow water aquifers wildlife habitat, and rare threatened and endangered species that rely on forest habitat.

## How does this proposal include leverage in funds or other effort to supplement any OHF appropriation:

The total value of this project is 50% of the annual Land Dept. budget. The entire amount received will be used for acquisition. The amount of money available to the Cass County Land Department for acquisition in the past is directly related to land sale revenue. Land Sale revenue has been down recently and funds to LCCMR are still outstanding pending the sale of land currently available over the counter. Our current staff will use this money to acquire lands in fee following existing procedures. Because our activity in land purchases and sales is currently low due to the slow economy, there will be little or no effect on current duties.

## Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

### Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

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

Not Listed

## Activity Details

### Requirements:

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**

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

### Land Use:

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

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

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

All Cass County managed forest land is open to public hunting and fishing.

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Forest trails are native surface and are used for the primary purpose of supporting short-term forest management activities. The allowable uses can be found in the forest roads section of the Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition - **Yes**

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Road and trail maintenance is done on an as needed basis while monitoring is completed by staff foresters.

Will new trails or roads be developed as a result of the OHF acquisition - **No**

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Contract for appraisals	August 2017
Meet with LUGs and prepare purchase agreements	January 2018
Title opinions from County Attorney	February 2018
Record Deeds	Summer 2018

# Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$1,404,000

## Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$37,000	Cass County, Cass County	\$37,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,404,000	\$0		\$1,404,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$0	\$18,000	Cass County	\$18,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1,404,000	\$55,000	-	\$1,459,000

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Commissioner	0.25	7.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Resource Manager	0.25	7.00	\$0	\$18,500	Cass County	\$18,500
Total	0.50	14.00	\$0	\$37,000	-	\$37,000

Amount of Request: \$1,404,000

Amount of Leverage: \$55,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 3.92%

DSS + Personnel: \$0

As a % of the total request: 0.00%

Easement Stewardship: \$0

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -%

## Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The leverage is part of the existing Cass Co operating budget.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - No

## 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	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	897	0	897
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	897	0	897

**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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,404,000	\$0	\$1,404,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$1,404,000	\$0	\$1,404,000

**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	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	897	897
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	897	897

**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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,404,000	\$1,404,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,404,000	\$1,404,000

**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	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,565	\$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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,565
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

2

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

## Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

Acquisition priorities are determined using the following criteria:

- The local unit of government (township or city) supports the acquisition.
- No developed recreation (boat landings, campgrounds, parks).
- Acquisition of parcels that provide access to existing County and State managed lands by existing forest access roads that have been developed and used for management access in the past.
- Acquisition of parcels that provide outstanding potential to maintain or increase the presence of pine on the landscape (often currently owned by private industrial land holders).
- Acquisition of parcels that are adjacent to existing state or federal lands that when acquired will increase habitat connectivity.
- Acquisition of parcels where the opportunity may be lost if we do not take immediate action.
- Parcels meeting multiple criteria are the highest priority.

### Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

### Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Becker 166	13432205	166	\$282,200	No	Full	Full
Bullmoose 40	13831228	40	\$37,000	No	Full	Full
Carder 320	14030235	320	\$512,000	No	Full	Full
Lima 40	14125234	40	\$59,000	No	Full	Full
Lindsey Lake	13930234	30	\$39,000	No	Full	Full
McKinley 80	13832208	83	\$132,800	No	Full	Full
Pine River 160	13830212	160	\$240,000	No	Full	Full
Pine River 40	13830210	40	\$68,000	No	Full	Full
Trelipe South 18	13927201	18	\$34,000	No	Full	Full

### Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

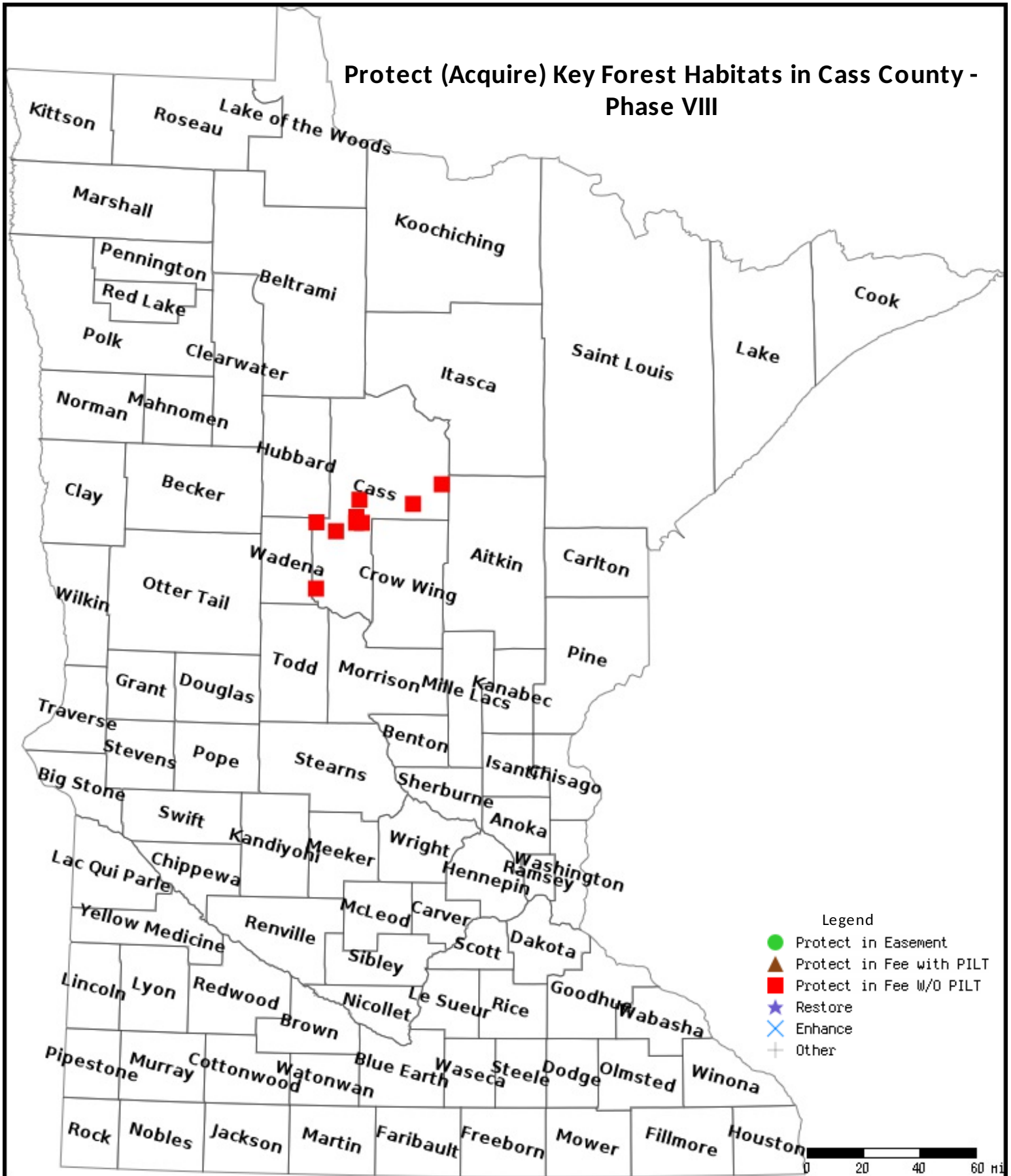
### Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.



## Parcel Map

### Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitats in Cass County - Phase VIII



Data Generated From Parcel List



