Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding

Date: May 31, 2017

Program or Project Title: Laurentian Forest - St. Louis County Habitat Project, Phase II

Funds Requested: \$6,106,000

Manager's Name: Emilee Nelson Organization: The Conservation Fund Address: 7101 York Avenue South Suite 340

City: Edina, MN 55435 Office Number: 9525955768 Mobile Number: 7635679086

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County Locations: Not Listed

Regions in which work will take place:

• Northern Forest

Activity types:

• Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

• Forest

Abstract:

St. Louis County and The Conservation Fund (TCF) will work cooperatively to protect in fee approximately 5,000 acres of forest habitat at risk of being converted to uses that would degrade critical habitat for wildlife in Minnesota's northeast forest landscape. Targeted parcels will be those that are vital to maintaining large, unfragmented blocks of forest that deliver the greatest habitat benefits. Adjacency to county, state and federal lands will be a key focus in leveraging the habitat benefits provided by project parcels.

Design and scope of work:

Problem to be addressed

Northern Minnesota's forest-dominated landscape provides important wildlife habitat, clean water, public recreational opportunities and economic value from its timber. It includes many large, privately owned parcels that are interspersed with millions of acres of county, state, federal and tribal forest lands. These privately owned parcels total more than one million acres of which most are held by large corporations. The past two decades have seen significant restructuring in the timber industry that has changed the northern forest and put habitat and public access at risk. More than 500,000 acres of industrial forest lands have changed ownership. Much of this land has been sold and converted into smaller parcels. The Minnesota Forest Resources Council has identified parcelization as the major policy problem confronting the ecological and economic health of Minnesota's forests. Forest conversion and fragmentation are two major physical alterations to the forest that can result from parcelization. In and near the focus area of this project, this parcelization trend continues. For example, the Potlatch Corporation (Potlatch) once owned 345,000 acres in the northern forest and now holds only 160,000 acres. In St. Louis County, Potlatch ownership has dropped from 110,000 acres to 70,000 acres in the past 10 years. This divestiture continues as Potlatch has sold, or is in the process of selling, over 175 parcels in St. Louis County since 2013. Much like the prairies half a century ago, Minnesota's most intact ecosystem is now facing imminent conversion and fragmentation. Unless action is taken soon, the opportunity to protect and manage large expanses of forest habitat will be lost.

Goals and Scope of Work

To mitigate forest conversion and fragmentation and the associated loss of habitat within St. Louis County, this project will protect by acquisition in fee approximately 5,000 acres of high priority habitat. This project will complement previously-funded OHF proposals to rejoin forest habitats for cohesive management strategies. All of the lands to be protected are currently owned by Potlatch. TCF and St.



Louis County have worked with Potlatch to review all of the company's holdings within the county to determine which parcels best fulfill project goals.

TCF, in coordination with St. Louis County, will use the following criteria to prioritize parcels:

- 1) Habitat quality;
- 2) Adjacency to other large forest blocks, with an emphasis on lands managed by St. Louis County;
- 3) Immediacy of threat of conversion; and
- 4) Potential to acquire parcels where mineral rights have not been severed. As will be discussed in greater detail below, St. Louis County will hold and manage all project lands.

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

- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

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

This project will address multiple indicators in the above plans. The MN Forest Resource Council calls for implementers of Landscape Plans to maintain or increase large contiguous forest patches which provide habitat for numerous native game and non-game wildlife species, as well as a no net loss of forestlands. The OHF 25-year Framework also seeks to protect forestland though acquisition or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties. This project will work toward both of these goals.

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:

This project concentrates on protecting those strategically important privately-held lands that connect other large blocks of publically owned forestlands. As smaller blocks of habitat have already been sold for private recreational use, the need to protect the larger blocks of habitat that directly border existing forestland is a direct priority listed for the LSOHC Northern Forest Section. Secondarily, this project will allow greater public access for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation to nearby Duluth and the 200,000 people residing in St. Louis County.

In addition to game species such as white-tailed deer, Ruffed Grouse, woodcock and black bear, the project area contains numerous songbirds and species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern including moose, gray wolf, Canadian lynx, Bald Eagle, Boreal Owl, Northern Goshawk, northern long-eared bat, Golden-winged Warbler, big brown bat, tricolored bat, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Peregrine Falcon. The parcels selected for this project will help to retain intact forest landscapes that will benefit all of these species.

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:

The methods for choosing which parcels to protect with this project that will reduce fragmentation of Minnesota's northern forests will be done through a mapping algorithm that follows these steps:

- 1. Identify high quality Potlatch forestland that is important habitat for forest species such as the Golden-winged warbler, Ovenbird, Ruffed Grouse, and northern long-eared bat. Data used will come from the Minnesota Biological Survey, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), USFWS and other pertinent sources.
- 2. Identify St. Louis County-managed lands greater than 120 contiguous acres in size that contain high quality habitat or habitat that can be cost-effectively restored.
- 3. Select the Potlatch lands that are also directly adjacent to county managed lands greater than 120-acres, meet the habitat filters from

the first criteria and/or are critical to connect contiguous existing protected parcels greater than 200 acres in size.

4. Of those acres, prioritize Potlatch lands that are also directly adjacent to State Forest, US Forest Service, or MN DNR ownership.

This methodology will assist in developing large, contiguous blocks of high-quality habitat that can be managed sustainably.

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:

Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) work in St. Louis County is only partially completed and is continuing. MBS hopes to have at least 90% of the survey work completed by June 2019. Project partners and SLC Lands will work with DNR ecologists and MCBS staff to obtain the best possible and most current information on the distribution and ecology of native plants and animals, native plant communities and the most intact landscapes when evaluating which parcels will be selected for inclusion in the project.

GIS modeling analysis supplied by the USFWS, TNC, USFS and others will be used by TCF and that incorporates multiple criteria to identify the highest priority Potlatch parcels to include in the project.

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

Ovenbird

Ovenbirds are found in upland forests statewide; typically in relatively mature forest but can also be found in younger forests. Deciduous, mixed coniferous-deciduous, and coniferous forests may be suitable. Ovenbirds nest on the ground in leaf litter. This species has been identified as a priority species to monitor, as an indication of the health of mature forest uplands, within the area represented by the LSOHC Northern Forest planning section. 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. TCF will use the breeding bird survey data to target acquisitions.

Golden-winged Warbler

This species is currently a candidate for listing as federally threatened. Its presence indicates that there is a broad age-class distribution of native northern tree species and critical brushy habitat that benefits not only the warbler, but also Ruffed Grouse. The American Bird Conservancy and the USFWS are actively monitoring Golden-winged Warbler populations and TCF will use their information to target acquisitions.

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

• Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors GIS prioritization algorithm identifies project parcels that align with existing protected forest habitat to maximize project benefits and create habitat corridors.

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

As indicated above, St. Louis County Lands will manage the acquired lands and has a wealth of forest management experience as it manages nearly 900,000 acres of County Administered land, its management system is certified to the ISO 14001 standard, and its practices are certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standard. The purpose of SLC Lands is to protect the variety of benefits provided by County Administered lands. These benefits include: healthy forests, wildlife habitat and fisheries, accessible recreational opportunities, forest diversity, forest products, and financial returns which all contribute to local community viability. Project partners will continue to work with SLC Lands to ensure the best habitat outcomes and evaluate the possibility of developing future projects.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
		Manage and monitor lands		
2018 and	ongoing St. Louis County	consistent with forest		
ongoing		certification and management		
		plans.		

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

Potlatch has been rapidly divesting its forest holdings for a number of years. In less than 20 years, 43% of its statewide ownership has

been sold - nearly 195,000 acres. In St. Louis County alone, Potlatch ownership has diminished from approximately 110,000 acres to 70,000 acres in the past 10 years. When isolated forest parcels are sold for development, the forest is not only being fragmented, but there is also a demand for new services (roads, power, etc.) that has a detrimental effect on habitat. It can easily be argued that the land owned by Potlatch, more than the prairies where land use conversion has already largely occurred, is the most threatened in the state.

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

This project builds on past and current efforts to protect the large remaining forestlands in St. Louis County. The lands in this proposal will continue to build on past investments in Minnesota's forests.

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:

Appro priatio n Year	Source	Amount
2016	Sax-Zim Bog Wetland Mitigation Bank	\$15,000,000+
2016	Private donor	380,000
2017	LWCF	3,500,000
2017	USFWS Mitigation	2,000,000

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

No variation.

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:

There are existing routes on potential project parcels that were developed for timber harvest and management purposes. In addition to forestry related activities, these routes have been used by hunters and others for recreation, and some of that use has included ATV travel.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

SLC Lands will maintain and monitor these trails and roads under its forest certification standards.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - Yes

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

There are existing routes on potential project parcels that were developed for timber harvest and management purposes. In addition to forestry related activities, these routes have been used by hunters and others for recreation, and some of that use has included ATV travel.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

SLC Lands will maintain and monitor these trails and roads under its forest certification standards.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Negotiate with landowner and enter into a purchase agreement.	August 2018
Conduct due diligence for acquisition of the properties (appraisals, title work etc).	September 2018
Acquire fee title to the properties.	December 2018
Transfer lands to St. Louis County.	December 2018

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$6,106,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$63,000	\$0		\$63,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$6,000,000	\$0		\$6,000,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
Pro fessio nal Services	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Direct Support Services	\$6,000	\$0		\$6,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$6,106,000	\$0	-	\$6,106,000

Personnel

Position		Over#ofyears	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN State Director	0.20	2.00	\$38,000	\$0		\$38,000
Conservation Acquisition Associate	0.20	2.00	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Total	0.40	4.00	\$63,000	\$0	-	\$63,000

Amount of Request: \$6,106,000

Amount of Leverage: \$0

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%

DSS + Personnel: \$69,000

As a % of the total request: 1.13%

Easement Stewardship: \$0

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -%

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

Our real estate support staff keeps hourly time sheets to track direct time spent on projects by grant source. We have used those past metrics to estimate the costs for this grant.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - Yes

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging:

None.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

This project leverages multiple past and current projects in St. Louis County to protect large blocks of forestlands.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the "economy of scale" and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

The total fee acquisition w/out PILT could be scaled and acres reduced. Our administrative costs could not be scaled as they are baseline costs for procurement of the land.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Туре	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	5,000	0	5,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	5,000	0	5,000

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Туре	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	\$6,106,000	\$0	\$6,106,000
Pro tect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$6,106,000	\$0	\$6,106,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Туре	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	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	5,000	5,000
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	5,000	5,000

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Туре	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	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	\$6,106,000	\$6,106,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,106,000	\$6,106,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Туре	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	\$1,221	\$0
Pro tect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Туре	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SEForest	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	\$1,221
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

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:

The methods for choosing which parcels to protect with this project that will reduce fragmentation of Minnesota's northern forests will be done through a mapping algorithm that follows these steps:

- 1. Identify high quality Potlatch forestland that is important habitat for forest species such as the Golden-winged warbler, Ovenbird, Ruffed Grouse, and northern long-eared bat. Data used will come from the Minnesota Biological Survey, TNC, USFWS and other pertinent sources.
- 2. Identify St. Louis County-managed lands greater than 120 contiguous acres in size that contain high quality habitat or habitat that can be cost-effectively restored.
- 3. Select the Potlatch lands that are also directly adjacent to county managed lands greater than 120-acres, meet the habitat filters from the first criteria and/or are critical to connect contiguous existing protected parcels greater than 200 acres in size.
- 4. Of those acres, prioritize Potlatch lands that are also directly adjacent to State Forest, US Forest Service, or MN DNR ownership.

This methodology will assist in developing large, contiguous blocks of high-quality habitat that can be managed sustainably.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

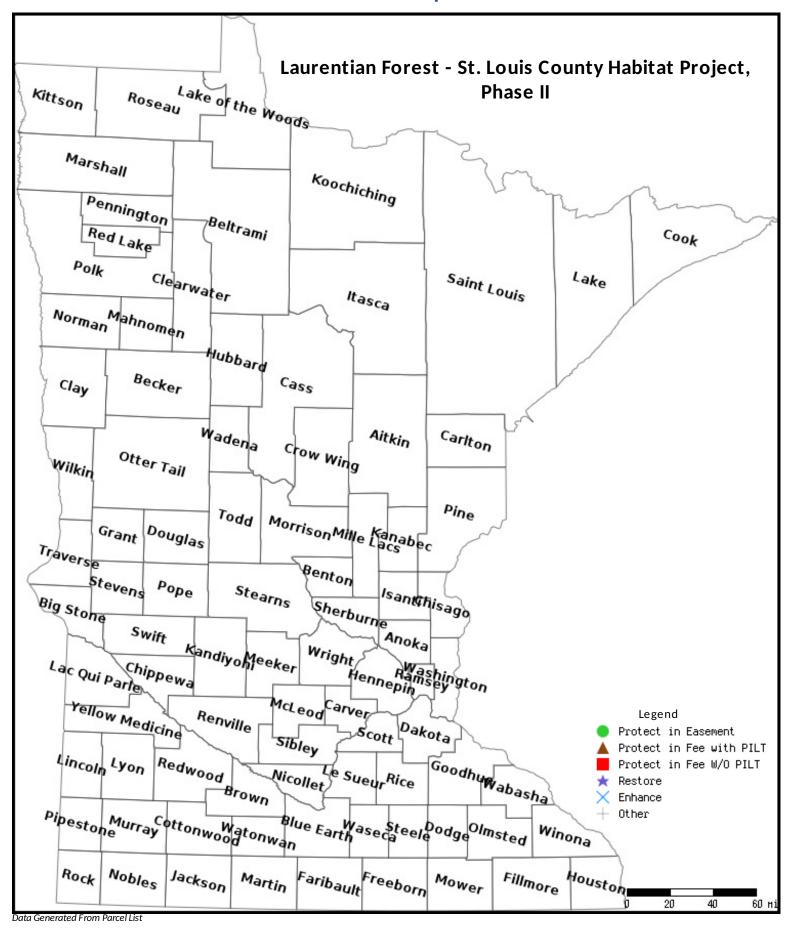
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map



CONSERVATION FUND





Project Area

St. Louis County and The Conservation Fund (TCF) will work cooperatively to protect in fee approximately 5,000 acres of forest habitat at risk of being converted to uses that would degrade critical habitat for wildlife in Minnesota's northeast forest landscape.

The past two decades have seen significant restructuring in the timber industry that has changed the northern forest and put habitat and public access at risk. More than 500,000 acres of industrial forest lands have changed ownership. Much of this land has been sold and converted into smaller parcels.

Potlatch has been rapidly divesting its forest holdings for a number of years. In less than 20 years, 43% of its statewide ownership has been sold - nearly 195,000 acres.

Much like the prairies half a century ago, Minnesota's most intact ecosystem is now facing imminent conversion and fragmentation. **Unless action is taken soon**, the opportunity to protect and manage large expanses of forest habitat will be lost.

This project will use the following criteria to prioritize parcels:

- 1) Habitat quality;
- 2) Adjacency to other large forest blocks, with an emphasis on lands managed by St. Louis County;
- 3) Immediacy of threat of conversion; and
- 4) Potential to acquire parcels where mineral rights have not been severed. As will be discussed in greater detail below, St. Louis County will hold and manage all project lands.

The mission of St. Louis County Lands Department is to protect the variety of benefits provided by County Administered lands, which include: healthy forests, wildlife habitat and fisheries, accessible recreational opportunities, forest diversity, forest products, and financial returns which all contribute to local community viability.

TCF will provide real estate expertise. St. Louis County will own and manage acquired parcels to dual-forestry certified standards, in addition to OHF requirements for healthy, sustainable habitat.

Partners

The Conservation Fund St. Louis County

OHF Funding Requested \$6.1 million

Protection Type

Fee title acquisition without PILT

Leverage

 Builds on 40,000 acres protected over the last 5 years

Project Outcomes

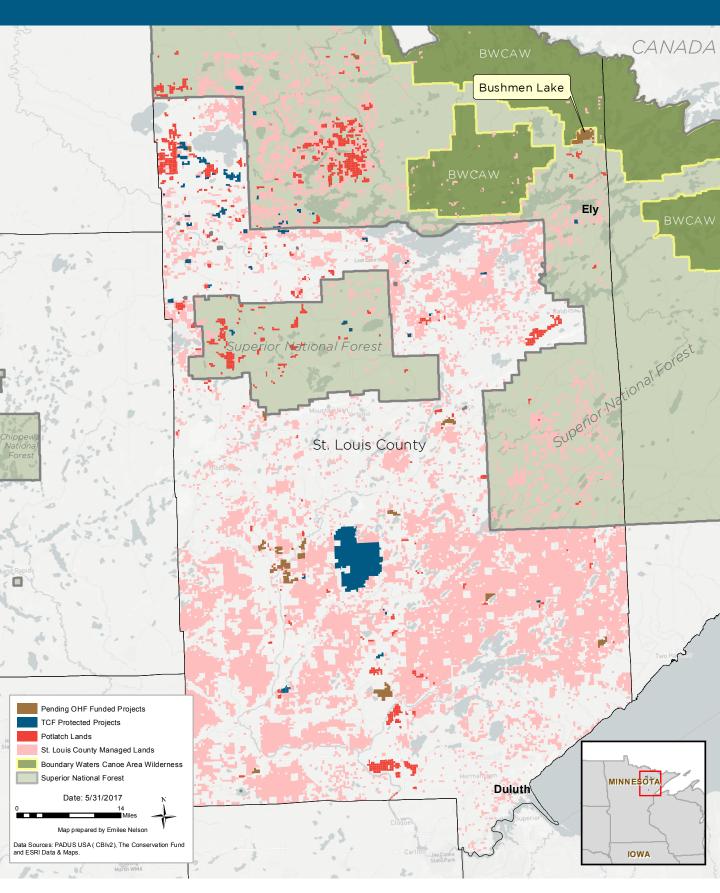
- 5,000 acres of forestlands protected
- Improved forest management access on adjacent parcels

Partner Capacity

- St. Louis County dual-certified (ISO 14001, Sustainable Forestry Initiative)
- SLC Lands manages nearly 900,000 acres
- TCF has protected 285,000 acres in Minnesota

St. Louis County Forestlands

THE CONSERVATION FUND



		Conserv	ration Complex ₁	Conserv	ation Complex ₂
Category	Sub-category	Acres	Estimated \$ (10 yrs)	Acres	Estimated \$ (10 yrs)
	Fee title (productive cropland) / acre		\$0		\$0
Permanent Protection	Fee title (marginal cropland) / acre		\$0		\$(
	Easement / acre (productive cropland)				
	Easement / acre (marginal cropland)		\$0		\$0
Totals		-	\$0	-	\$0
Tamananan Duatastian	CRP per acre / year		\$0		\$(
Temporary Protection	Private Lands Agreements / acre		\$0		\$(
Totals		-	\$0	-	\$(
	Wetland / acre		\$0		\$(
Restoration	Upland tile / acre		\$0		\$(
	Grassland / acre	-	\$0		\$(
	Stream / mile		\$0		\$(
Totals	,	-	\$0	-	\$(
	Prescribed fire / acre * 2 (every 5 yrs)		\$0		\$(
	Conservation grazing / mile		\$0		\$(
	Haying / acre * 2 (every 5 yrs)		\$0		\$(
Enhancement	Woody removal (grove) / acre		\$0		\$(
Ennancement	Woody removal (volunteer) / acre * 2				
	(every 5 yrs)		\$0		\$(
	Herbicide / acre (intensely infested site)		\$0		\$(
	Herbicide / acre (lightly infested site)		\$0		\$0
Totals		-	\$0	-	\$0
	Personel hours / year		\$0		\$(
C. 11.	Travel / mile (IRS rate) / year		\$0		\$(
Stewardship	Build structures/parking areas		\$0		\$(
	PILT/acre/yr	-	\$0	-	\$(
Totals		-	\$0	-	\$0
TO	OTAL CONSERVATION COMPLEX COST	\$0)	\$0	
	COST PER ACRE	\$0.00)	\$0.00	
	Total Conservation Complex Acres]
	Total Unprotected Acres]
	Total Protected Acres		_		
l Cost of Conservation	Complex per Conservation Indicator*				

^{*} Using accepted models created by USFWS and others, we can estimate the number of duck breeding pairs, nesting grassland birds, etc, whatever model is applicable to the conservation complex. These metrics are indicators of success for the goal(s) set for each conservation complex.