

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding



**Date:** May 31, 2017

**Program or Project Title:** Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase VI

**Funds Requested:** \$5,707,300

**Manager's Name:** Richard F. Peterson

**Title:** Forest Legacy Coordinator

**Organization:** MN DNR Forestry

**Address:** 1810 - 30th St. NW

**City:** Faribault, MN 55021

**Office Number:** 507-333-2012

**Mobile Number:** 507-330-6291

**Email:** richard.f.peterson@state.mn.us

**County Locations:** Crow Wing, Hubbard, and Morrison.

### Regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

### Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Protect in Fee

### Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

### Abstract:

The Minnesota Forests for the Future Program will use \$5.7 million to protect 4,000 acres with permanent easements, 480 acres in fee title and restore up to 400 acres of native forests in the northern forest region. While the program focuses on forest protection, surrounding areas of wetland and grasslands will be included in biologically and habitat rich forest/wetland complexes. Conservation easement acquisition will focus on tracts near or adjacent to our Phase V tracts. Fee title acquisitions target priority inholdings and access parcels within State Forests. Restorations will focus on old field areas within easement parcels.

### Design and scope of work:

The Hardwood Hills and Rum River Project Area is a landscape of forests, extensive wetlands, riparian habitat and open waters. Over 217 species of greatest conservation need are known to occur within this region including many disturbance sensitive species such as red-shouldered hawks. Portions of this landscape have been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as sites of statewide biodiversity significance on the basis of the number of rare species, the quality of the native plant communities, size of the site, and context within the landscape. This landscape is extremely vulnerable to development. Between 2008 and 2013, more than 260,000 acres of forest, wetland, and grassland in the Upper Mississippi River Basin were converted to other uses, with a significant portion occurring within the project area. If unprotected, the long term integrity of the forest and wetland habitats will be compromised by future development activities that could convert and fragment habitat and threaten water quality. This project will focus on protection efforts in strategic locations to ensure that forests remain undeveloped, with connections maintained between forests and wetlands across the landscape. Songbirds, timber wolves, black bear, deer, bobcat, beaver, wood duck, mallard, woodcock and many other game and non-game species will benefit from protection.

Conservation Easements: Phase VI of the Forests for the Future Program (MFF) will focus on priority tracts within Morrison County and will complement other conservation work in-progress (MFF Phase V) and already completed in the region (Army Compatible Use Buffers) to protect and conserve forests and wetlands for fish, game and wildlife and water quality benefits. MFF conservation easements will result in permanent protection while maintaining the land in private ownership and on the tax rolls. Landowners will be

responsible for managing the properties under the guidance of a state-approved forest stewardship plan. Key habitats protected include upland deciduous and conifer forests, non-forested wetlands (shrub swamps), open wetlands, nearly 1 mile of wild rice lake shoreline and nearly 5 miles of streams and rivers.

Fee Title Acquisition: Fee acquisition will protect at-risk forest parcels in the Badoura and Paul Bunyan State Forests, consolidate and link State owned parcels, and provide management and public recreational access. These parcels are currently owned by Potlatch and are scheduled for sale in the near future if state acquisition doesn't occur. This proposal will enhance previous conservation protection efforts (Pinelands Sands 1-OHF2014) in this area.

Restoration: Forest Restoration utilizing native conifer and hardwood trees will target existing hayfields and agricultural fields within easement tracts.

This project is being done in partnership and cooperation with many federal, state, local and private agencies engaged in conservation and protection efforts in and around the Morrison County including the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, Morrison County SWCD, Mississippi Headwaters Board and the Conservation Fund.

The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota has committed to providing match funds up to 10% of total project costs.

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

- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

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

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

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

Activities carried out under this project coincide with goals and objectives for protecting key critical habitat types and species assemblages in Minnesota. There are several plans with complementary goals to protect forest habitat, secure connectivity, and make large mosaics of natural lands as resilient as possible including Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare and the Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework. Within Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare, Goal 1 identifies "Stabilize and Increase Species in Greatest Conservation Need Populations" by targeting priority conservation actions to maintain and enhance key habitats.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25-Year Framework identifies "protect forestland through acquisition or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties" as a priority action for the northern forest section. This project will protect approximately 4,480 acres thereby preventing forest habitat loss, parcelization and fragmentation.

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

#### **Forest / Prairie Transition:**

- Not Listed

#### **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:**

#### **LSOHC Priorities:**

Protecting large, contiguous forests through easements or acquisition of private lands that limit access to public lands: Acquisition and easements should be targeted to areas that would consolidate ownerships, address critical habitat needs, and have significant public support in the region.

Protecting and restoring high ecological value forests, including rare native plant communities, forest habitat for SCGNs, forested riparian areas, old growth forests, and forest habitat corridors.

As development and conversion pressures have increased over decades, critical wildlife habitat areas have become threatened. In many cases only remnants of once abundant wildlife populations remain. Protecting large, contiguous forests through easement and fee acquisition and protecting high ecological value forests containing rare native plant communities, forest habitat for SGCN's, forested riparian areas and forest habitat corridors are identified priorities for the northern region.

The permanent protection of up to 4,480 acres of priority forest habitat within this project is focused on ensuring that forests remain as large, connected blocks, thus sustaining and enhancing diverse wildlife and fish habitat and other environmental benefits. Within this landscape, maintaining connections between working forests, riparian forests, and wetlands, provides resiliency to support biodiversity and clean water, healthy aquatic habitats, and outdoor recreational opportunities including access to hunting and fishing opportunities.

## **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:**

This program uses the Minnesota County Biological Survey (including identified sites of biodiversity significance), GIS analysis tools, and priority scoring and ranking to identify lands for protection to create forest/wetland habitat complexes and connecting corridors. In addition, we consult with and cooperate with local and regional watershed and landscape planning efforts such as the The Nature Conservancy's Multiple Benefits Analysis, Camp Ripley Area Landscape Stewardship Plan, and the Sentinel Landscape Plan.

## **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:**

Target habitats of our proposal included upland conifer forests, upland hardwood forests, non-forested (shrub) wetlands, open peatlands and stream and lake shoreline. Protection of these parcels will provide critical habitat for game species including upland birds (turkey, woodcock, ruffed grouse), white-tailed deer, black bear, and waterfowl as well as songbirds and other non-game wildlife species.

Wild rice shoreland provides important habitat for wetland dependent wildlife species in Minnesota and is especially important for migrating and breeding waterfowl. More than 17 species of wildlife listed as Species in Greatest Conservation Need use wild rice areas for breeding, migration and foraging including common loon, trumpeter swan, bald eagle, American bittern, least bittern, red-necked grebe, sora rail, Virginia rail, yellow rail, black tern, rusty blackbird, sedge wren, lesser scaup, northern pintail, and American black duck.

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

### Ovenbird

Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) 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. 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

Often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers. Suggested by the USFWS as a species representative of shrubland systems in the Upper Midwest, Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) are also recognized as a Minnesota Species in Greatest Conservation Need (stewardship species) due to the relatively large percentage of the global population that breeds within the state. 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

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 forest.

## **Outcomes:**

### **Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *This project will permanently protect 4,480 acres of forest & wetland, nearly 1 mile of wild rice shoreline, nearly 5 stream miles and restore 400 acres of forest. The project would protect the property's conservation values - its plants, animals, natural communities and wildlife habitats found in the forests, wetlands, and shorelines of the property by permanently restricting specified land uses such as development, subdivision, land conversion or other activities that would damage those features. The project will prevent habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and associated habitat degradation and will promote healthy and diverse forests, keep water clean and maintain wildlife.*

**Programs in forest-prairie transition region:**

- Not Listed

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

All lands protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented in DNR's forest easement program over the past 18 years. Our easement stewardship program incorporates annual landowner meetings, annual on-site monitoring of all properties, response to landowner inquiries, tracking ownership changes and addressing and resolving easement violations.

Funding for easement stewardship is included in the current proposal. Stewardship funds will be transferred to the designated stewardship account and interest earned from the account will fund annual stewardship and monitoring work for the easements. All easements will have baseline property reports, forest stewardship plans and easement monitoring plans prepared prior to closing of the project. Future forest and wildlife management activities will be guided by a DNR-approved Forest Stewardship Plan. The Forest Stewardship Plan provides direction and guides the sustainable management activities that are consistent with protecting habitat and other resource values of the property.

Fee lands acquired will become part of the Minnesota State Forest system. Fee acquisitions increase management efficiency through improved access for habitat management and consolidation of existing state forest lands. Funding for management comes from the Forest Management Investment Account.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
For easement project: June 30, 2021 or upon completion of the project.	OHF	Transfer stewardship funds to dedicated stewardship account per accomplishment plan and OHF appropriations.	Develop easement stewardship plans prior to closings.	Develop baseline property reports and easement monitoring plan prior to closing.
For easement project: Annually/perpetually	OHF-Permanent Easement Account	Monitor easements annually and enforce easement terms.	Annual landowner contacts and on-site monitoring.	Review forest and wildlife habitat management activities annually and review and update Forest Stewardship Plans periodically.
For fee project: June 30, 2021 or upon completion of the project.	Natural Resource Fund - FMIA	Manage forests to maximize forest health and wildlife benefits consistent with guidance documents.	Maintain boundaries.	Monitor public use and address any issues.
For restoration: Ongoing	OHF	Conduct annual monitoring and inspection of restoration sites during annual easement monitoring visits.	Assess restoration and recommend maintenance as needed.	Monitor sites until they are established and periodically thereafter.

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

From 2008-2012 Minnesota ranked 2nd nationally in rates of deforestation. Additionally, large forest ownerships are undergoing parcelization often followed by land conversion and often leading to habitat fragmentation. This underscores the need for urgent and timely response to protect priority forests from parcelization, conversion and fragmentation. One example of this is the Potlatch ownership in Minnesota. Potlatch, once the largest private forest landowner in the state with over 300,000 acres has over the past 12 years sold nearly half their ownership in Minnesota. Some of these lands, particularly those in west central/north central Minnesota have been converted to irrigated agriculture with negative implications for fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, management and public access, and recreation.

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

TNC has committed up to 10% matching funds or \$570,000 towards this project.

**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:**

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2010	The Conservation Fund	\$9,750,000
2010	RIM Critical Habitat Match	\$328,631
2012	The Nature Conservancy	\$1,437,900
2012	RIM Critical Habitat Match	\$229,100
2012	State Capital Bonding	\$231,551
2015	RIM Critical Habitat Match	\$100,000

## 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 - **No**

Local government approval is not currently required for such acquisitions, however its the policy of the DNR to notify county boards of all acquisitions prior to closing for their information and to solicit comments and concerns.

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program - **Not Listed**

Is the activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Not Listed**

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 fee land acquisitions will be managed by the Division of Forestry consistent with State Forest policies and will be open for hunting and fishing following completion.

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

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 Access Roads and Trails: These roads and trails have been developed and are maintained to provide ongoing access for forest and wildlife management activities on the properties. On fee lands, roads and trails will provide both public recreational access and management access to State Forest Lands.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Maintenance of forest access roads and trails will be the responsibility of the landowner, either private landowners or State Forest

administrator. Monitoring of roads and trails will be conducted as part of the annual easement monitoring of the eased properties. MNDNR has a monitoring and reporting plan in place that involves the Divisions of Forestry, Parks and Trails and Enforcement. This includes annual spring (and other wet season) closures, reporting issues and enforcement actions when necessary.

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:

In a few cases additional and temporary forest access roads and trails will be established as needed. They will provide temporary or, sometimes, permanent access for forest and wildlife management activities.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Maintenance of forest access roads and trails will be the responsibility of the landowner. Monitoring of roads and trails will be conducted as part of the annual easement monitoring of the easement properties.

## Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Acquire conservation easements.	June 30, 2021
Develop conservation easement monitoring plans, forest stewardship plans, and dedicate easement stewardship.	June 30, 2021
Acquire fee title acquisitions	June 30, 2021
Restore sites to native forest vegetation.	June 30, 2022

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$5,707,300**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Contracts	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,000,000	\$0		\$1,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$4,000,000	\$570,000	The Nature Conservancy of MN	\$4,570,000
Easement Stewardship	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
Travel	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Professional Services	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
Direct Support Services	\$15,300	\$0		\$15,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	\$0		\$2,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$5,707,300	\$570,000		\$6,277,300

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Forest Legacy staff/coordinator	0.20	4.00	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Total	0.20	4.00	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000

Amount of Request: \$5,707,300  
 Amount of Leverage: \$570,000  
 Leverage as a percent of the Request: 9.99%  
 DSS + Personnel: \$95,300  
 As a % of the total request: 1.67%  
 Easement Stewardship: \$200,000  
 As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 5.00%

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

DNR Direct and Necessary Cost Calculator - Additive model.

**Does the amount in the contract line include R/E work?**

Yes; All the amount is included in restoration.

**Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - No**

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

NA

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

The Nature Conservancy of Minnesota has committed match funding of 10% of the grant amount. DNR and TNC are finalizing grant agreement.

**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:**

Available funding would be directed to the highest priority parcels. Administration costs and other acquisition costs would be reduced as the number of parcels are reduced. Per parcel acquisition costs may be lower for multi-parcel projects. Acres protected will be reduced in proportion to the reduction in funds.



## Output Tables

**Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	400	0	400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	480	0	480
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	4,000	0	4,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	4,880	0	4,880

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$200,000	\$0	\$200,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,057,000	\$0	\$1,057,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$4,450,300	\$0	\$4,450,300
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$5,707,300	\$0	\$5,707,300

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

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	80	0	0	320	400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	480	480
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	667	0	0	3,333	4,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	747	0	0	4,133	4,880

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

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$160,000	\$200,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,057,000	\$1,057,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$750,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,700,300	\$4,450,300
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$790,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,917,300	\$5,707,300

**Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$500	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$2,202	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$1,113	\$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	\$500	\$0	\$0	\$500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,202
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$1,124	\$0	\$0	\$1,110
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:

Top priority for selection is given to forests that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses, best contribute to protection of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and that enhance connective landscapes.

## Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

### Morrison

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Morrison 16R	04230221	100	\$0	No
Morrison 17R	04230203	115	\$0	No
Morrison 18R	04229223	20	\$0	No
Morrison 23R	04131236	80	\$0	No

## Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

### Crow Wing

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
CrowWing 1	04430224	135	\$0	No	No	No

### Hubbard

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Hubbard 1	14232218	240	\$0	No	Full	Full
Hubbard 2	13932201	320	\$0	No	Full	Full

### Morrison

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Morrison 12	03931214	360	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 13	04130206	120	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 14	13331233	590	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 15	04132226	200	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 16	04230221	960	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 17	04230203	400	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 18	04229223	1,320	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 19	04228226	667	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 20	04230232	160	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 21	04230229	140	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 22	04131235	112	\$0	No	No	No
Morrison 23	04131235	195	\$0	No	No	No

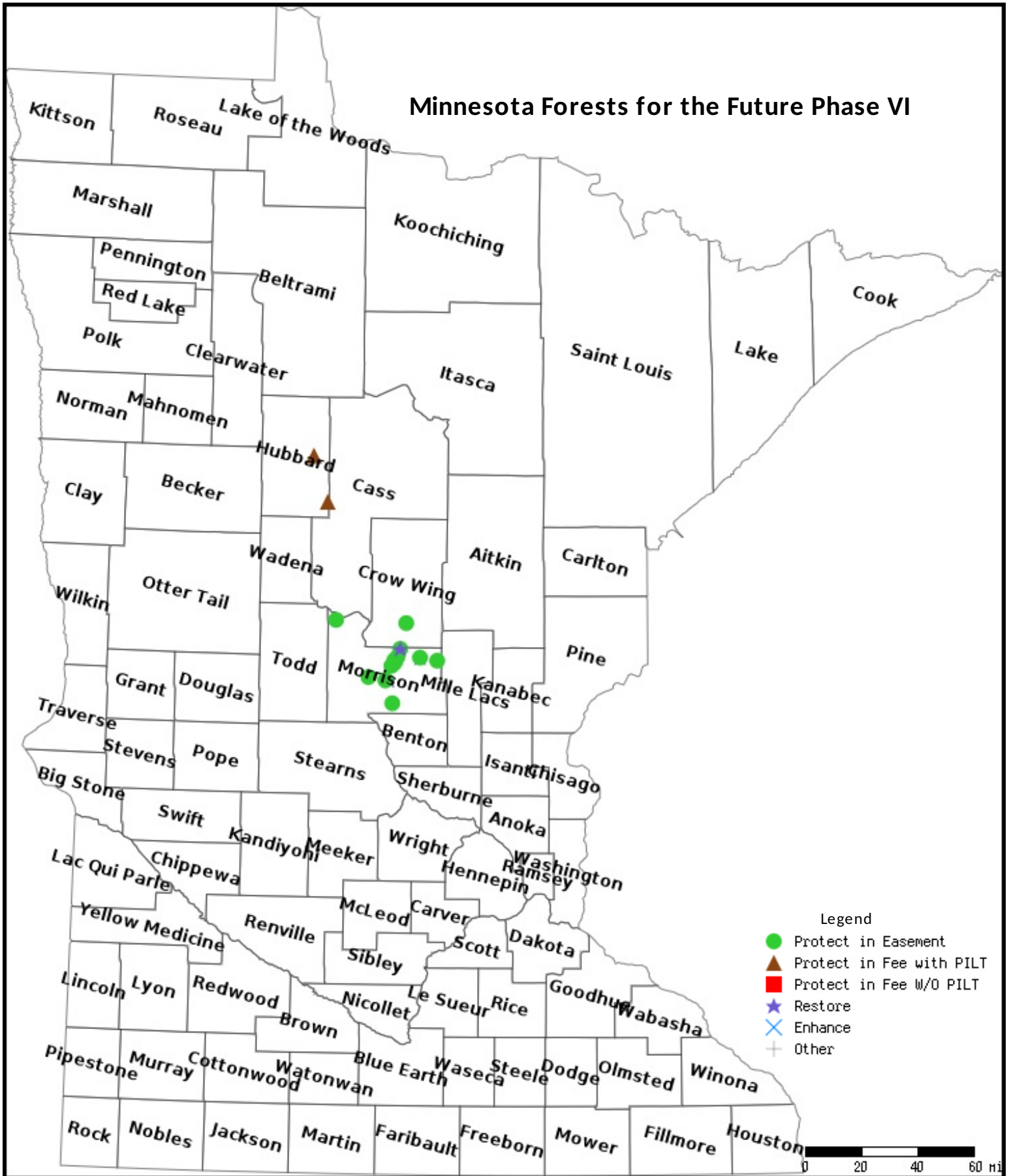
## Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

## Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

# Parcel Map



Data Generated From Parcel List



# Forests for the Future Program — Phase VI

Forest Protection & Restoration focusing on large forest & wetland complexes in Morrison, Crow Wing, Hubbard Counties—Funding Requested: \$5,707,300



## Protection:

- 4,000 acres permanent forest conservation easements
- 480 acres fee title state forest acquisition with public access
- 4.9 miles of stream and Platte River frontage
- 5,500 ft. of lake frontage with 4,500 ft. on wild rice lake

## Restoration:

- 400 acres of upland forest habitat restoration

## Match Funds and Partnerships:

- \$570,000 The Nature Conservancy



## Phase VI Details

- Complements Phase V funded tracts
- Parcels contain high quality, diverse, and connected forest, shrubland, & wetland habitat according to MCBS ratings (sites of biodiversity significance)
- Supports Species of Concern: Nelson's sparrow, sandhill crane, American bittern, Blanding's turtle, purple martin, bald eagle, creek heelsplitter
- Provides habitat for many game and non-game wildlife species including ruffed grouse, wild turkey, black bear, deer, bobcat, beaver, wood duck, mallard, timber wolf, woodcock, and songbirds



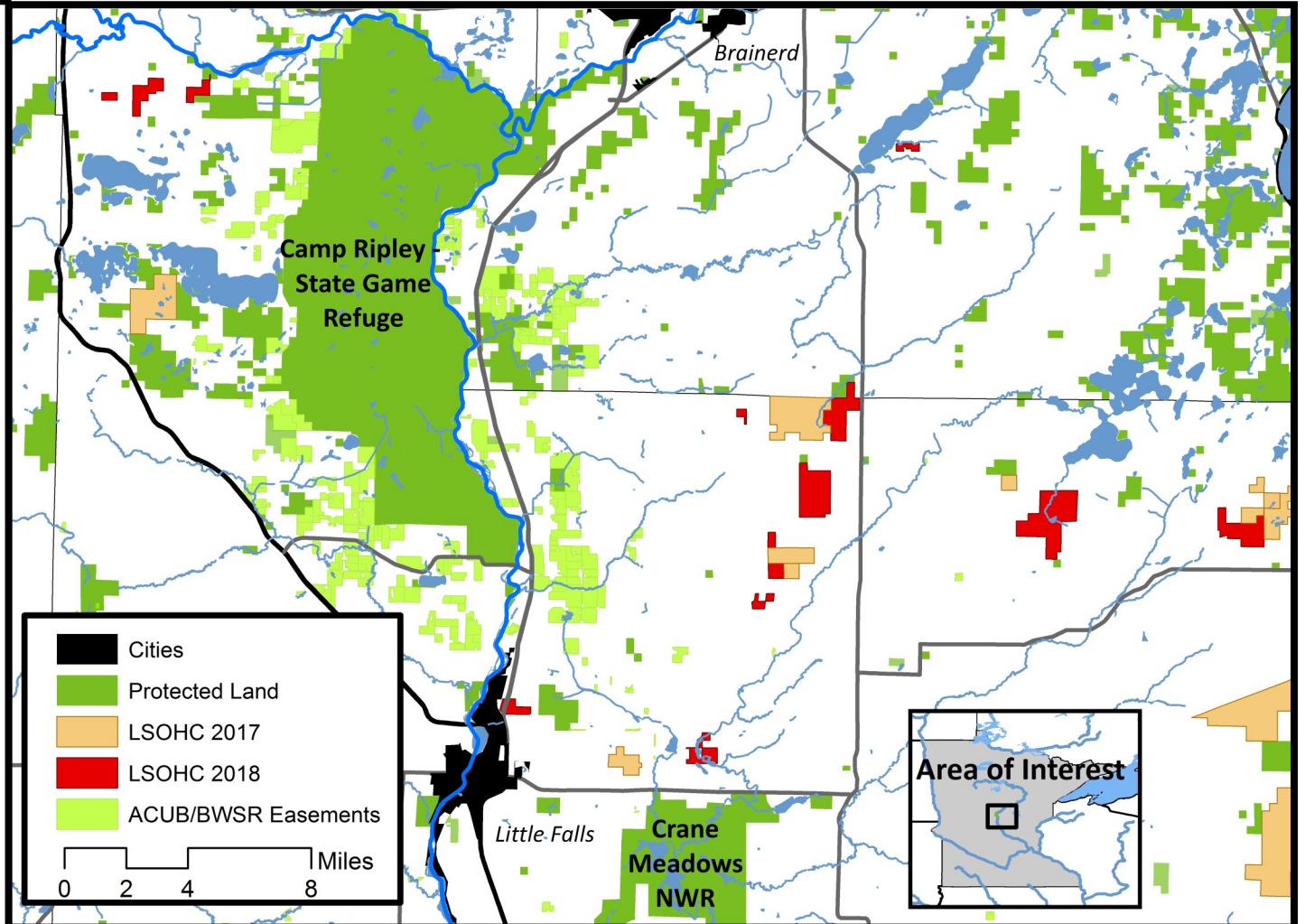
## Program Accomplishments

Northern Forest Program goals:

- Protect large, contiguous forest blocks through easement and fee acquisition including high ecological value forests, riparian forests, habitat corridors and forested watersheds.

OHF Funded Accomplishments:

- Fee Title Protection: 3,700 acres of State Forest, Wildlife Management Area and Scientific and Natural Area acquisitions.
- Conservation Easement Protection: 207,000 acres private forests.
- 3,200 acre easement and 80 acre fee acquisition in progress
- Phase VI, building upon Phase V, promotes healthy and diverse forests & protects important wetland/forest complexes identified by the DNR Wildlife Action Plan and MCBS.





Minnesota, North Dakota and  
South Dakota  
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May 30, 2017

Richard Peterson  
Forest Legacy Coordinator  
MN Department of Natural Resources  
1810 30<sup>th</sup> St NO  
Faribault, MN 55021

RE: Minnesota Forests for the Future, Phase VI

Dear Mr. Peterson,

The Nature Conservancy through its Minnesota Headwaters Fund is pleased to support the Minnesota Forests for the Future, Phase VI proposal to permanently protect 4,480 acres of critical habitat in Crow Wing, Hubbard, and Morrison counties.

The many lakes, intact and contiguous forests, and extensive network of rivers and streams that make up the Headwaters of the Mississippi provide significant habitat to an abundance of biodiversity. This region's forests and wetlands provide critical habitat to hundreds of species and natural communities, including many species of greatest conservation need. However, habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation are substantially altering the lands and waters of this vital landscape. Conservation action is needed now to reverse the current trajectory of land conversion.

The Conservancy values the positive impact of this continuing project on many different fronts, including increased habitat connectivity, increased habitat integrity, protection of water quality and stream flow, increased resiliency and redundancy for sensitive species and communities and reduction of ecosystem stressors.

The Nature Conservancy is currently working to finalize and execute an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to contribute funding toward the permanent conservation of lands identified through Phase V and VI and potentially beyond; and through our Minnesota Headwaters Fund we are pleased to partner again on this exciting opportunity through providing financial and implementation support to this proposal to protect critical forest and wetland habitat in the Mississippi Headwaters region.

Sincerely,

Douglas T. Shaw, PhD

Associate State Director – Conservation

The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota