

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2019 / ML 2018 Request for Funding



Date: May 30, 2017

Program or Project Title: Protect Key Forest Habitat Lands in Cass County-Phase VIII

Funds Requested: \$2,000,000

Manager's Name: Kirk Titus
Title: Land Commissioner
Organization: Cass County
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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 permanently protect over 1,100 acres of northern forest wildlife habitat from development and fragmentation through fee title acquisition. The title of the acquired lands will be held by Cass County in fee without a PILT obligation.

Design and scope of work:

Cass County, from the Brainerd Lakes area to Walker has and will continue to see some of the fastest population growth in Minnesota. The loss of private forest land to home site development, agriculture and other non-forest uses will continue to substantially increase the demands for county managed forest lands.

This growth and development has resulted in the loss of the Jack Pine barrens and forested lake shore landscapes in southern Cass County. Forest tracts, currently undeveloped and held by private owners, are sold to developers. Historically, many of these lands often provided access to existing public lands for resource management and public recreation while providing unfragmented landscapes, contiguous wildlife corridors, and protected larger blocks of land.

Two Opportunities:

The private forest land owner, a neighbor, with a certain land conservation ethic who wishes for their lands to continue to provide sustainable natural resource values like wildlife habitat, clean water, forest products and recreational activities for future generations. Cass County continues to work with many private landowners with similar values on these types of acquisitions and there are several in this application.

The second opportunity is the key industrial forest tracts that are being considered or currently being offered for sale by a large industrial forest owner, Potlatch in this area. These Potlatch in-holdings are usually within or nearby large tracts of public land and can also provide access for management or recreation. Market conditions and a willingness by Potlatch to sell property at this time is an opportunity that should be addressed now, since it is narrow window and may close at any time. The County's strategy is to acquire lands that consolidate unfragmented landscapes, avoid incompatible development and create habitat corridors.

One hundred percent of the OHF funded land acquisitions have been supported by both the County Board and the local unit 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 Resources 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 stakeholder input from the local unit of government on all land acquisitions. 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:

The Cass County Land Department has been producing and demonstrating significant conservation legacies for over 60 years. Certification of the lands since 2000 by the Forest Stewardship Council is a validation of positive habitat conservation for fish, game and other wildlife. 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 certain lands that have 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

A portion of this request is also targeting lands that adjoin other county managed lands at the Deep Portage Reserve where a recent bird count study was completed. From Dr. Gerald Niemi's report, "the results of the counts in 2016 reveal a diverse avifauna at Deep Portage, including five species defined by Audubon Minnesota as stewardship species in Minnesota and four species identified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as Species of Greatest Conservation Need". Study results included 47 different bird species and nearly a thousand individuals were observed during a 3 day period on the one square mile plot. Niemi also reports that "Forest management as the site should be reviewed to determine how this management has facilitated or maintained such a high population of Golden-winged Warbler as well as several other species of concern in Minnesota".

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:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *The outcome is measured by the number of purchased acres of public land that are permanently protected from future development and fragmentation while still providing access for resource management, hunting and fishing.*

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
2019	County Funds	Incorporate parcels acquired into the GIS.	Delineate and map forest covertypes.	
2020	County Funds	Complete forest inventory.	Complete regeneration surveys as needed.	
Ongoing	County Funds	Continue to follow the Forest Resources Mgmt Plan under the direction of the County Board.		

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 home site development, agriculture and other non-forest uses has created an urgent need for public funds to purchase strategic parcels. The acquired parcels 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:

Our current forest management program provides the long term funding and resources for staff. The OHF funds are for acquisition only.

Relationship to other funds:

- County funds provide the staff and resources for land management.

Describe the relationship of the funds:

OHF is providing funds for acquisition only.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
ML 2010	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2011	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2012	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2013	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2014	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2015	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.
ML 2016	County Funds	Approximately .25 FTE or \$20,000 per year.

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**

None

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:

The roads and trails are native surface and were built for forest management purposes or recreational access. All forest roads are considered open to motorized travel unless posted closed with County Board consent. Motorized and non-motorized use is allowed. The roads and trails policy can be found on page 42 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 a staff forester.

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Contract for appraisals.	August 2018
Meet with local units of government and prepare purchase agreements.	January 2019
County Attorney completes title opinions.	March 2019
Record deeds	Summer 2019

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$2,000,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$40,000	Cass County , Cass County	\$40,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,000,000	\$0		\$2,000,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$0	\$24,000	Cass County	\$24,000
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	\$2,000,000	\$64,000	-	\$2,064,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Commissioner	0.25	8.00	\$0	\$20,000	Cass County	\$20,000
Resource Manager	0.25	0.00	\$0	\$20,000	Cass County	\$20,000
Total	0.50	8.00	\$0	\$40,000	-	\$40,000

Amount of Request: \$2,000,000

Amount of Leverage: \$64,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 3.20%

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 Land Dept operating budget.

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 parcels would be prioritized based on the grant award. Administrative costs are not affected because they are not funded by the grant. Outputs, like acres acquired will be reduced proportionally as the grant award is reduced.

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	1,133	0	1,133
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1,133	0	1,133

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	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$2,000,000

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	1,133	1,133
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,133	1,133

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	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000

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	\$1,765	\$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	\$1,765
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1.2 miles

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?
Carder 240	14030235	240	\$528,000	No	Full	Full
Laumann 98	13430218	98	\$194,000	No	Full	Full
Maurer 40	14125234	40	\$58,000	No	Full	Full
Parker 80	13530214	80	\$110,000	No	Full	Full
PCH Becker 160	13432205	166	\$320,000	No	Full	Full
PCH Byron 80	13532205	80	\$160,000	No	Full	
PCH McKinley 83	13832208	83	\$108,000	No	Full	Full
PCH Pine River 160	13830212	160	\$230,000	No	Full	Full
PCH Pine River 41	13830210	41	\$60,000	No	Full	Full
PCH Poplar 80	13632233	80	\$96,000	No	Full	Full
Reich 27	13926221	27	\$63,000	No	Full	Full
Wheeler 19	14027202	19	\$38,000	No	Full	Full
Wright 18	13927210	18	\$35,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

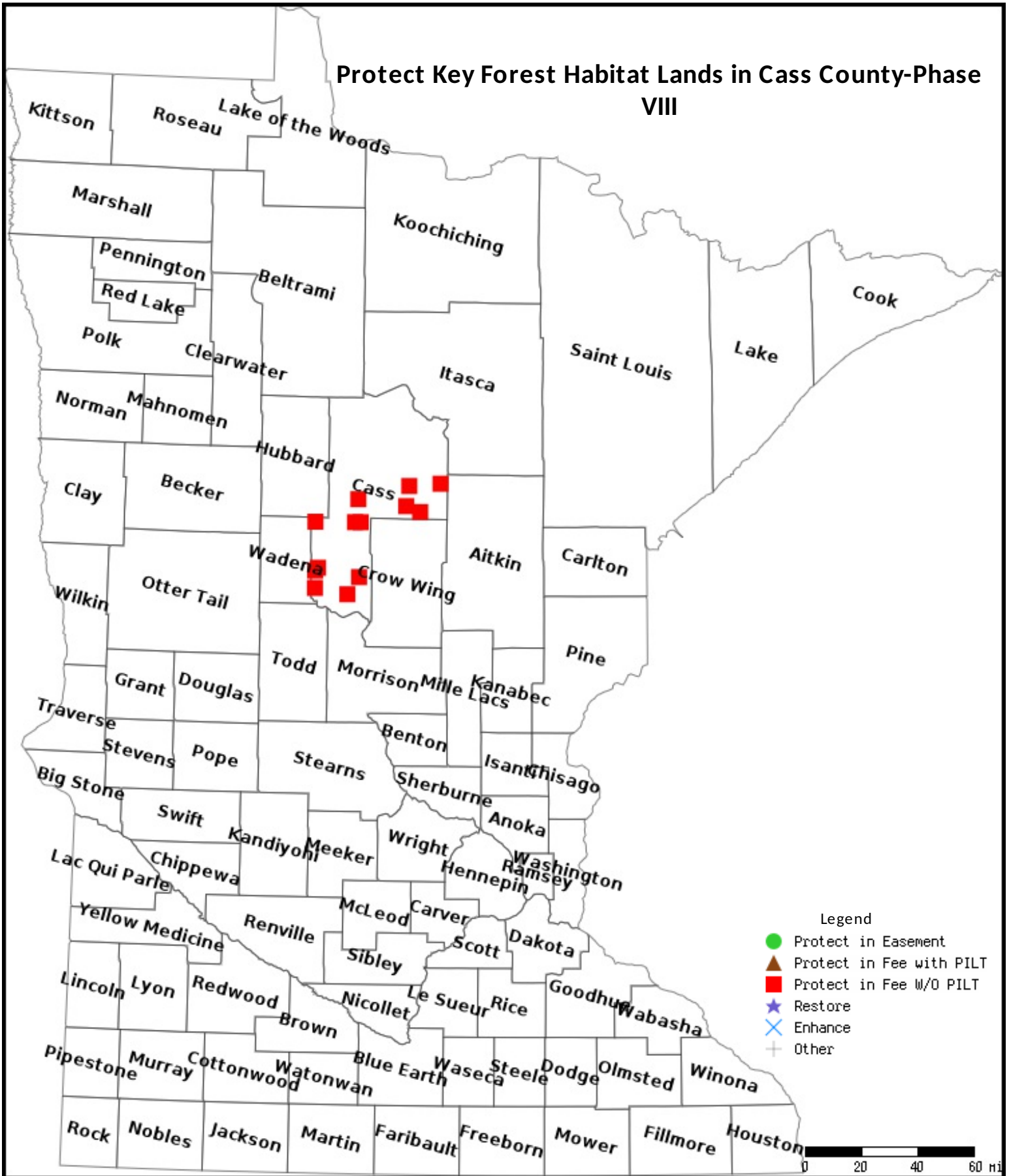
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Protect Key Forest Habitat Lands in Cass County-Phase VIII



Data Generated From Parcel List



CASS COUNTY

Still More To Explore! *Minnesota*

Protect Key Forest Habitat Lands in Cass County-Phase VIII

Project Purpose

This project will permanently protect over 1,100 acres of northern forest wildlife habitat from development and fragmentation through fee title acquisition. The title of the acquired lands will be held by Cass County in fee without a PILT obligation.

Project Goals

- Protect over 1,100 acres of forest habitat.
- Protect watershed resources including 1.2 miles of river and lake shoreline.
- Reduce forest fragmentation.
- Increase public access to existing County and State managed lands for wildlife and outdoors-related recreation including hunting and fishing per State of Minnesota regulations.
- Consolidate public land ownership to increase land management efficiency.

Funds Requested: \$2,000,000

Local Input

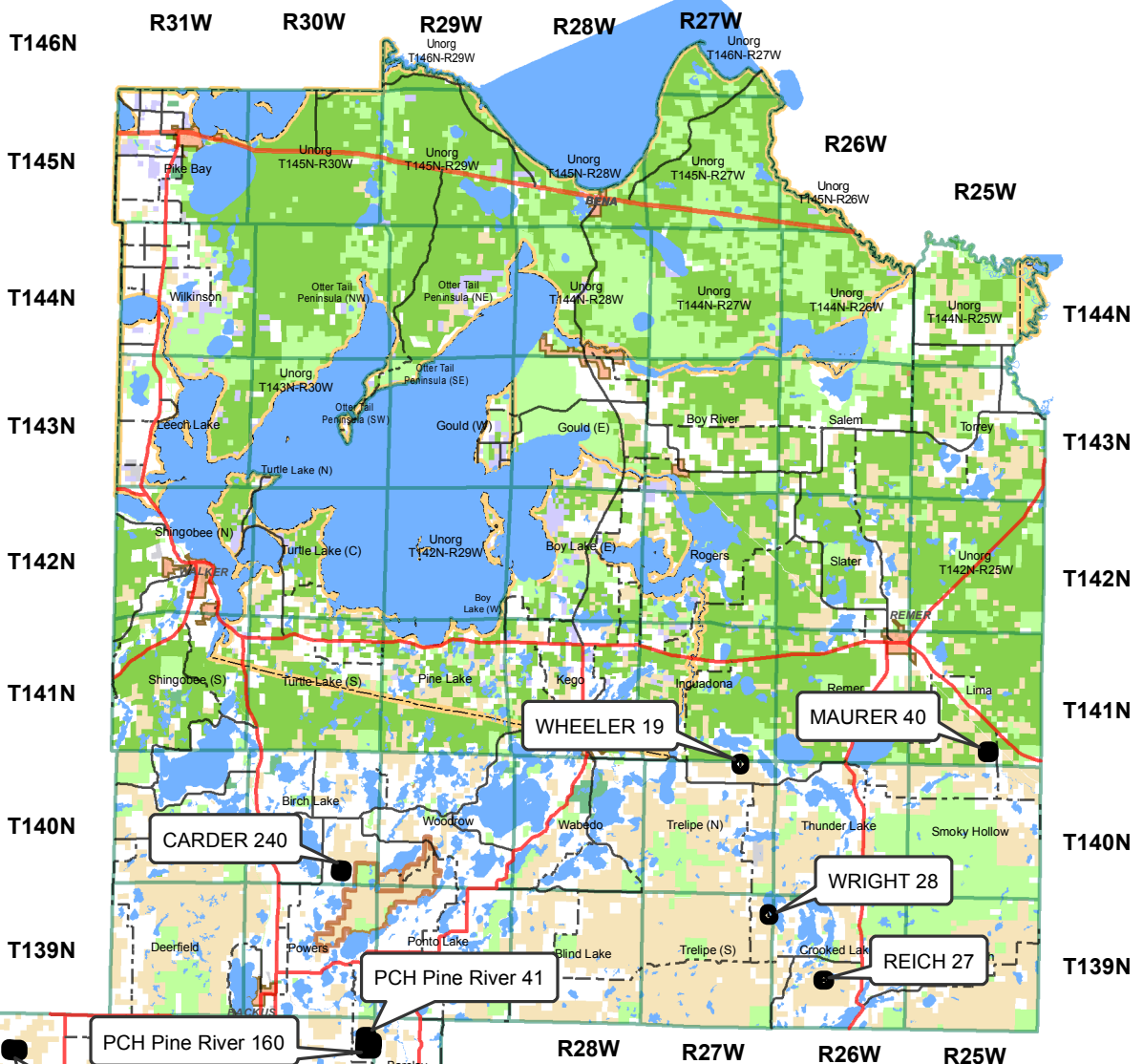
- The project is supported by a community driven process as each acquisition requires approval from the local city or township and County Board of Commissioners.

A Proven Record of Success

- The county was awarded its first grant in 2010.
- To date, six grants have been closed and expect the seventh grant to close by the end of the 2017.
- This is a program that performs because of the accountability to the local taxpayers.

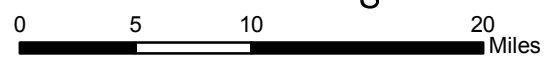
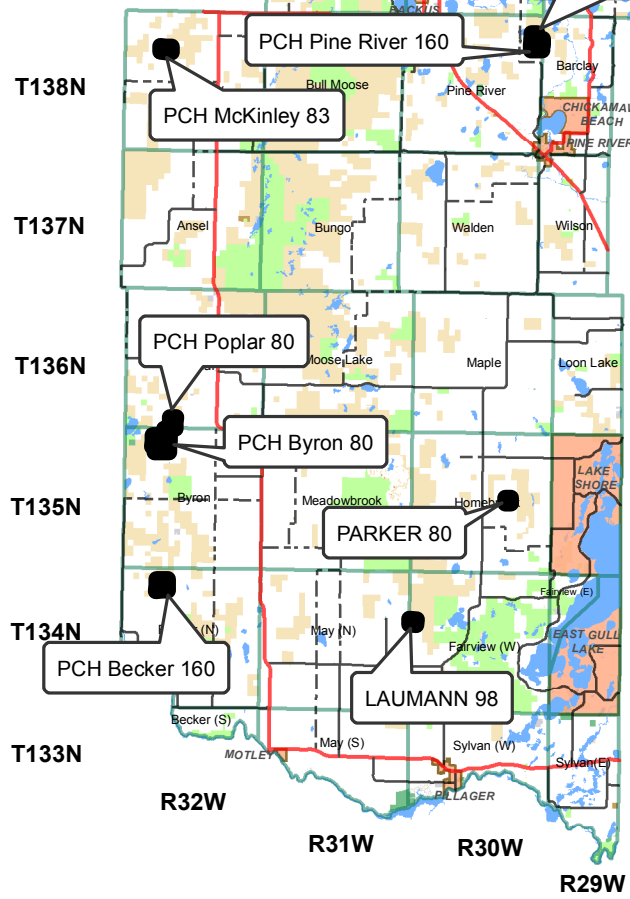
About Us

- The Cass County Land Department has been in business for over 60 years.
- Our staff of professional foresters has over 140 years of natural resource management experience.
- The county managed forest lands of 255,000 acres have been certified to the Forest Stewardship Council forest certification standard since 2000. This certification is a rigorous third party audit of the counties forest management practices and operations and assures residents, taxpayers and visitors that these forest lands are managed in a sustainable manner.

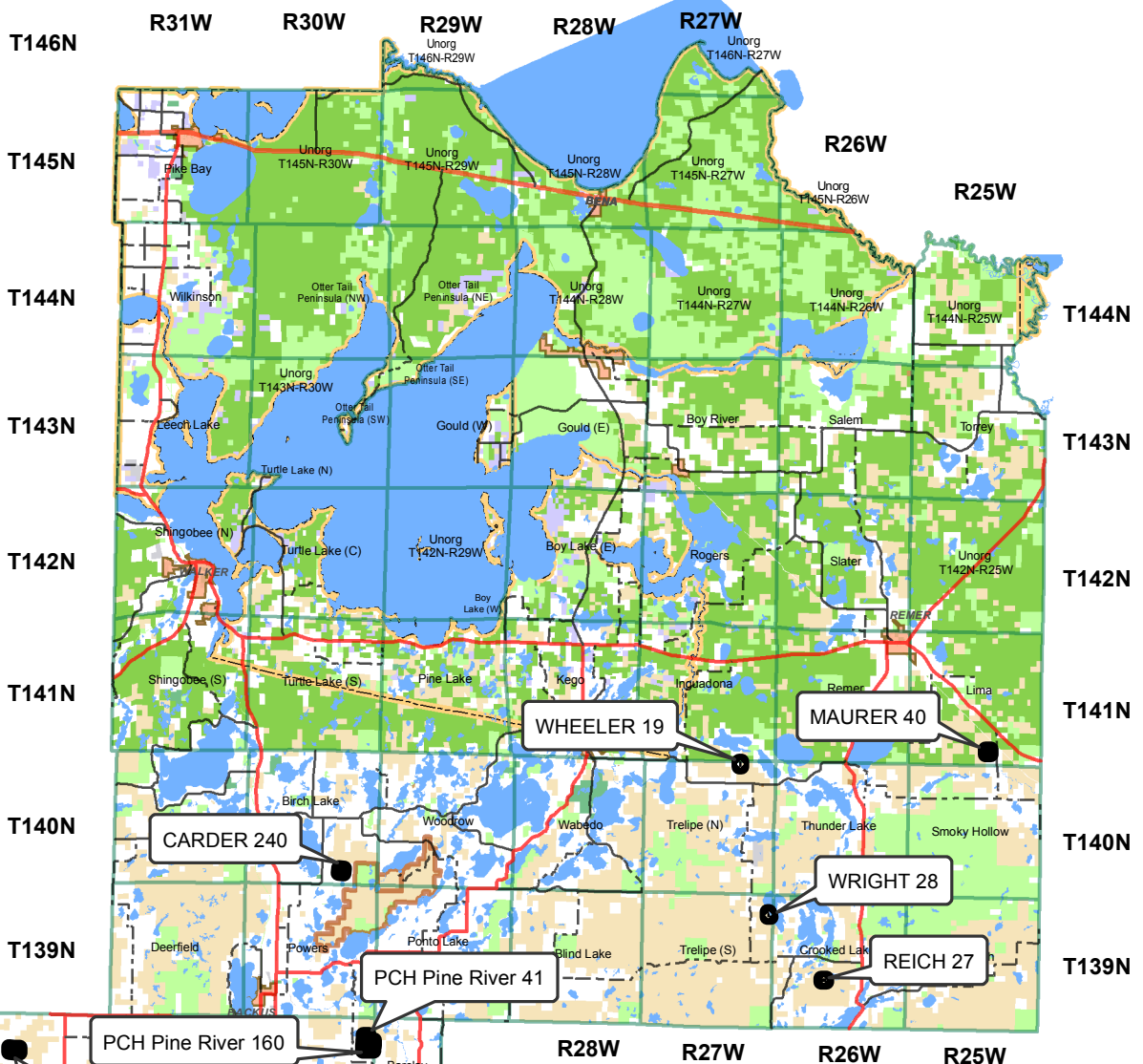


ML 2018 Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands in Cass County Phase VIII

Roads	Ownership
US	Private
STATE	County Administered
CNTY-PAVED	State
CNTY-GRAVEL	Federal
Parcels of Interest	Tribal
Townships	County Fee Ownership
Cities	Township
Deep Portage Conservation Reserve	Other Exempt
Leech Lake Reservation	City

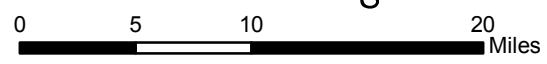
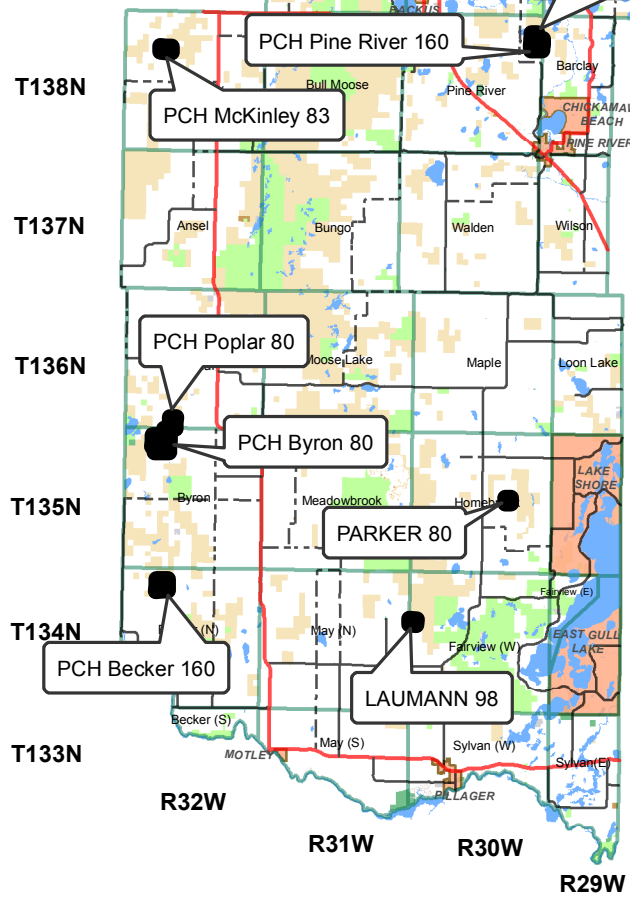


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ML 2018 Protect (Acquire) Key Forest Habitat Lands in Cass County Phase VIII

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