

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2020 / ML 2019 Request for Funding



Date: May 31, 2018

Program or Project Title: Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase 7

Funds Requested: \$13,081,600

Manager's Name: Richard Biske

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Organization: The Nature Conservancy

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County Locations: Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Wabasha, and Winona.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

This project will protect approximately 3,722 acres using conservation easements and fee land acquisition and restore and enhance approximately 500 acres of declining habitat for important wildlife species in strategically targeted areas of biodiversity significance in the Blufflands of Southeast Minnesota resulting in increased public access and improved wildlife habitat.

Design and scope of work:

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL) in partnership will use Outdoor Heritage Funds to invest in habitat protection and restoration within the Blufflands of Southeast Minnesota to expand and connect larger contiguous blocks of protected lands allowing land managers to restore, enhance and maintain high quality habitats at a scale difficult to accomplish with a fragmented ownership. Benefits of this program include the increased effectiveness of frequent prescribed fire necessary to reclaim "goat prairies", oak savanna and regenerate oak hardwood forests at a larger scale. Protecting and managing these lands is not only important for ecological reasons, but also benefits public use and enjoyment of these lands and the resources they provide. This proposal will enhance prior conservation investments and ensure that the legacy of the Blufflands is preserved in a high quality condition for future generations.

There are 86 different native plant community types mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS), covering nearly 149,670 acres within the project area. There are 183 species of state listed rare plants and animals, many of which are concentrated on 749 sites of biodiversity significance. This program has a proven track record of protecting, restoring and enhancing lands that meet both state and local priorities for biodiversity, land access and watershed health.

In addition, despite the area's high demand for outdoor recreation and having more species of greatest conservation need than anywhere else in the state, only 5% of the region is open to the public.

Conservation Easements:

MLT will acquire approximately 1,525 acres of conservation easements and develop restoration and habitat management plans for eased acres. MLT will identify potential projects within targeted priority areas through an RFP process coupled with local outreach via SWCD offices. This competitive landowner bid process will rank projects based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the best projects and securing them at the lowest cost to the state.

Fee Acquisition:

TNC and TPL will coordinate with MN DNR on all potential fee-title acquisitions. TNC and TPL will assist the participating DNR Divisions by conducting all or some of the following activities: initial site reviews, negotiations with the willing seller, appraisals, environmental reviews and acquisition of fee title. TNC and TPL will transfer lands to the DNR except when TNC ownership is appropriate. Fee acquisition of approximately 1,523 acres of forest and 674 acres of prairie along 2 miles of coldwater trout stream is planned.

Restoration and Enhancement:

TNC will restore/enhance approximately 240 acres of bluff prairie, floodplain, riparian habitat and forest.

MLT will restore and enhance 260 acres of habitat on existing and new easements.

Ecological restoration enhancement management plans will be developed in coordination with the appropriate DNR staff, landowners and/or hired subcontractors.

Results to date:

Conservation Easements: 2,038 acres

Fee Land Acquisition: 2,965 acres

13 miles of stream protected

Restoration and Enhancement: 983 acres

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation

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:

OHF 25 Year Framework

Indicator 1: Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties. 2,965 acres opened to public hunting, fishing and recreation to date, improving access and management.

Indicator 2: Protect, enhance and restore habitat for wildlife in rivers, cold water streams and associated upland habitat. 13 miles of coldwater trout streams have been protected and opened to fishing.

Restoration and enhancement from bluff to stream on 983 acres.

Indicator 3: Protect and restore bluff prairies. 94 acres protected/restored.

Indicator 4: Restore forest based habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades. 55 acres of forest restored.

Plan 2: Wildlife Action Plan

Indicator 1: Stabilize and increase SGCN populations on: oak savanna, native prairie, cliffs and bluffs and stream habitats. 4 bluff prairies covering 169 acres.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Southeast Forest:

- Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties

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:

Over 4.5 square miles (2,965 acres) have been opened for public hunting and fishing and allowing increased management within habitat complexes. To date 3,777 acres (73%) of land protected through our program include a documented rare species or community element occurrence; half of those have a state rank of 1 or 2. Twenty different rare species or plant communities and 1 unique groundwater feature have been protected.

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:

Southeast MN is blessed with a wealth of conservation planning and biological indices and analyses. Our partnership uses existing plans, like the watershed-based Landscape Stewardship Plans and DNR's Wildlife Action Network to identify priority areas to focus our efforts and resources. Individual projects are assessed based on their significance to biodiversity (according to data from the MN Biological Survey), along with several other important criteria such as:

- location within a priority area
- health and extent of existing natural communities
- areas of significant biodiversity and native plant communities
- proximity to existing conservation lands
- parcel size
- importance for stream quality
- risk of conversion

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:

Most of the projects selected for this proposal are located in complexes of biodiversity significance, as identified by MBS. They are also in close proximity to current state land, allowing contiguous blocks of habitat to be expanded thereby increasing continuity in a fragmented habitat. Sedimentation and erosion are major threats to fish in the region. Protecting upland natural communities, especially on the steep bluffs that flank most trout streams, will help prevent additional erosion. Aquatic habitat will also benefit from protection of trout stream banks and floodplains. The water quality benefit that comes with the protection of forested upland areas will be significant and contribute to improved trout habitat and non-game fish and mussel habitat. Proposed projects have 66 element occurrences, including 42 different species/communities/assemblages identified by the natural heritage inventory. Completed projects include a total of 76 element occurrences representing 46 different species/communities/assemblages. Specific habitats include bluff prairie, oak savanna, barrens prairie, oak-hickory woodland, jack pine-oak woodland, white pine - oak/maple forest and maple basswood hardwood forest. These habitats support species including: tri-colored and northern long-eared bats, timber rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle, western foxsnake, North American racer, American ginseng, great indian plantain, plains wild indigo and red-shouldered hawk.

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

Natural populations, including healthy populations with good habitat, vary among locations, and also rise and fall within lakes and rivers. Most fish surveys conducted by DNR produce an index of abundance (catch per unit effort) rather than a population estimate. This project is estimated to benefit 2,400 pounds of brook trout and 3,120 pounds of brown trout. The program also benefits many other species unique to Southeast Minnesota and other species including rusty patch bumblebee, monarch butterfly, timber rattlesnake, bull snake, Blanding's turtle, Louisiana water thrush, wild turkey and whitetail deer.

Outcomes:

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Large corridors and complexes of biologically diverse wildlife habitat typical of the unglaciated region are restored and protected. We will track the acres of priority parcels protected within the Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) identified as priorities in regional planning. Success within each COA will be determined based on the percentage of area protected, restored and/or enhanced.

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

Acquisition projects will be adjacent or within close proximity to existing protected lands, including state-owned lands and lands under conservation easement, allowing for the expansion of maintenance and restoration activities that are currently taking place on those protected lands and adjacent private lands. Habitats cleared of invasive species will be maintained with prescribed fire and other practices. Protection and restoration projects will improve future prescribed fire and maintenance activities through economies of scale. The tracts protected and enhanced as part of this proposal also meet the prioritization for Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan. MN DNR has been successful in securing federal habitat enhancement funding. Tracts acquired will be transferred to the state for ongoing management unless when TNC ownership is appropriate. MLT - The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through the state-of-the-art easement stewardship standards and practices. MLT is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a

successful easement stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring and defending the easements as necessary. In addition, MLT encourages landowners to undertake active ecological management of their properties, provides them with habitat management plans and works with them to secure resources (expertise and funding) to undertake these activities over time.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Every 4-6 years	US Fish and Wildlife Service	prescribed fire		
Every 4-6 years	Game and Fish Fund	prescribed fire		
2022 and perpetually	MLT Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	

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

Habitat fragmentation continues to plague the region caused by the continued growth from Rochester and demand for rural residential housing and demand for cropland. This program and partner success has generated several large protection and restoration projects that are increasingly rare to the region due to subdivision. The Nature Conservancy has a signed option to purchase 950 acres along 4.75 miles of coldwater trout stream adjacent to an existing public land unit. Without adequate funding to execute the option and complete the purchase the property will likely be subdivided and sold.

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

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) State Wildlife Grant funds are used to enhance oak savanna and bluff prairie on private lands within priority complexes this project operates in an effort to manage at a landscape scale. TNC uses US Forest Service funds to conduct landowner outreach and technical assistance for private lands habitat planning and project development to improve forest condition and habitat enhancement within priority complexes.

MLT: Minnesota Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements as part of its landowner bid protocol. An estimated leverage of \$367,000 of donated value from landowners from easement acquisition is a conservative estimate.

Partners are also leveraging private funds to cover a portion of travel and direct support services cost totaling \$176,500.

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Clean Water Fund

Describe the relationship of the funds:

This project implements priority activities identified in watershed protection plans developed with support from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Clean Water Fund.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Any state agency or organization requesting a direct appropriation from the OHF must inform the LSOHC at the time of the request for funding is made, whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose:

This proposal does not substitute or supplant previous funding that was not from a legacy fund.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2013	The Nature Conservancy	\$67,661
2014	The Nature Conservancy	\$2,173,459
2015	The Nature Conservancy	\$14,200
2016	The Trust for Public Land	\$250,000
2016	The Nature Conservancy	\$2,900

Activity Details

Requirements:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

We will follow the county/township board notification processes as directed by current statutory language.

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection - **No**

A fee land acquisition project has a trout stream angling access easement on it that was considered in the appraisal. We will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed.

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

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program - **Yes**

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes (WMA, SNA, AMA, Private Land, County/Municipal, Public Waters, State Forests)**

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **Yes**

Are the funds confirmed - **No**

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds - **October 1, 2018**

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

Short-term use of agricultural crops is an accepted best practice for preparing a site for prairie restoration. For example, short-term use of soybeans could be used for restorations in order to control weed seedbeds prior to prairie planting. In some cases this necessitates the use of GMO treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank, however neonicotinoids will not be used.

MLT - The purpose of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easements is to protect existing high quality natural habitat and to preserve opportunities for future restoration. As such, we restrict any agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases in which there are agricultural lands associated with the larger property, we will either carve the agricultural area out of the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may include a small percentage of agricultural lands if it is not feasible to carve those areas out. In such cases, however, we will not use OHF funds to pay the landowners for that portion of the conservation easement.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **Yes**

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

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

None

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 - **No**

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Purchase agreements or options on acquisition of fee land	June 30, 2022
Purchase agreements or options on conservation easements	June 30, 2022
Acquisition of fee land	June 30, 2023
Stream corridor and floodplain restoration	June 30, 2024
Bluff prairie and oak savanna enhancement	June 30, 2025
Easement acquisition	June 30, 2023

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$13,081,600

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$660,100	\$0		\$660,100
Contracts	\$1,446,000	\$0		\$1,446,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$7,225,000	\$0		\$7,225,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$925,000	\$0		\$925,000
Easement Acquisition	\$1,470,000	\$367,000	Landowners	\$1,837,000
Easement Stewardship	\$336,000	\$0		\$336,000
Travel	\$33,000	\$2,000	Private	\$35,000
Professional Services	\$524,000	\$0		\$524,000
Direct Support Services	\$242,500	\$176,500	Private,Private	\$419,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$65,000	\$0		\$65,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Supplies/Materials	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
DNR IDP	\$115,000	\$0		\$115,000
Total	\$13,081,600	\$545,500	-	\$13,627,100

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Protection and Legal Staff	0.28	3.00	\$129,300	\$0		\$129,300
TNC Project Management	0.50	3.00	\$160,000	\$0		\$160,000
TNC Protection Staff	0.33	3.00	\$94,000	\$0		\$94,000
TNC Grant Administration	0.13	3.00	\$33,800	\$0		\$33,800
MLT Staff	0.90	3.00	\$243,000	\$0		\$243,000
Total	2.14	15.00	\$660,100	\$0	-	\$660,100

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Trust for Public Land	\$129,300	\$0		\$129,300
Contracts	Trust for Public Land	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Trust for Public Land	\$2,900,000	\$0		\$2,900,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$2,000	Private	\$2,000
Professional Services	Trust for Public Land	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000
Direct Support Services	Trust for Public Land	\$57,500	\$57,500	Private	\$115,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Trust for Public Land	\$35,000	\$0		\$35,000
Capital Equipment	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Trust for Public Land	\$75,000	\$0		\$75,000
Total	-	\$3,476,800	\$59,500	-	\$3,536,300

Personnel - Trust for Public Land

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Protection and Legal Staff	0.28	3.00	\$129,300	\$0		\$129,300
Total	0.28	3.00	\$129,300	\$0	-	\$129,300

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	The Nature Conservancy	\$287,800	\$0		\$287,800
Contracts	The Nature Conservancy	\$500,000	\$0		\$500,000

Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	The Nature Conservancy	\$4,325,000	\$0	\$4,325,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	The Nature Conservancy	\$925,000	\$0	\$925,000
Easement Acquisition	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0	\$0
Easement Stewardship	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	The Nature Conservancy	\$7,000	\$0	\$7,000
Professional Services	The Nature Conservancy	\$150,000	\$0	\$150,000
Direct Support Services	The Nature Conservancy	\$119,000	\$119,000	Private \$238,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	The Nature Conservancy	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000
Capital Equipment	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies/Materials	The Nature Conservancy	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
DNR IDP	The Nature Conservancy	\$40,000	\$0	\$40,000
Total		\$6,408,800	\$119,000	\$6,527,800

Personnel - The Nature Conservancy

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TNC Project Management	0.50	3.00	\$160,000	\$0		\$160,000
TNC Protection Staff	0.33	3.00	\$94,000	\$0		\$94,000
TNC Grant Administration	0.13	3.00	\$33,800	\$0		\$33,800
Total	0.96	9.00	\$287,800	\$0		\$287,800

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$243,000	\$0		\$243,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$796,000	\$0		\$796,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Minnesota Land Trust	\$1,470,000	\$367,000	Landowners	\$1,837,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$336,000	\$0		\$336,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$26,000	\$0		\$26,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$244,000	\$0		\$244,000
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$66,000	\$0		\$66,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$3,196,000	\$367,000		\$3,563,000

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Staff	0.90	3.00	\$243,000	\$0		\$243,000
Total	0.90	3.00	\$243,000	\$0		\$243,000

Amount of Request: \$13,081,600
Amount of Leverage: \$545,500
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 4.17%
DSS + Personnel: \$902,600
As a % of the total request: 6.90%
Easement Stewardship: \$336,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 22.86%

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

TNC: DSS is based on The Nature Conservancy's Federally Negotiated rate as proposed and subsequently approved by the US Dept. of

Interior on an annual basis. The proportion requested from the grant represents 50% with the other 50% contributed as leverage.

MLT: In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of the direct support services.

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

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

TNC and TPL contract line item are dedicated to enhancement and restoration work. Typical contractors include private vendors and Conservation Corps of MN/IA.

MLT will use the contract budget item for three distinct purposes: to complete habitat management plans on the new easement acquisitions; for restoration plans and projects on existing easements; and for partnering with SWCD's on outreach for easement acquisition.

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:

Vehicle rental is also included.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

TNC and TPL will leverage privately sourced funds to cover half of direct support services (DSS) costs.

TPL has leveraged private funds for IDP.

The Land Trust encourages landowners to donate value as a participant in the program. This leverage (\$367,000) is a conservative estimate of expected landowner contributions.

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:

Partially scalable, TNC has a large project under option, with reduced funds the project may not be completed. Personnel costs are associated with projects. Larger protection, enhancement and restoration projects while having higher acquisition, easement or contract costs do allow for greater efficiency in personnel and administrative costs.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	100	100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	443	1,523	0	1,966
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	231	0	0	231
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	1,525	1,525
Enhance	0	60	55	160	275
Total	0	734	1,578	1,785	4,097

Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	20
Total	20

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$145,000	\$75,000	\$300,000	\$520,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$2,296,700	\$5,918,900	\$0	\$8,215,600
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,393,000	\$2,393,000
Enhance	\$0	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$503,000	\$953,000
Total	\$0	\$3,741,700	\$6,143,900	\$3,196,000	\$13,081,600

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	100	0	0	100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,966	0	0	1,966
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	231	0	0	231
Protect in Easement	0	0	1,525	0	0	1,525
Enhance	0	0	275	0	0	275
Total	0	0	4,097	0	0	4,097

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$520,000	\$0	\$0	\$520,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$8,215,600	\$0	\$0	\$8,215,600
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$2,393,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,393,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$953,000	\$0	\$0	\$953,000
Total	\$0	\$0	\$13,081,600	\$0	\$0	\$13,081,600

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$5,184	\$3,886	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$4,329	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,569
Enhance	\$0	\$5,000	\$2,727	\$3,144

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$5,200	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$4,179	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$4,329	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$1,569	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$3,465	\$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:

Not Listed

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Brightsdale State Forest Unit	10309206	25	\$25,000	Yes
Gribben Creek State Forest Unit	10309228	30	\$36,000	Yes

Winona

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Whitewater WMA	10810202	60	\$180,000	Yes

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Dodge

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Middle Fork Zumbro River SNA	10817224	175	\$787,500	No	Full	Full

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Choice	10308211	102	\$102,000	No	Full	Full
Choice WMA North 3	10208203	120	\$480,000	No	Full	Full
Choice WMA North 5	10308234	80	\$400,000	No	Full	Full

Houston

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Money Creek South	10406206	100	\$100,000	No	Full	Full

Wabasha

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
McCarthy Lake	10909206	138	\$135,000	No	Full	Full
Watopa Forest	10910210	320	\$1,320,000	No	Full	Full
Weaver Dunes	10909206	231	\$250,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Rush Creek	10408202	240	\$825,000	1	shed	\$0	Remove

Winona

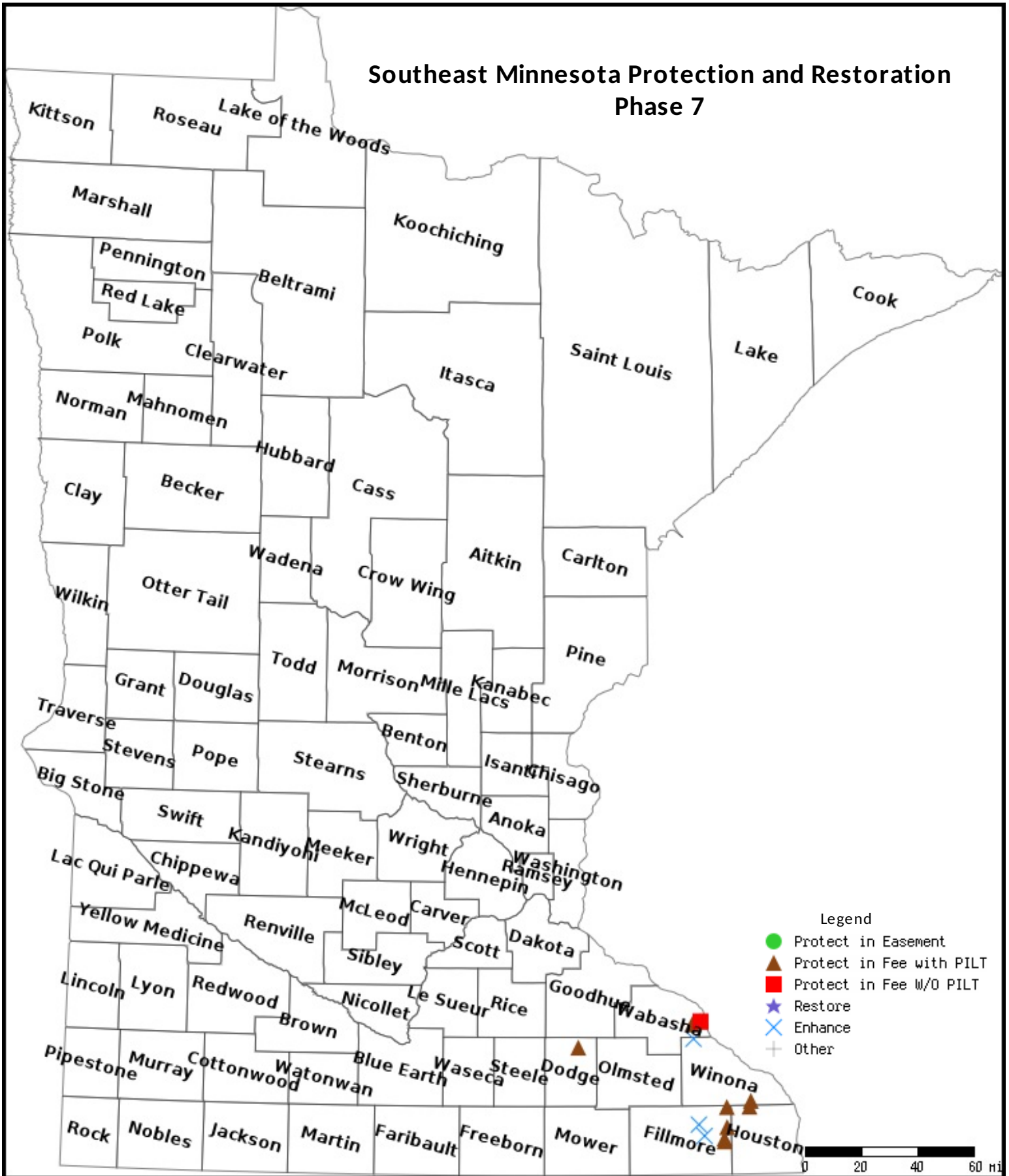
Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Money Creek	10506230	850	\$2,500,000	1	shed	\$0	Remove

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase 7



Data Generated From Parcel List

Southeast MN Protection & Restoration - Phase 7

Summary of Proposed Activity:

Phase 7 covers the Southeast Forest Section

1,525 acres of perpetual conservation easements

2,197 acres of fee land acquisition

400 acres of bluff prairie, savanna, forest restoration & enhancement

All projects take place in priority conservation areas and complement existing work done by partners

Prioritizing Projects:

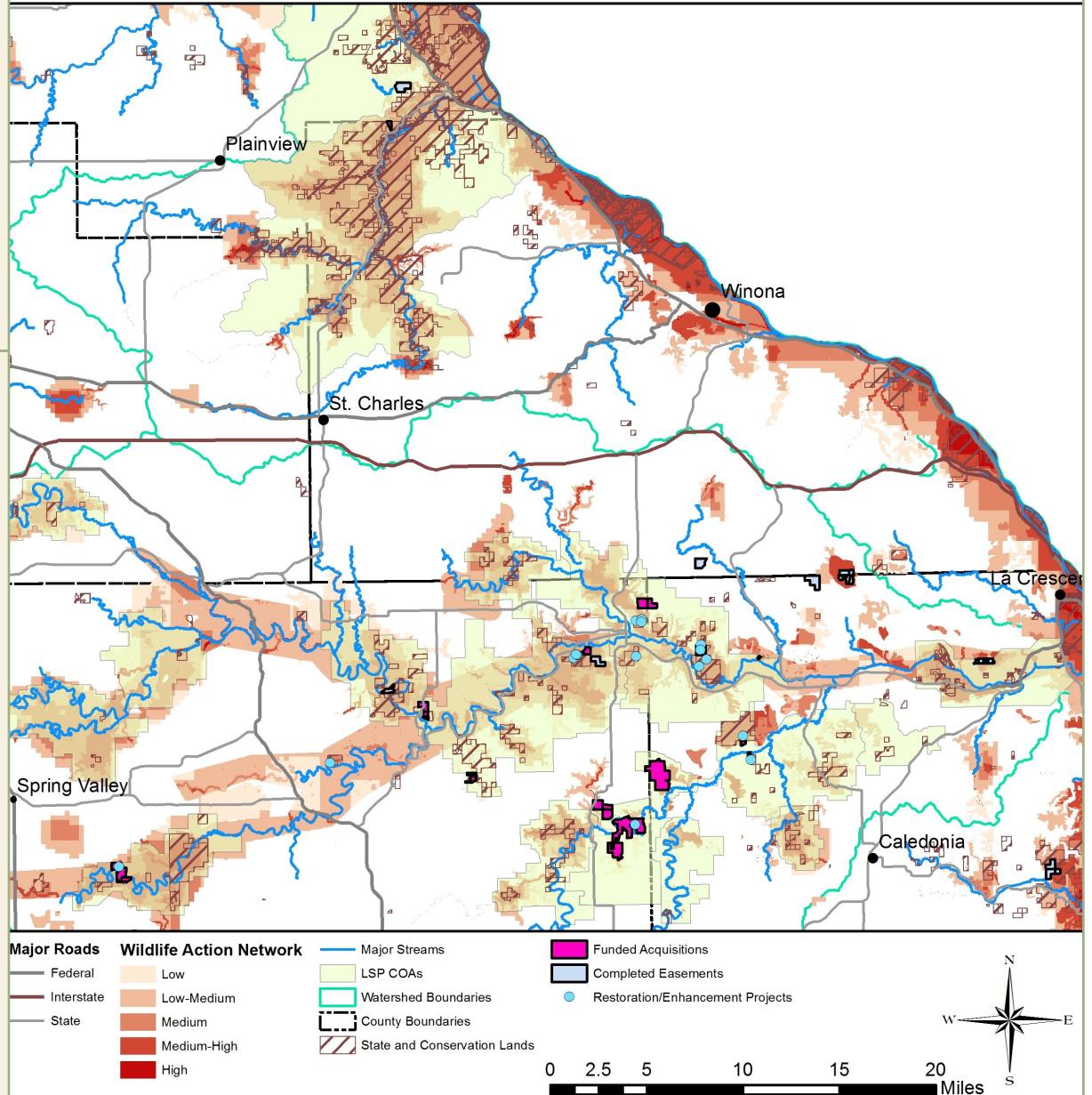
Protection

Fee title land acquisition projects are coordinated with DNR Forestry, SNA or Wildlife. For both conservation easements and fee title acquisitions, projects that include High or Outstanding Biodiversity Significance and/or are adjacent to existing conservation lands are given highest priority along with those that limit fragmentation and improve large landscape management for Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Restoration

Restoration projects are selected based on long-term viability. Because the Southeast Forest Section is dominated by fire dependent communities, projects are selected considering the potential to implement controlled fire at a large scale, thus maintaining the viability of natural habitats and minimizing long-term management costs.

Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement Projects in Southeast Minnesota





Accomplishments

Fee Acquisition: Closed or pending on 2,965 acres (77% of goal) including 13 miles of trout stream (150% of goal)

Completed 2,038 acres of conservation easements (114% of goal)

Restoration and Enhance completed on 645 acres (76% of goal)

To date, the Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Project has leveraged \$2.5 million of private funds for acquisitions along with \$200,000 in federal funds and \$172,000 from easement landowners



Heritage Brook Trout Stream Protected



Phase 4/ML16 Project - The newly protected Yucatan WMA was formerly operated as a Girl Scout camp. The Trust for Public Land protected the camp's 833 acres in partnership with the DNR.

Partners:

The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land will complete all fee-simple land acquisitions in collaboration with the Minnesota DNR. Additionally, TNC will also coordinate habitat restoration and enhancement with DNR.

The Minnesota Land Trust will complete the permanent conservation easement transactions in partnership with private landowners and restoration and enhancement projects in partnership with USFWS.



Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration

Parcels are reviewed by both a Division of MN DNR and Conservancy to ensure that they meet the priorities of both partners.

Criteria for identification of key conservation parcels.

State-owned properties represent significant blocks of ownership in Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) in Southeast Minnesota as identified by Landscape Stewardship Plans and present opportunities for targeted stewardship. Where landscape stewardship plans and identified Conservation Opportunity Areas do not exist, core areas are identified by the Areas of Significant Native Biodiversity Significance. State-owned lands containing mapped native plant communities were selected as a starting point. Additional management acreage and contiguous land cover were increased by selecting adjoining parcels of private land that met certain criteria. This initial private parcel selection was made using the following criteria, with each parcel satisfying all points (Figure 1):

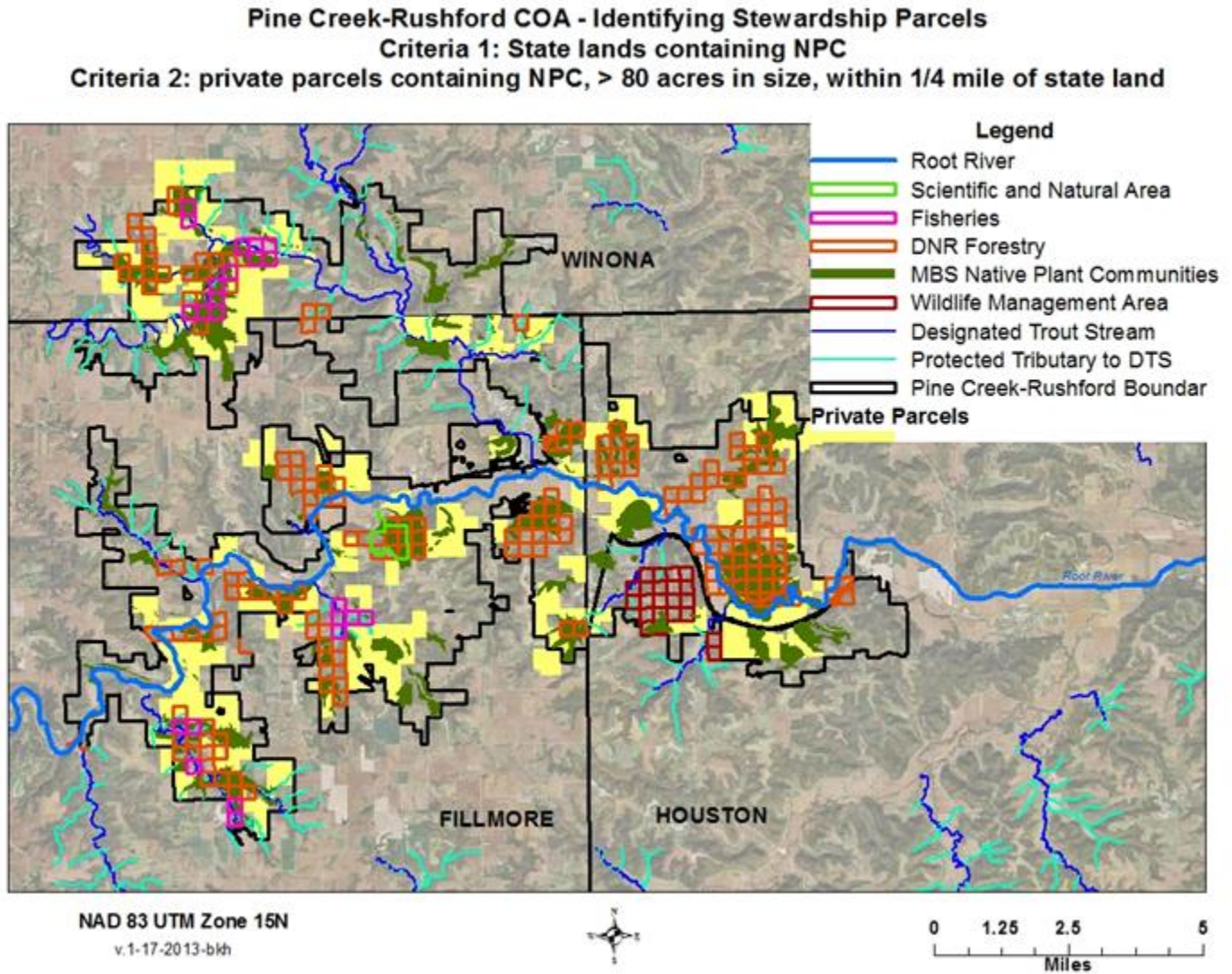
- Parcel is within Conservation Opportunity Area or Area of Significant Native Biodiversity (allows for large landscape management and management efficiencies, i.e. large scale Rx fire)
- Parcel contains an Minnesota Biological Survey mapped native plant community
- Parcel was equal to or greater than 80 acres in size
- Parcel property line began within ¼ mile of a state-owned parcel
- A Conservation Partner is willing to accept the property/meets partner objectives (SNA, WMA, Forestry)
- Willing seller

Some land parcels were selected for stewardship activities, while others were chosen for potential acquisition or conservation easement purchase.

Where multiple units of conservation lands exist within a COA , habitat corridors may need to be established to support the larger landscape and identified core areas. Parcels within an identified corridor should meet the following criteria:

- Between 2 conservation land units
- Within ½ mile of existing conservation land unit
- Contain more than 50% habitat

Figure 1. Example of parcels identified for stewardship activities in Pine Creek/Rushford Conservation Opportunity Area. The selected private parcels meet criteria and are considered for acquisition, easement, or management.



SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet		SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7	SITE 8	SITE 9	SITE 10	SITE 11	SITE 12	Notes
COUNTY														
100 Pts	ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE													
Weighting Factor	Size/Abundance of Habitat (33 points)													
	a) Size (33 pts): Acres of Habitat to be Protected by an Easement													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Quality of Natural Resources to be Protected by the Easement (33 points)													
	a) Habitat Quality (28 pts): Quality of Existing Ecological Systems (Terrestrial & Aquatic)													
	b) Imperiled Species (5 pts): Occurrence of Documented Rare Species on Parcel													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Landscape Context (34 points)													
	Current Status (30 points)													
	a) Protection Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Protected Lands (8 pts)													
	ii. Amount of Protected Lands within 3 miles of Property													
	: Protected Land within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Protected Land 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	b) Ecological Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Ecological Habitat (8 pts)													
	ii. Amount of Ecological Habitat within 3 miles of Property													
	: Ecological Habitat within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Ecological Habitat 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	Future Potential (4 points)													
	a) Conservation Plan Context (2 pts)													
	b) Amount of Existing Activity (2 pts)													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COST														
	i. Bid amount (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	ii. Estimated donative value (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	TOTAL ACQUISITION COST (\$)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out

SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

Three primary factors when taken together provide a good estimate of long-term viability for biodiversity: 1) **Size** of the occurrence (species population or example of natural community), 2) **Condition** of the occurrence, and 3) its **Landscape context**. This framework is used widely across the world by a large number of conservation organizations and agencies and here in Minnesota by the Minnesota DNR, The Nature Conservancy and others. The Minnesota Land Trust has adopted this practice as well.

In this summary document, we provide an overview of the framework used by the Land Trust in assessing and prioritizing land protection opportunities before the organization.

- 1. Habitat Size (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the easement relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. Although size can pertain to species populations, the size of such populations is often constrained by available habitat. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator in these circumstances.

Scoring: Parcels are scored by how they fall relative to twelve size classes of habitat:

0 pt	1-40 acres
3 pts	41-50 acres
6 pts	51-75 acres
9 pts	76-108 acres
12 pts	109-152 acres
15 pts	153-224 acres
18 pts	225-320 acres
21 pts	321-460 acres
24 pts	461-660 acres
27 pts	661-960 acres
30 pts	961-1380 acres
33 pts	>1380 acres

- 2. Quality of Natural Resources (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat) and imperiled species if known. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on the condition of focal ecological community targets – both terrestrial and freshwater – and presence of imperiled species on the property, as such:

- a) Habitat Quality (28 points)** – The Minnesota Biological Survey natural community element occurrence ranking framework (for terrestrial systems) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency fish and insect indices of biotic integrity are used to score habitat quality on parcels, as such:

- 0 pts Absence of natural communities; fish/insect IBI = 0-10.
- 4 pts Natural communities averaging D rank; fish/insect IBI = 10-20.
- 8 pts Natural communities averaging CD rank; fish/insect IBI = 20-40.
- 12 pts Natural communities averaging C rank; fish/insect IBI = 50-59.
- 16 pts Natural communities averaging BC rank; fish/insect IBI = 60-69.
- 20 pts Natural communities averaging B rank; fish/insect IBI = 70-79.
- 24 pts Natural communities averaging AB rank; IBI = 80-89.
- 28 pts Natural communities averaging A rank; IBI > 90.

b) Imperiled Species (5 points) – Scoring of the parcel is based on species abundance, as follows:

- 1 pt 1 occurrence
- 2 pts 2 occurrences
- 3 pts 3 occurrences
- 5 pts 4 or more occurrences

3. Landscape Context (34 points): Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based as follows:

a) Protection Context (15 points) – Is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous protected land (if any) and amount of protected land within 3 miles of the property. Here, we look at two subfactors:

i) Amount of protected land (acres) contiguous with the parcel. Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of protected land contiguous to the parcel (8 points), as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of contiguous protected lands
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby but not contiguous can also play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight protected lands within ½ mile of the parcel higher than those farther removed, and score them separately.

(a) Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of protected land

- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt 0-640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

b) Ecological Context (15 points) – As with Protection context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous ecological habitat (if any) and amount of ecological habitat within 3 miles of the property.

i) Amount of ecological habitat (acres) contiguous with the parcel, providing species with direct access to larger blocks of permanent habitat (8 points). Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of natural ecological habitat contiguous to the parcel, as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of contiguous ecological habitat
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby, whether contiguous or not play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight ecological habitat within ½ mile of the parcel higher than that farther removed, and score them separately.

Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

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- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt 0-640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

c) Future Potential (4 points) – The degree to which the area within which a parcel lies has been identified as a priority for conservation action and the degree to which action is being

implemented in that area is a direct indicator of the long-term potential for maintenance of biodiversity associated with a parcel. Lands affiliated with priority areas are more likely to be complemented with additional levels of nearby protected lands than those outside of priority areas. In areas experiencing high levels of development, this factor may carry a significant amount of weight in setting protection priorities.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on two subfactors: 1) their position relative to priority areas identified in statewide or local planning efforts, and 2) the degree to which action is being implemented within a priority area.

- 0 pts Parcel not within priority area
- 1 pt Parcel within priority area; minimal activity occurring
- 2 pts Parcel within priority area; modest activity occurring
- 3 pts Parcel within priority area; good levels of activity occurring
- 4 pts Parcel within priority area; high levels of activity occurring