Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2020 / ML 2019 Request for Funding

WA 03

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

Date: May 30, 2018

Program or Project Title: Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program - Phase 4

Funds Requested: $5,235,000

Manager's Name: Wayne Ostlie
Title: Director of Land Protection
Organization: Minnesota Land Trust
Address: 2356 University Avenue W
Address 2: Suite 240
City: St. Paul, MN 55114
Office Number: 651-917-6292
Mobile Number: 651-894-3870
Email: wostlie@mnland.org
Website: www.mnland.org

County Locations: Clay, Otter Tail, and Pope.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

Phase 4 of the Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program will result in the protection of 2,340 acres of high priority wetland habitat complexes in Minnesota's Prairie and Forest-Prairie Transition areas by securing permanent conservation easements within scientifically prioritized habitat complexes. The Minnesota Land Trust will use its innovative landowner bid model to maximize conservation benefit and financial leverage in protection project selection. In addition, a partnership between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Land Trust will restore/enhance 1,986 acres of wetlands and associated prairies to benefit important waterfowl and SGCN populations.

Design and scope of work:

Wetlands and shallow lakes provide the essential backbone for the survival of waterfowl and other important wildlife species. In fact, more than 50% of Minnesota's Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wetlands during their life cycle. Most of the plans developed to protect Minnesota's wildlife—including Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, and the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan—cite the protection and restoration of the state's remaining wetlands as one of the top priorities to achieve the State's conservation goals. Moreover, these plans cite the use of conservation easements on private lands as one of the primary strategies to protect important wetland and shallow lake habitat.

Minnesota Land Trust's Wetlands Habitat Protection Program area extends from Meeker northwest to Becker County, located along a vast glacial moraine system at the edge of the of western Minnesota. This prairie pothole country is the core of Minnesota's "duck factory" and is central to one of North America's most important flyways for migratory waterfowl. Through Phases 1 and 2 of this

program, the Land Trust has procured 17 conservation easements protecting nearly 2,500 acres of habitat and 75,100 feet of shoreline, with more on the way.

Phase 4 will build on these accomplishments by broadening the Program's focus to include – along with wetland protection – habitat restoration and enhancement. In a partnership between the Land Trust and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, this proposal will restore/enhance 1,986 acres of important prairie and wetland habitat on private lands already protected within the Program area. In addition, the Land Trust will protect 2,340 acres of new priority wetland and associated upland habitat through conservation easements. The Program will be closely coordinated with other public agencies, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders to ensure this Program meets multi-agency conservation goals.

The Land Trust will continue to implement a criteria-based ranking system and market approach for purchasing conservation easements. The Program will continue to target projects that help complete gaps in existing public ownership, are of the highest ecological value, and provide the greatest leverage to the state. The Land Trust will seek donated easements in these areas whenever possible but also may purchase easements that help complete key complexes as necessary.

To focus our easement protection work, we used the Prairie Plan and other data sets and plans to shape our Wetlands Program plan and identify important wetland complexes in this landscape based on the intersection of high-quality habitat, existing protected areas and restorable agricultural lands. These complexes include a mosaic of wetland, prairie/grassland, and forest habitats, as well as agricultural land. Outcomes from this project include: 1) healthy wetland habitat complexes and associated populations of waterfowl, upland birds, and SGCN; 2) improved water quality; 3) increased participation of private landowners in habitat conservation projects; and 4) enhancement of prior public investment in wetland and upland habitat.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

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

Once secured, conservation easements will protect in perpetuity the important shoreland and associated upland habitats adjacent to some of Minnesota's premier wetland and prairie resources. Habitat management plans will be developed and provided to the landowners for use in enhancing and maintaining each parcel's important habitat. Restoration and enhancement of prairie and wetland habitats on USFWS easements will provide for enhanced habitat quality that will benefit a slate of SGCN along with waterfowl, pheasants, and other wildlife. Protection of these critical habitats advances a primary goal identified by Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan through stabilization of SGCN, the state's waterfowl population through the Duck Plan, and the full slate of prairie species through the Prairie Plan.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Prairie:

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

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 Minnesota Land Trust and US Fish & Wildlife Service will focus their protection, restoration and enhancement work on key wetland, prairie and other habitats within Minnesota's Prairie Pothole area, guided by the Minnesota Prairie Plan, Duck Plan and State Wildlife Action plan. High quality lands are protected through acquisition of perpetual conservation easements; native habitats are restored and enhanced on existing eased lands. We work in partnership with local, state and federal agency and non-profit conservation partners to ensure our activities are complementary to those undertaken by others working in the program area. By doing this, we are

building complexes of high quality protected habitat, reducing fragmentation concerns and providing for connectivity between core habitat areas that will enable species to move over time.

In purchasing conservation easements, we work with willing, conservation-minded landowners. Our landowner bid process will be targeted toward specific areas with our Wetlands program area identified through the plans listed above. Opportunities within the program area are identified and prioritized based on the potential to contribute to build a permanent conservation legacy that includes outcomes for wildlife and the public. Prairie and wetland habitats on lands protected through conservation easement by MLT and the USFWS are targeted for restoration and enhancement in order to elevate their inherent value for wildlife. Both the Land Trust and USFWS are deeply committed to maintaining these investments over time.

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 is focused on procuring easements and restoring prairie and wetland habitats on easement lands within priority complexes of wetlands and associated upland habitats, as guided by the State Wildlife Action Plan, Duck Plan and Prairie Plan. Specific parcels available for acquisition of easements are further reviewed relative to each other to identify priorities among the pool of applicants. This relative ranking is based on three primary ecological factors (amount of habitat on the parcel (size) and abundance of SGCN; the quality or condition of habitat; and the parcel's context relative to other natural habitats and protected areas) and cost. As such, the program serves to build upon past conservation investments in the program area, expanding the footprint of existing protected areas (WMAs, WPAs, etc.), facilitating the protection of habitat corridors and reducing the potential for fragmentation of existing habitats. In addition, our partnership with USFWS will enable us to further reduce effects of fragmentation through restoration of prairie, wetlands and other habitats. Minnesota Biological Survey data is a cornerstone to our assessment of potential conservation easement acquisitions; we also conduct field visits to further identify and assess condition of habitats prior to easement acquisition, as many private lands were not formally ssessed through MBS.

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

Minnesota's wetlands are essential to our wildlife health and diversity. This project directly benefits SGCN and other important game and non-game wildlife species by minimizing the potential threats to their habitat brought about by detrimental agricultural practices, residential or commercial development or imprudent land management. The wetland habitat complexes that will be targeted through the ranking system will include a mosaic of wetlands, grasslands and woodlands. Priority projects will include high or outstanding habitat as identified in Minnesota Biological Survey data. They will also be located near other protected lands so as to help build larger habitat complexes which will be comprised of both public and private lands. In fact, with the vast majority of this landscape in private ownership, working with private owners on land protection strategies is key to successful conservation in this region. Finally, we will work closely with partners in the region to identify those habitat complexes where private land protection can make a significant contribution to existing conservation investments.

This program addresses LSOHC priorities by protecting shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for Minnesota's wildlife, especially its migratory waterfowl and associated species.

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

DNR staff, in consultation with a variety of experts in NGOs and other agencies, have compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities to be used to answer the question above. The metrics are derived from existing data sources and/or scientific literature, but are necessarily gross averages; they are not accurate at a site-specific scale. Therefore, they are not intended to be used to score or rank requests, but represent the best information we have for immediate support to the Council’s objective.

1. Prairies and Grasslands

Bobolink and Grasshopper Sparrow: The breeding territory size of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows is 1.7 and 2.1 acres respectively in high quality habitat in Wisconsin. 100 acres of habitat could potentially hold approximately 60 and 48 pairs of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows, respectively.

Ring-necked Pheasant: By looking at the ratios of CRP acres in Minnesota to pheasant harvest, we can estimate that every three acres of grassland habitat has the potential to produce one harvested pheasant rooster.

2. Wetlands and Shallow Lakes

Mallard: The biological model used in the UMRG LRJV uses a simple but accepted rate of 1 mallard pair per hectare (1 mallard pair per 2.47 acres) of wetland habitat (noting that upland nesting habitat is also needed).

Trumpeter swan: Though reported territories can range in size from 1.5 - >100 hectares, a reasonable expectation is that 1 trumpeter swan pair would be supported by each 150 acres of wetland protected, restored or enhanced.

Outcomes:

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need *This program will permanently protect 1,170 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 1068 acres of wetlands and prairies in the forest-prairie transition region. Measure: Acres protected; acres restored; acres enhanced.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Remnant native prairies and wetlands are perpetually protected and adequately buffered *This program will permanently protect 1,170 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 918 acres of wetlands and prairies in the prairie region. Measure: Acres protected; acres restored; acres enhanced.*

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

The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget.

In addition, MLT will assist landowners in the development of comprehensive habitat management plans to help ensure that the land will be managed for its wildlife and water quality benefits. USFWS and MLT (as easement holders on respective properties) will work with landowners in an ongoing basis to provide habitat restoration plans, resources and technical expertise to undertake restoration, enhancement and ongoing management of these properties.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023 and in perpetuity	MLT Long-Term stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of conservation easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	
Every 4-6 years	USFWS, Landowners, MLT	Prescribed fire, tree control, invasive species control		

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

Although the Land Trust and USFWS have been active in this landscape for more than 15 years, we now have a unique window of time to deepen our commitment and conservation impact to protect important wetland complexes. With an aging landowner population and organizational momentum, the time is now to implement a robust wetland protection and restoration program for this region. To focus our work, we have completed an initial analysis to identify important wetland complexes in this landscape based on the intersection of high-quality habitat, existing protected areas and restorable agricultural lands. These complexes include a mosaic of wetland, prairie/grassland, and forest habitats, as well as agricultural land.

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

The Minnesota Land Trust and USFWS are collaborating in the delivery of this program. The Land Trust will lead all facets of easement acquisition in the Program. Restoration and enhancement activities on easement properties will be coordinated by the Land Trust, which includes design review, subcontracting, and project management; USFWS will provide project planning, restoration design and project oversight assistance for these activities. The USFWS is not a direct recipient of funding through this proposal; their time committed to the Program is an in-kind contribution (leverage) estimated at $29,800.

The Land Trust encourages private landowners to fully or partially donate the appraised value of their conservation easement, thereby receiving less than the appraised value might otherwise allow. This donated value is shown as leveraged funds in the proposal. The Land Trust has a long track record in incentivizing landowners to participate in this fashion. In Phase 1 of this program alone, $1,183,400 in easement value was donated to the program as leverage against the $1,629,000 grant; significant donations are continuing. We expect a significant landowner contribution to continue in phase 4, with our conservative estimate of leverage being $810,000.

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Describe the relationship of the funds:

The Minnesota Land Trust was a partner in the Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP), which received grants from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), from 2001--2011. This proposed OHF grant accelerates the Land Trust's work protecting critical wetland and associated upland habitat within the program area and does not supplant any existing funding sources.

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:

Funding procured by MLT through the Outdoor Heritage Fund via this proposal will not supplant or substitute any previous funding from a non-Legacy fund used for the same purpose.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2001-2011	ENRTF	2,000,000
2014-2018	McKnight Foundation	300,000

Activity Details

Requirements:

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

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 (Private Land)**

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

Are the funds confirmed - **Yes**

Documentation

What are the types of funds?
In-Kind Match - $29600

Land Use:

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

Explain

Easement Acquisition:
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.

Restoration/Enhancement:
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.

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

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:

Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. Often, these established trails and roads are permitted in the terms of the easement and can be maintained for personal use if their use does not significantly impact the conservation values of the property. Creation of new roads/trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Existing trails and roads are identified in the project baseline report and will be monitored annually as part of the Land Trust's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails in line with the terms of the easement will be the responsibility of the landowner.

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

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Conservation easements completed or options secured	June 30, 2022
Restoration and enhancement projects completed	June 30, 2024

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: $5,235,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$365,000	$29,800	USFWS	$394,800
Contracts	$1,000,000	$0		$1,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	$0	$0		$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	$0	$0		$0
Easement Acquisition	$2,700,000	$810,000	Private Landowners	$3,510,000
Easement Stewardship	$624,000	$0		$624,000
Travel	$37,000	$0		$37,000
Professional Services	$405,000	$0		$405,000
Direct Support Services	$99,000	$0		$99,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	$0	$0		$0
Capital Equipment	$0	$0		$0
Other Equipment/Tools	$5,000	$0		$5,000
Supplies/Materials	$0	$0		$0
DNR IDP	$0	$0		$0
Total	$5,235,000	$839,800	-	$6,074,800

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.75	3.00	$203,000	$0		$203,000
MLT Restoration Staff	0.60	3.00	$162,000	$29,800	USFWS	$191,800
Total	1.35	6.00	$365,000	$29,800	-	$394,800

Amount of Request:	$5,235,000
Amount of Leverage:	$839,800
Leverage as a percent of the Request:	16.04%
DSS + Personnel:	$464,000
As a % of the total request:	8.86%
Easement Stewardship:	$624,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition:	23.11%

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

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 direct support services.

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

Restoration and enhancement accounts for $1,040,000 of the contract line amount. Additional funds in the contract line are for the writing of habitat management plans via qualified vendors and engaging respective County Soil and Water Conservation Districts for landowner outreach purposes to facilitate communication of the protection program to targeted priority landowners.

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:

Land Trust staff regularly rent vehicles for grant-related purposes, which is a significant cost savings over use of personal vehicles.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements to the program. The leverage amount is a conservative estimate of value we expect to see donated by landowners. USFWS staff participation in restoration/enhancement projects is committed and shown as leverage.

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:

Because this program endeavors to protect and restore/enhance multiple parcels, it is scalable. Less funding will result in fewer protected acres and lost opportunities. In addition, some of the administrative and outreach costs are more fixed. As such, there is an economy of scale to working within one appropriation.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	309	0	100	409
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	2,340	2,340
Enhance	0	1,177	0	400	1,577
Total	0	1,486	0	2,840	4,326

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	0
Total	0

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	$0	$238,000	$0	$80,000	$318,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Protect in Easement	$0	$0	$0	$4,195,000	$4,195,000
Enhance	$0	$522,000	$0	$200,000	$722,000
Total	$0	$760,000	$0	$4,475,000	$5,235,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	359	0	50	0	409
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	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	1,170	0	1,170	0	2,340
Enhance	0	709	0	868	0	1,577
Total	0	2,238	0	2,088	0	4,326

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	$0	$278,000	$0	$40,000	$0	$318,000
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	$0	$0
Protect in Easement	$0	$2,097,000	$0	$2,098,000	$0	$4,195,000
Enhance	$0	$363,000	$0	$359,000	$0	$722,000
Total	$0	$2,738,000	$0	$2,497,000	$0	$5,235,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	$0	$770	$0	$800
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	$0	$0	$0	$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	$0	$0	$0	$0
Protect in Easement	$0	$0	$0	$1,793
Enhance	$0	$444	$0	$500

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	$0	$774	$0	$800	$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	$0
Protect in Easement	$0	$1,792	$0	$1,793	$0
Enhance	$0	$512	$0	$414	$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:

Restoration and enhancement work will take place on private lands over which MLT and USFWS have secured permanent conservation easements to protect wetlands and associated upland habitat. The projects included in the parcel list were identified as priorities for restoration/enhancement by USFWS staff in their Morris and Fergus Falls offices and MLT staff. Parcels selected for protection via conservation easement will be identified via an RFP sign-up and prioritized through a project ranking process (see scoring criteria posted with this proposal).

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
TSch	13846201	62	$40,000	Yes

Otter Tail

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
DRen	13743206	200	$28,000	Yes
LWEva	13140226	309	$200,000	Yes
OSor North	13140234	123	$77,000	Yes
SSla	13138205	186	$125,000	Yes

Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
BMul	12338201	141	$33,700	Yes
GLee	12339213	20	$11,000	Yes
JGan	12338211	114	$29,000	Yes
TCar	12536229	331	$69,000	Yes

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

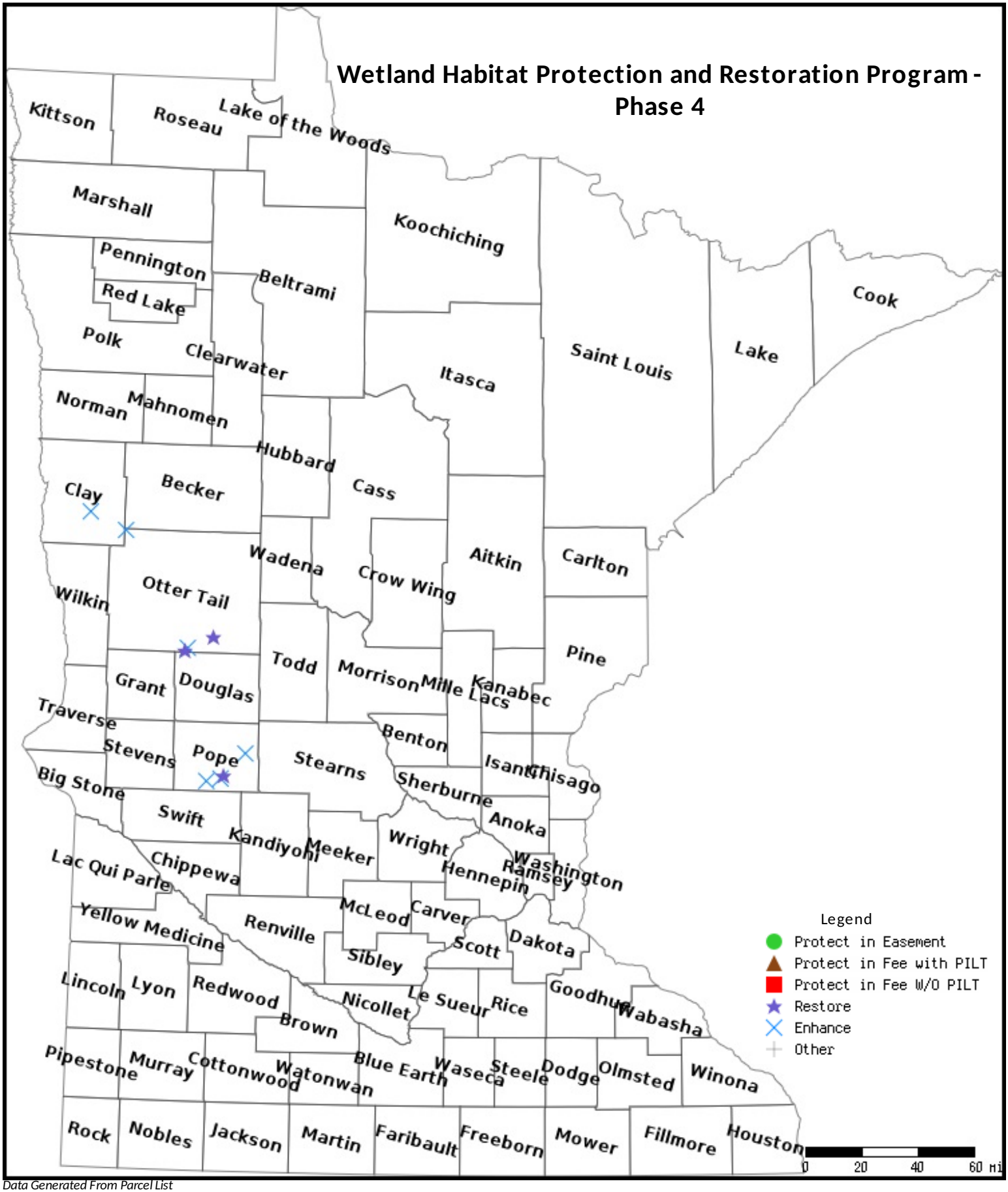
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map



Data Generated From Parcel List

Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program
Phase 4

The Minnesota Land Trust is requesting $5,235,000 for the third phase of the Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program.

The Land Trust will secure 2,340 acres of permanent conservation easements that target high priority wetland habitat complexes within Minnesota's Prairie and Forest/Prairie Transition sections. Using our innovative landowner bid model, the program will maximize conservation benefit and leverage $810,000 in private easement value.

In partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Land Trust will also restore/enhance 1,986 acres of important wetland and prairie habitat on private lands protected through conservation easement.

Outdoor Heritage Fund Request:

$5,235,000 to protect **2,340** acres and restore/enhance **1,986** acres.

The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited conservation organization with a twenty-five year history of protecting Minnesota's most unique wildlife habitats around the state.

For more information about this proposal, please contact Wayne Ostlie, Director of Land Protection, at 651-917-6292 or wostlie@mnland.org.

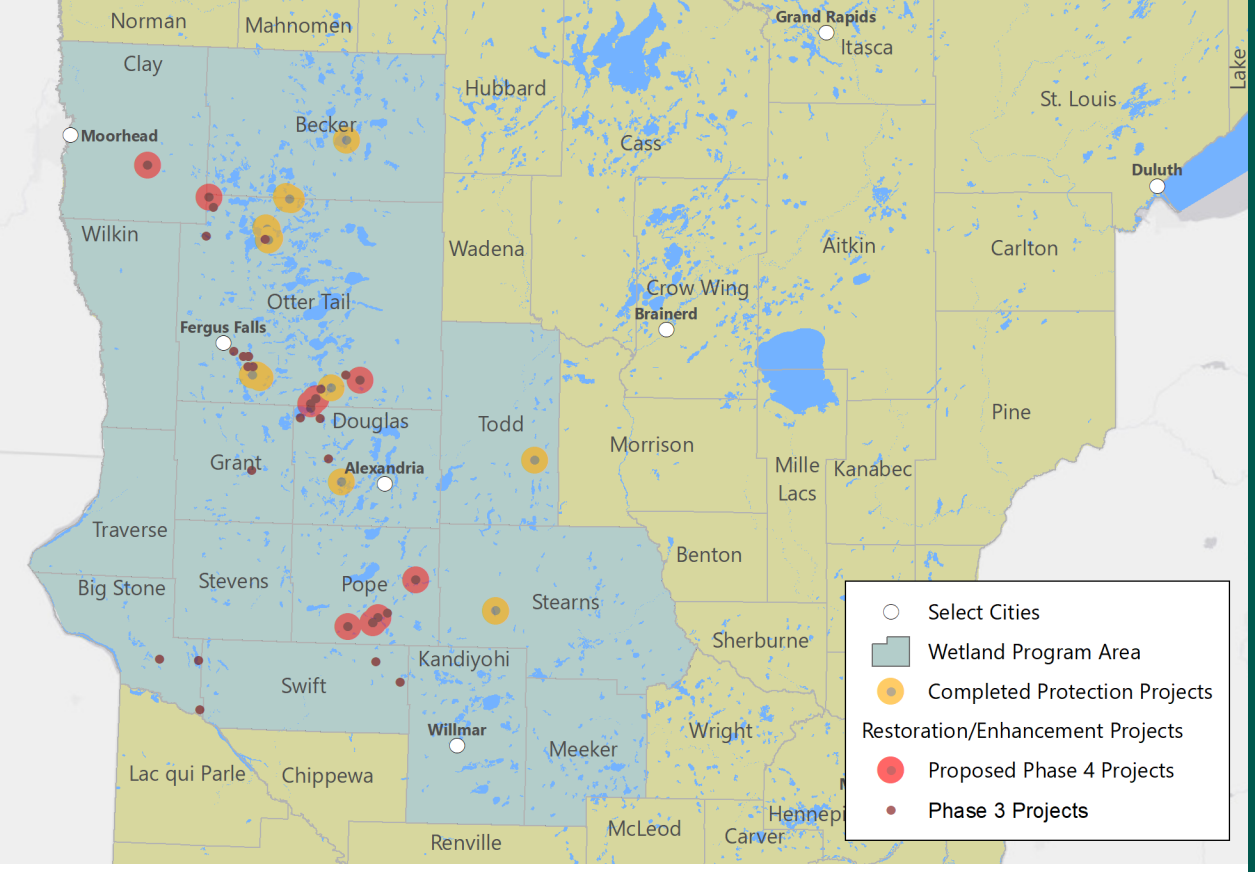
How Does the Program Support State Goals?

This program will target high-priority wetlands and associated upland habitat. This advances a primary goal identified by the Statewide Wildlife Action Plan through stabilization of Species in Greatest Conservation Need. Protection and restoration of wetlands and grasslands are primary strategies identified in Minnesota's Prairie Conservation Plan, the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan, and the Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in Minnesota.

Paul Raymaker

What Are the Outcomes of the Program?

- Healthy wetland habitat complexes and associated populations of waterfowl, upland birds, and species in greatest conservation need.
- Improved water quality.
- Increased participation of private landowners in habitat projects.
- Enhancement of prior public investment in wetland protection and restoration.



What has Been Accomplished to Date in the Program?

Phase I (Complete):

Completed 14 conservation easements, protecting 1,962 acres of habitat and 75,106 feet of shoreline (~14.2 miles).

Phase II (In Progress):

Seven conservation easements have been prioritized in Phase II. Three have already closed, protecting 514 acres of habitat and 29,590 feet of shoreline (~5.6 miles).

Phase III (Planned):

Starting in July, we will begin the third phase of the Wetland Habitat Protection Program to protect 646 acres and restore/enhance an additional 745 of habitat.

The Wetland Habitat Protection Program has generated considerable interest among landowners in protecting these places. **Collectively these landowners have contributed over $1.5 million in easement value as leverage to the $2.1 million investment from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.**

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

Mission

The Minnesota Land Trust protects and restores Minnesota's most vital natural lands in order to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences, and scenic beauty for generations to come.

Contact Us

Minnesota Land Trust

2356 University Ave. W.
Suite 240
St. Paul, MN 55114

(651) 647-9590

mnland@mnland.org

Visit us on the web at
www.mnland.org

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

A Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs within its conservation program areas an RFP (Request for Proposals) model to both identify high-quality projects and introduce a level of competition into the easement acquisition process. Below, we briefly discuss how the system works and the framework put in place to sort the varied opportunities that come before us.

How the Ranking System Works

The parcel ranking framework employed through the Minnesota Land Trust's RFP process is intended as a ***decision support tool*** to aid in identifying, among the slate of landowners submitting bids for conservation easements, the most ecologically significant opportunities for the price. Using this framework, the Land Trust and its partners use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those worthy of consideration.

It is important to note that this parcel ranking framework enables the Land Trust to rank projects *relative* to one another. That's important to do, but it's also important to understand how a project (or suite of projects) relates to the ideal situation (i.e., a project that is of exceptional size, condition and superb landscape context). If, for example, an RFP generated 20 proposals in a program area, the framework would effectively sift among them and identify the relatively good from those relatively bad. However, this information alone would not determine whether any of those parcels were of sufficient quality to pursue for protection (all may be of insufficient quality to warrant expenditure of funds). To solve this problem and make sure ranked projects are high priorities for conservation, we step back and evaluate them relative to the ideal - i.e., is each project among the best opportunities for conservation we can expect to find in the program area?

As part of its proposals to LSOHC, the Land Trust included easement sign-up criteria that laid out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust utilizes in ranking potential parcels relative to one another, and identifying those with which a conservation easement will be pursued. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criteria. These weightings will be refined as we move forward in applying this approach in each program area.

The Framework

We evaluate potential projects based on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost. Both are assessed independent of one another.

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

The Ecological Significance score is determined by looking at 3 subfactors, each weighted equally (as a default). Each of these constitutes 1/3 of the total ecological significance score.

Subfactors:

- **Size or Quantity** – the area of the parcel to be protected (how big is it?), length of shoreline, etc. The bigger the better.
- **Condition or Quality** – the condition of the natural communities and/or target species found on a parcel. The higher quality the better.
- **Landscape Context** – what's around the parcel, both ecologically and from a protected status standpoint. The more ecologically intact the surrounding landscape the better; the extent to which a parcel builds off of other protected lands to form complexes or corridors, the better.

Note that we have the ability to emphasize one subfactor over another if the specific circumstances warrant it, but we begin with a default standard at the onset. At present, all of our geographies are using the default standard.

Indicators:

A suite of weighted indicators is used to score each parcel relative to each of the above subfactors. Indicators are selected based on their ability to effectively inform the scoring of parcels relative to each of the respective subfactors. Weightings for each criterion are assessed and vetted to ensure that a set of indicators for each subfactor produces meaningful results, then applied across each of the proposed parcels. Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Data sets used for this purpose must offer wall-to-wall coverage across the program area to ensure that bias for or against parcels does not creep into the equation. Where gaps in such coverages exist, we attempt to fill them in to the extent feasible (via field inventory, etc.). Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Factor 2: Cost

Cost is a second major factor used in our consideration of parcels. Although ecological significance is *the* primary factor in determining the merits of a project, our RFP programs also strive to make the greatest conservation impact with the most efficient use of State funds. As such, we look at the overall cost of each project relative to its ecological significance; we also ask landowners to consider donating all or some of their easement value to the cause and to better position their proposals. Many landowners participate in that fashion.

Cost, as a primary factor, is assessed independently of the ecological factors. Given equal ecological significance, a project of lower cost will be elevated over those of higher cost in the ranking. That said, exceptionally high quality projects are likely to be pursued even if no or modest landowner donation is put forward. Alternatively, there are projects offered as full donations that are not moved forward because their ecological significance is not acceptable. The degree to which cost factors into the ranking of parcels relative to one another is made on a case-by-case basis.

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST WETLANDS 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	
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	
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	
TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	**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