

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2020 Accomplishment Plan



Date: December 16, 2019

Program or Project Title: Northern Forest Habitat Conservation

Funds Recommended: \$ 4,905,000

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Legislative Citation: ML 2020, Ch. X, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd XX

Appropriation Language:

County Locations: St. Louis

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

Abstract:

The Minnesota Land Trust, The Conservation Fund and St. Louis County seek to strategically acquire up to 4,600 acres of former industrial forest land to permanently maintain large, unfragmented blocks of northeast forest habitats vital to regional wildlife populations and sustainable forestry.

Design and scope of work:

St. Louis County lies at the center of Minnesota's iconic northern forest landscape. Northern forests provide high quality wildlife habitat, clean water, sustainable forestry products and recreational opportunities because of the large, contiguous, publicly accessible lands. The restructuring of the global timber industry has put Minnesota's forest lands at risk as industrial owners divest land assets. The Minnesota Forest Resources Council identified parcelization of these lands as the primary threat to the ecological and economic health of Minnesota's forests. To ensure healthy game and non-game wildlife populations and to maintain historic public access points for hunting and fishing for future generations the integrity of large forest tracks must be preserved. The time is now to secure these lands to preserve the quality of northern forest habitats and provide enduring public benefits.

Goals and Scope of Work

The goal of this project is to ensure long term sustainability of game species such as, white tail deer and ruffed grouse as well as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including moose, spruce grouse, northern long-eared bat and Canada lynx in St. Louis

County. Our objective is to acquire fee title to up to 4,600 acres of strategically located for-sale industrial forest land to fill the gaps between existing public forest lands managed by St. Louis County Lands & Minerals Department (SLCMD). Sustainable, long-term management of large unfragmented forest tracts are essential to guarantee robust wildlife populations for future generations to enjoy and appreciate. The acquired lands help secure the future of the forested landscape in northern Minnesota by enhancing sustainable management of St. Louis County's forest resources and ensuring permanent public access to these large contiguous forest tracts.

All of the lands to be purchased through this appropriation are at-risk former industrial forest lands. PotlatchDeltic Corporation (Potlatch) is actively divesting more than 10,200 acres in St. Louis County, which puts public access for hunting and fishing at imminent risk. The Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and project partners, St. Louis County Lands & Minerals Department (SLCLMD) and The Conservation Fund (TCF), will prioritize and acquire parcels that best preserve forest integrity and public access.

The Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) with the assistance of The Conservation Fund (TCF) will use appropriated funds for the fee-title purchase of strategic forest parcels. The lands will then be transferred to SLCLMD for permanent conservation and management. All lands will be open to public hunting and fishing. The St. Louis County Board unanimously approved this project (Attachment A).

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories:

Most SGCN native to the northern forests are considered interior forest species. These species require large tracts of unfragmented forest for foraging, breeding and raising young. This proposal directly addresses the greatest threat to existing large block forests in St. Louis County. Subdividing large interior forest parcels into smaller retail lots that will either see residential, or other human development disturbance. SLCLMD uses the most current information on the distribution and ecology of native plants and animals, native plant communities and the most intact landscapes when evaluating which parcels will be selected for inclusion in the project.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

St. Louis County developed a GIS project to assist with selecting and prioritizing parcels. The initial parcel selection will use spatial analysis, remote sensing and land metrics such as adjacency to SLCLMD managed forest, land form, forest cover, landscape position and hydrology to select suitable forest parcels to include in the acquisition. Project partners then use existing, publicly available conservation data in GIS to prioritize selected parcels to best protect known existing fish and wildlife habitat and reduce fragmentation of Minnesota's northern forests. Conservation data layers include Minnesota Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance, MN Wildlife Action Plan, The Nature Conservancy's Climate Resilience and other pertinent sources to identify important habitat areas.

This methodology will assist in developing large, contiguous blocks of high-quality forest habitat that can be managed sustainably. Parcels that do not meet forest conservation criteria will be small, isolated, or poor quality habitat and more suitable recreational, or residential development.

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

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

Which other plans are addressed in this program:

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- St. Louis County Land Use Plan 2018

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program:

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

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Does this program include leverage in funds:

No

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 request is not supplanting or substituting for any other funding. This is new work that will not happen without the support of OHF.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2016	Private Corporations (multiple)	15000000
2016	Private Individual	380000
2017	Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	13500500
2017	Federal (USFWS)	2000000

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

Forest lands acquired will become part of St. Louis County’s forest system. St. Louis County Lands & Minerals Department will manage the acquired lands as permanent forest lands. SLCLMD practices are certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). SLCLMD mission is to manage its forests for the variety of benefits they provide including healthy forests, wildlife habitat and fisheries as well as providing accessible recreational opportunities and forest products which all contribute to local community viability.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 & ongoing	St. Louis County	Monitor and manage lands consistent with forest certification and management plans		

Activity Details:

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

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j) - **Yes**

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

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

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

All lands acquired will be fully open for public hunting, fishing and other wildland recreation according to State of Minnesota regulations.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

County

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

County Forest

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

one

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

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

There are existing minimally maintained roads and trails on the properties developed for timber harvest and management purposes.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

SLCLMD Foresters regularly access properties and monitor these trails and roads under its forest certification standards and Minnesota's Forest Management Guidelines. Road and trail maintenance may be completed as part of regular forestry operations.

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

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

SLCLMD will evaluate the existing road and trail system for alignment with SLCLMD forestry and recreational priorities. Some roads will be maintained for forest management purposes, some roads may be retired. Additional roads and trails may be added as necessary for access in order to accomplish sustainable forestry activities. Roads may be used for other allowable uses such as hunting, fishing and nature observation access where appropriate.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

SLCLMD Foresters regularly access properties and monitor these trails and roads under its forest certification standards and Minnesota's Forest Management Guidelines. Road and trail maintenance may be completed as part of regular forestry operations.

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation? - **No**

Not Listed

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Negotiate with landowner and enter into purchase agreement	August 2021
Conduct due diligence for acquisition of properties (appraisals, title work, etc)	March 2022
Acquire fee title to selected properties	August 2022
Transfer properties to St. Louis County	December 2022

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/1/2023

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *Northern Forestlands are protected to promote healthy and diverse forests, keep water clean and help maintain healthy wildlife populations This project will permanently protect the plants, animals, natural communities and wildlife habitats found in the forests, wetlands, and shorelines of approximately 2,600 acres of at-risk land with fee title acquisition. The project will permanently restrict incompatible land uses such as development, subdivision, land conversion or other activities that would damage those features. The project will prevent habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and associated wildlife population declines associated with development and fragmentation.*

Budget Spreadsheet

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount

Reduce overall fee acquisition acres.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 4905000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$98,000	\$0		\$98,000
Contracts	\$110,000	\$0		\$110,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$4,621,000	\$0		\$4,621,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Professional Services	\$35,000	\$0		\$35,000
Direct Support Services	\$26,000	\$0		\$26,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$4,905,000	\$0		\$4,905,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Land Protection staff	0.25	3.00	\$98,000	\$0		\$98,000
Total	0.25	3.00	\$98,000	\$0		\$98,000

Amount of Request: \$4,905,000

Amount of Leverage: \$0

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%

DSS + Personnel: \$124,000

As a % of the total request: 2.53%

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

The Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate in a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017. The rate only includes allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. This DNR approved rate is only applied to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services.

What is included in the contacts line?

Sub-contracts to assist completing real estate transactions and due diligence including appraisal, title work, negotiation, environmental survey or review, documentation, purchase agreements, etc.

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

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

none

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

none

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	4,600	0	4,600
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	4,600	0	4,600

Table 2. Total 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	\$4,905,000	\$0	\$4,905,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$4,905,000	\$0	\$4,905,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N 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	4,600	4,600
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	4,600	4,600

Table 4. Total Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N 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	\$4,905,000	\$4,905,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,905,000	\$4,905,000

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	\$1066	\$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	\$10 66
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Automatic system calculation / not entered by managers

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Parcel List

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

St. Louis

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Industrial forest owner-scattered parcels	05815219	4,600	\$4,905,000	No		

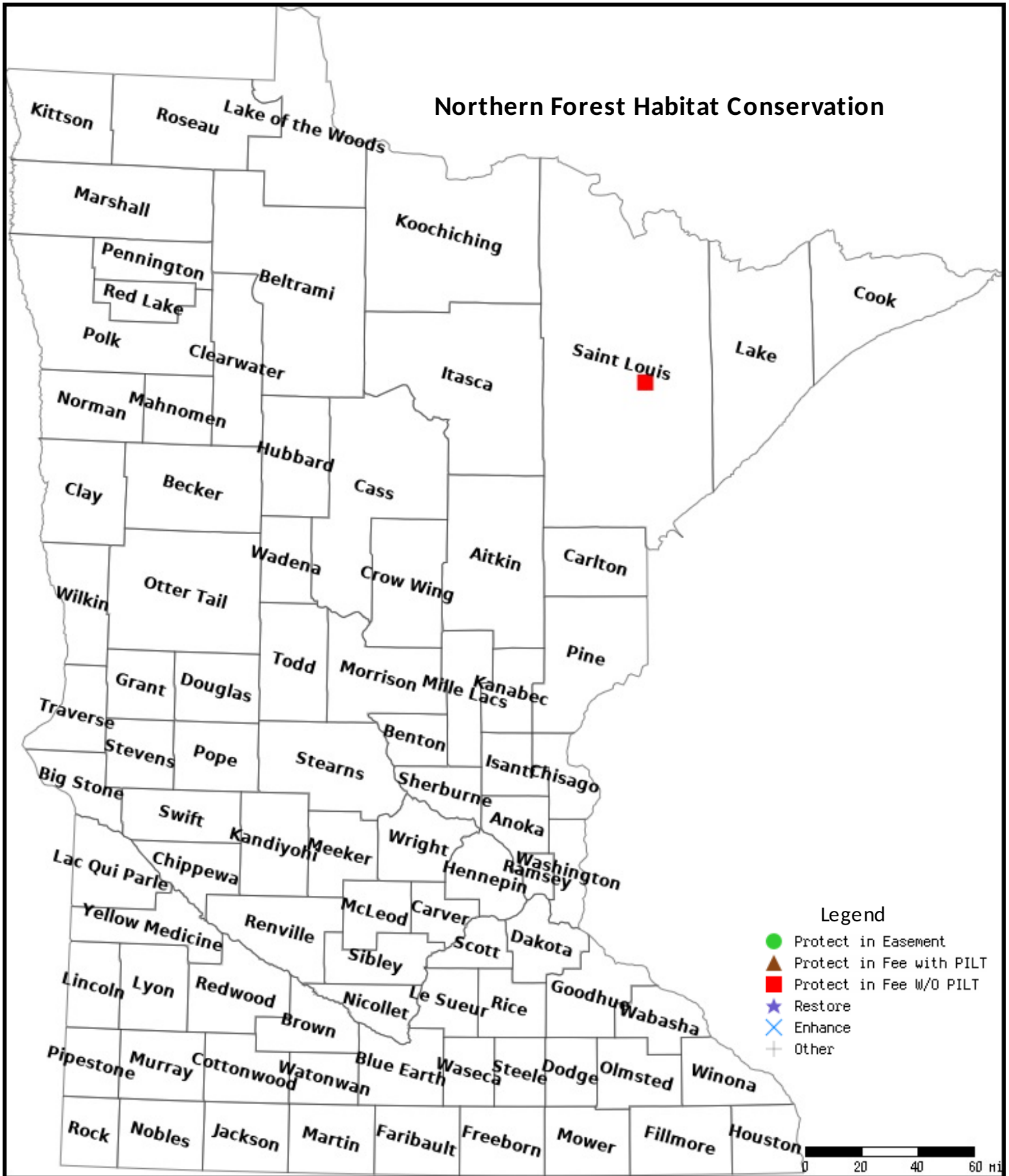
Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map



Data Generated From Parcel List