

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2020 Accomplishment Plan



Date: December 18, 2019

Program or Project Title: RIM Grassland Reserve - Phase II

Funds Recommended: \$ 3,772,000

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

Appropriation Language:

County Locations: Not Listed

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

Using the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program, this project will address the potential loss of grassland habitats from conversion to cropland and accelerate grassland protection efforts not covered by other programs. Working in coordination with established Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams (LTTs), this proposal will enroll 800 RIM acres (approximately 10 easements), focusing on Minnesota Prairie Plan-identified landscapes.

Design and scope of work:

In 2019 alone over 96,000 acres of CRP will expire in Minnesota. In the next two years an additional 144,554 acres will expire. Minnesota was once a land of 18 million acres of prairie. Today less than two percent remains. The few acres of native remnant prairie that remain were once thought of as too rocky or wet for row crops but not anymore. If the current trajectory of grassland and prairie loss continues it will be devastating to grassland wildlife populations, including pollinator species.

This proposal, working in partnership with Prairie Conservation Plan Local Technical Teams (LTTs), focuses on protecting current grasslands and buffering native prairie that are within wildlife habitat complexes not covered by other conservation programs. There are programs for native prairie such as MNDNR Native Prairie Bank, Federal Native Tallgrass Prairie (NTP)s and programs for cropland, but there are no programs for moderate quality prairies that have the potential for higher quality through protection and management. As Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and LTTs review these areas for possible enrollment, they may find additional tracts that are native prairie. With this project, some native prairie may be included to square up parcels. In cases where larger tracts are

identified, they will contact the DNR's Biological Survey and Native Prairie Bank staff for a more formal botanical survey of the site.

The loss of native prairie and grassland habitat is arguably the greatest conservation challenge facing northwest, western and southern Minnesota. This proposal aims to protect 800 acres of prairie and grassland habitat by coordinating and accelerating the enrollment of Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) through private land easements. This level of acceleration is needed to address today's rapid loss of grassland habitat and meet the goals set forth in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan.

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:

Minnesota grasslands provide important habitat for a wide range of species of greatest conservation need. Consistent with guidance in The Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, strategic site selection will be conducted as well as efforts to minimize landscape stressors and plan for plant diversity and long-term resiliency of project sites. More than 150 Species of Greatest Conservation Need use grasslands for breeding, migration, and/or foraging.

Species that will be targeted include: Greater prairie chicken, Eastern meadowlark, Western meadowlark, Grasshopper sparrow, Northern pintail, Northern black duck, Burrowing owl, Chestnut collared longspur, Bobolink, Wilson's phalarope, Sedge wren, Plains hog-nosed snake, American badger, Prairie vole, Plains pocket mouse, Eastern spotted skunk, Dakota skipper, Monarch butterfly, poweshiek skipper, Regal fritillary, Rusty patched bumble bee.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Native prairies are often part of large complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, and wetlands. These complexes will be the top priority for this project using the MN Prairie Plan framework. A preference will be given to protecting expiring CRP with enrollment of adjacent remnant prairie as identified in the MN County Biological Survey. This focus on expiring CRP will fill a niche that cannot otherwise be filled by the Native Prairie Bank program. LTT's will help guide restoration strategies such as prescribed burning, conservation grazing and woody tree removal to be used to restore the conditions of moderate quality prairies. In addition, the LTTs will identify remnant prairie sites that are not listed on the MN County Biological Survey and update the survey accordingly. By utilizing the LTT's, parcels will be targeted for protection and resulting acres will be tracked and reportable.

Recent genetic diversity research was conducted on Greater Prairie Chickens by the MNDNR to understand how birds move through the landscape using a new approach called landscape genetics. It found that prairie chickens in the northern part of the sampled area, near Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, are not very connected to prairie chickens in Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties to the south. Connecting these areas with high quality habitat would allow more genetic mixing, potentially reduce stress and mortality and eliminate the need for birds to travel long distances to find suitable habitat. This "follow the chicken" approach has worked remarkably well in identifying, targeting and protecting areas that have positive impacts on a wide range of species of greatest conservation need.

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

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

Which other plans are addressed in this program:

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program:

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- Protect, enhance, and restore rare native remnant prairie

Prairie:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna

Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Historically the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) with BWSR, DNR, PF, NRCS, MASWCD, and SWCDs as primary partners, has provided funding to SWCDs to utilize technicians to promote the conservation provisions of the Federal Farm Bill and other conservation program opportunities to private landowners.

Does this program include leverage in funds:

Not Listed

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 funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

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

Not Listed

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement into perpetuity. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and partner staff document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and any enforcement necessary.

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

Not Listed

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 - **Yes**

Explain

In certain circumstances food plots for wildlife are an allowable use on RIM easements and must be part of an approved Conservation Plan. Under this proposal no food plots would be allowed on remnant prairies which have never been cultivated (only areas that buffer remnant prairies). Food plots on narrow buffers, steep slopes and wet areas are not allowed but may be offered on any potential surrounding grass buffer on prior cultivated lands. RIM policy limits food plots to 10% of the total easement area or 5 acres whichever is smaller. There is no cost share for establishment of food plots and upon termination and/or abandonment the landowners must reestablish the vegetation as prescribed in the Conservation Plan at their own expense. Food plots are a rarely selected option by landowners, to date only 2.2% of RIM easements have food plots.

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

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

Who will manage the easement?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) , implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of the easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

Who will be the easement holder?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) , implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of the easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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

This proposal will enroll 800 acres (approximately 10 easements) focusing on Minnesota Prairie Plan-identified landscapes.

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:

Though uncommon, there is a potential for allowable minimal use trails, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc.). Unauthorized trails identified during the monitoring process are in violation of the easement.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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:

Though uncommon, there could be a potential for new minimal use trails if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). Unauthorized trails identified during the monitoring process are in violation of the easement.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program that has over 7000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation? - **Yes**

Vegetative restoration is planned to occur and these restoration costs are included in the easement acquisition amount.

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Enrollment of 800 acres of Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) private land easements	June 30, 2025
Final Report Submitted	November 1, 2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/1/2025

Federal Funding:

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

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. A summary of the total acres acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed during the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. An increase of native grassland habitat availability within a certain region is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent wildlife within that region. This would have a positive impact on both game and nongame species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these complexes are restored.

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species. A summary of the total acres acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed during the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. An increase of native grassland habitat availability within a certain region is expected to increase the carrying capacity of grassland-dependent wildlife within that region. This would have a positive impact on both game and nongame species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these complexes are restored.

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

A reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionally for the most part. Program management costs would be the exception, due to program development and oversight remaining somewhat consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 3772000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$252,900	\$0		\$252,900
Contracts	\$21,000	\$0		\$21,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$3,382,500	\$0		\$3,382,500
Easement Stewardship	\$65,000	\$0		\$65,000
Travel	\$6,600	\$0		\$6,600
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$31,800	\$0		\$31,800
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$9,400	\$0		\$9,400
Supplies/Materials	\$2,800	\$0		\$2,800
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$3,772,000	\$0		\$3,772,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Mgmt	0.38	5.00	\$210,000	\$0		\$210,000
Esmt Processing	0.13	3.00	\$26,900	\$0		\$26,900
Engineering/Eco Services	0.05	3.00	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
Total	0.56	11.00	\$252,900	\$0		\$252,900

Amount of Request: \$3,772,000

Amount of Leverage: \$0

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%

DSS + Personnel: \$284,700

As a % of the total request: 7.55%

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

BWSR calculates and periodically reviews and updates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done

What is included in the contacts line?

The contract line includes costs covered under the SWCD MIPA, \$2000 for staff time per easement acquisition.

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:

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

No leverage source listed.

What is the cost per easement for stewardship and explain how that amount is calculated?

Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and any enforcement necessary.

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	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	800	0	0	800
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	800	0	0	800

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	17
Enhance	0
Total	17

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	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$3,772,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,772,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$3,772,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,772,000

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	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	80	0	720	0	800
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	80	0	720	0	800

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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$377,200	\$0	\$3,394,800	\$0	\$3,772,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$377,200	\$0	\$3,394,800	\$0	\$3,772,000

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	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$4715	\$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	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$4715	\$0	\$4715	\$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

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

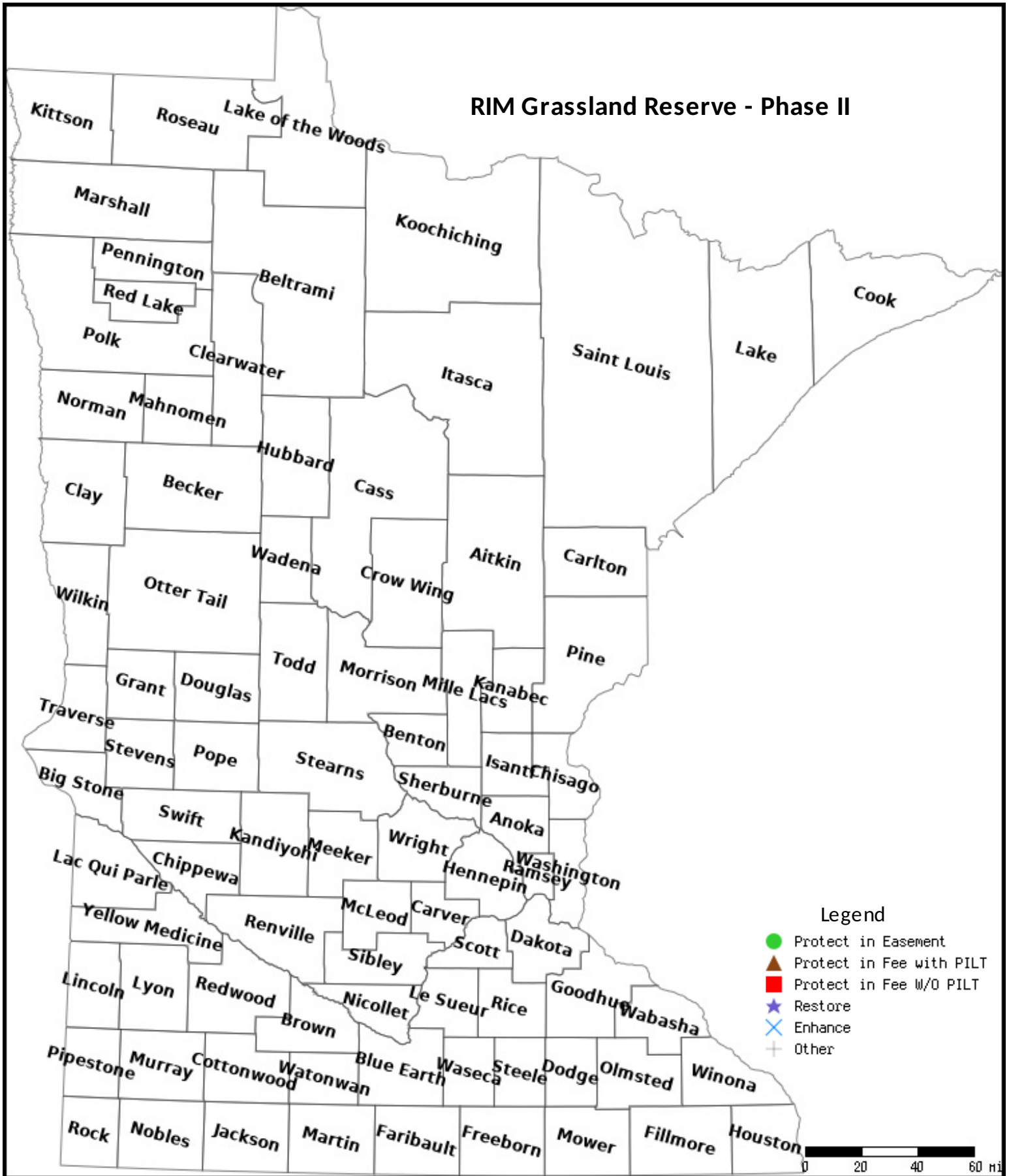
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

RIM Grassland Reserve - Phase II



Data Generated From Parcel List