

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2020 Accomplishment Plan



Date: December 17, 2019

Program or Project Title: Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley - Phase VI

Funds Recommended: \$ 2,025,000

Manager's Name: Eran Sandquist

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

Appropriation Language:

County Locations: Becker, Clay, Mahnommen, Norman, and Wilkin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

The Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership VI accelerates the protection and restoration of 500 acres of strategic prairie chicken-focused habitats that will be transferred to the MNDNR as a WMA or to the USFWS as a WPA and are open to public hunting. MN Prairie Chicken Society and Pheasants Forever will be protecting parcels that focus specifically on prairie chicken benefits, which makes this proposal unique and highly focused. All acquisitions will occur within the prairie and prairie/forest transition planning regions with a focus in Clay, Norman, Mahnommen and Wilkin counties as this is the primary range of prairie

Design and scope of work:

The Problem: In Minnesota, greater prairie chickens are largely restricted to the beach ridges of the Glacial Lake Agassiz region. Greater prairie chickens require large blocks of grasslands, with a minimum of 320 acres at any one site. The makeup of these grassland complexes should include numerous successional states of habitat to sustain a local population. Greater prairie chickens are a "flagship" species in the sense that if we have greater prairie chickens on the landscape, then we have also included the habitat needs of many additional grassland-dependent wildlife species with less exacting habitat requirements. Greater prairie chicken habitat has declined dramatically in recent years due to 1) loss of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres and 2) conversion of grasslands; (including remnant native prairie), to row crop production.

An Approach to the Problem: This partnership protects native and restored prairies, sedge meadows, and other types of grasslands and

associated wetlands to promote the growth and stability of greater prairie chicken populations. This is a very focused proposal with the priority of protecting remnant prairies within core and corridor areas of the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. All projects acquired under this proposal will be restored and/or enhanced to be productive grassland habitat as part of the grant activity. Once acquired, the subject tracts will be fully restored and/or enhanced. Our proposed tracts were identified as high priority greater prairie chicken habitat with willing sellers who have an interest in preserving wildlife values of those acres. These tracts were ranked as high priority for greater prairie chicken habitat based on six criteria including: 1) distance to the nearest prairie chicken lek; 2) location in or outside of a core area from the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan (MPCP); 3) distance to the nearest public hunting land (WPA or WMA); 4) tract size; 5) current grassland type (native prairie, restored prairie, brome, or row crop; and 6) wetland density and predicted waterfowl breeding pairs (wetlands can provide important habitat for prairie chickens over their annual life cycle).

Benefits: By protecting, restoring and enhancing grasslands and wetlands in the right areas, this partnership delivers on many of the goals of state side conservation plans. In fact, one ecosystem measure of the Prairie Conservation Plan (MPCP) success is to have stable or increasing greater prairie chicken populations in Minnesota. The MPCP is ideally suited for greater prairie chicken management with core areas containing large contiguous blocks of grassland and smaller grassland patches scattered across the landscape called corridors that allow birds to maintain populations outside the core areas as well as move across the landscape. In addition to grassland conservation, most tracts have extensive wetlands. Restoring and maintaining these wetlands will have several benefits including water storage, sequestering and storing carbon, water quality, diversity of flora and fauna, and reducing erosion. Providing secure habitat for greater prairie chickens also provides habitat for a host of other grassland species.

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:

There are a number of game, non-game, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that benefit from this partnership's results. Pheasants Forever uses GIS layers and works with DNR staff to identify rare, threatened and endangered species that occur on or near a project. The State of North America's Birds 2016 report shows how many of our continent's grassland birds are in steep declines, and species dependent on grasslands are also threatened. SGCN for this region include 35 vertebrate animals, 59 plants, and 13 invertebrate animals. Many of the proposed tracts contain native prairie communities as mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey. Depending on the quality, these native tracts likely have a number of T&E prairie dependent species on them which will be protected. This proposal aims to increase greater prairie chicken numbers in Minnesota by adding to and creating a connected system of grassland habitats across the landscape. In this way, we are addressing the limiting factor to greater prairie chicken populations, while also building more protected high quality habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species. We work in close coordination with partners and land managers on the restoration and enhancement of all acquired tracts. When SGCN are located on or near project tracts, the restoration/enhancement activities add habitat value for these species.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

This proposal is fully integrated into the MN Prairie Conservation Plan as described in the "design and scope of work" section. Most of the tracts listed are within core areas, have remnant native prairie on them, and are adjacent to existing WMAs/WPAs. We continue to build upon past conservation efforts. Most tracts are within less than a half mile of known greater prairie chicken habitat and leks. The latest geospatial layers will be used to help identify and evaluate projects such as the MN County Biological Survey, core and corridors in the Prairie Conservation Plan, high priority areas within the MN Wildlife Action Plan, etc. to make the best science-based decisions as possible. We also strive to protect habitat where we will have the best return on investment that have the greatest impact on prairie chicken populations. Close coordination with local resource managers will further ensure that this partnership is delivering the best results for the investment.

A recent study by MN DNR researcher, Dr. Charlotte Roy, and collaborators Dr. Andrew Gregory (Bowling Green State University) and Eric Nelson (MN DNR), informs us about landscape connectivity gaps for greater prairie chickens. Using landscape genetic techniques, Dr. Roy and her colleagues learned that greater prairie chickens in the northern part of the sampled area, near Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, are not very connected to greater prairie chickens in Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties to the south. Their findings suggest that providing quality grassland habitat in Norman and Polk counties should be a priority to improve connectivity in the planned corridor. The genetic data obtained also indicates that birds in Norman County are moving less than other areas, which could put them at risk for inbreeding in the future, particularly if habitat needs are not addressed. To begin addressing this conservation need, the researchers recommend increasing grassland quantity and improving grassland quality near areas from which greater prairie chickens can expand, to begin making connections between core areas in the planned corridor.

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

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

Which other plans are addressed in this program:

- Grassland Conservation Plan for Prairie Grouse
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program:

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

Prairie:

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

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Does this program include leverage in funds:

Yes

Available funding continues to be a limiting factor for protection programs. With CRP authority declining in the current farm bill, Minnesota is experiencing significant CRP acres (largely grassland practices) expiring out of the program. Permanent conservation efforts must be accelerated to sustain or grow grassland habitat for wildlife. Before the passage of the Legacy Amendment, PF would acquire approximately 1,000 acres/year to become WMAs or WPAs in this area. This grant significantly accelerates our ability to acquire priority parcels and more than triples our historic annual accomplishments. This proposal accelerates the protection and restoration of valuable grassland habitat that focus on greater prairie chickens and other wildlife while providing additional public access to hunting, bird watching, trapping or otherwise recreate in Minnesota's great outdoors.

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 supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the protection and restoration of strategic parcels.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
Annual		None

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

All lands will be enrolled into the WMA or WPA system and will be managed in perpetuity by the MN DNR or USFWS, respectively. All acquisitions will be restored and/or enhanced to as high quality as practicable, with the knowledge that quality and comprehensive restorations utilizing native species result in lower management costs. In addition, local PF chapter members and volunteers maintain significant interest in seeing the habitat and productivity of acquired parcels are high. MPCs, PF, DNR and USFWS will develop an ecological restoration and management plan for each parcel. Grant and partner dollars will be used for the initial site development and restoration/enhancement work.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Transfer - WMA	DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Standard long-term maintenance; fire, invasives control, etc		
Post Transfer - WPA	USFWS - Federal	Standard long-term maintenance; fire, invasives control, etc		

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

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife. This proposal may include initial development plans or restoration plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. In these restorations, PF's policy is to use non neonicotinoid treated seed and no herbicides other than glyphosate. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources. There are no immediate plans to use farming for winter food on any of the parcels in this proposal.

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j) - **No**

At minimum, we will notify local government in writing of the intent to acquire and donate lands to the state and follow up with questions prior to the acquisition. In cases where there is interest, we will also indicate our willingness to attend or ask to attend county or township meetings to communicate our interest in the projects and seek support.

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

Because we are working within priority habitat areas, it is possible that parcels could have perpetual easements on a portion of them. If a parcel has a perpetual easement and is deemed a high priority by the partners, we will follow guidance established by the Outdoor Heritage Fund to proceed, or use non-state funding to acquire the protected portion of the property.

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

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

No variation from State of MN regulations for WMA acquisitions.

All WPA acquisitions will be open to the public taking of fish and game during the open season according to the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, United States Code, title 16, section 668dd, et seq.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of MN, Federal

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA, WPA

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

We anticipate closing on 1-3 tracts through this appropriation.

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**

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

Yes. We may also seek additional leverage (i.e. PF chapters, federal, etc.) to supplement the restoration budget contained within this proposal.

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Identify priority acquisitions	07/01/2020
Contract appraisals ordered	09/01/2020
Purchase agreements	02/01/2021
Re-evaluate tract priority	02/14/2021
Contract appraisals ordered	04/01/2021
Purchase agreements	09/01/2021
Close on tracts	01/01/2023
Restorations completed	06/30/2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/1/2025

Federal Funding:

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 - **07/01/2020**

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 *Strategic parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for pollinators, resident and migratory game and non-game species. Lands will be protected to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by Minnesota DNR of United States FWS. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in the "Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years" and "Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan".*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *Strategic parcels that increase the functionality of existing habitat will be acquired and restored to functioning wetlands with diverse upland prairie to serve as habitat for pollinators, resident and migratory game and non-game species. Lands will be protected to provide accelerated wildlife habitat and public access, monitored by Minnesota DNR of United States FWS. Protected and restored acres will be measured against goals outlined in the "Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years" and "Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan".*

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

We have reduced accomplishments/costs proportionately across the overall program to accommodate the reduced appropriation. As a result of the reduction, we will be able to protect fewer acres. As in past appropriations, we will focus on the most strategic, highest priority tracts.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 2025000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$20,100	\$0		\$20,100
Contracts	\$395,000	\$0		\$395,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$923,900	\$15,000	PCS, PF, Federal, Private	\$938,900
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$602,000	\$15,000	PCS, PF, Federal, Private	\$617,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$1,000	\$0		\$1,000
Professional Services	\$36,000	\$0		\$36,000
Direct Support Services	\$8,300	\$0		\$8,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$18,700	\$0		\$18,700
Total	\$2,025,000	\$30,000		\$2,055,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF State Coordinator	0.01	3.00	\$4,000	\$0		\$4,000
PF Field Staff	0.04	3.00	\$9,100	\$0		\$9,100
PF Grants Staff	0.03	3.00	\$7,000	\$0		\$7,000
Total	0.08	9.00	\$20,100	\$0		\$20,100

Amount of Request: \$2,025,000

Amount of Leverage: \$30,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 1.48%

DSS + Personnel: \$28,400

As a % of the total request: 1.40%

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

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.12%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 2.0% of the sum of personnel, contracts, professional services, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

What is included in the contacts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for restoration, enhancement and potentially some initial development of the protected acres. This could include but is not limited to wetland/grassland restoration, tree removal, prescribed fire, building removal, signs, posts, and other development activities.

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:

n/a

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, land value donations, contractor donations, MPCS and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF has an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

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	300	0	0	300
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	200	0	0	200
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	500	0	0	500

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

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	10
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	0
Total	10

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	\$1,229,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,229,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$796,000	\$0	\$0	\$796,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$2,025,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,025,000

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	40	0	260	0	300
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	20	0	180	0	200
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	60	0	440	0	500

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	\$159,200	\$0	\$1,069,800	\$0	\$1,229,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$79,600	\$0	\$716,400	\$0	\$796,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$238,800	\$0	\$1,786,200	\$0	\$2,025,000

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	\$40 97	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$3980	\$0	\$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	\$3980	\$0	\$4115	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$3980	\$0	\$3980	\$0
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

Becker

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Spring Creek WMA addition	14242212	320	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Clay

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Clay County WMA addition	13845222	160	\$512,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Hatchet Lake WPA addition	14145229	615	\$1,968,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Hoykens WPA addition	140 44230	160	\$544,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Hoykens WPA addition	140 45225	282	\$958,800	No	Full	Not Applicable
Ulen WMA Addition	14245225	320	\$640,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Mahnomen

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Coburn WMA addition	14342231	160	\$416,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Skoog WPA addition	14342212	80	\$120,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vanose WMA addition	14641225	309	\$575,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Norman

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Agassiz Olson WMA addition	14645209	54	\$81,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Agassiz Olson WMA addition	14645233	120	\$240,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Dalby WMA addition	14345210	160	\$320,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Frenchmans Bluff WPA addition	14343207	60	\$150,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344218	320	\$960,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Neal WMA addition	14344219	20	\$80,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
New WMA	14645230	640	\$1,600,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rockwell WMA addition	14345205	82	\$164,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rockwell WMA addition	14345205	100	\$150,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rockwell WMA addition	14445234	160	\$512,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Slininger WPA addition	14345210	320	\$1,024,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition, Tract 5	14344202	40	\$40,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Vagsness WMA addition, Tract 8	14344202	60	\$100,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Wilkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Rothsay WMA addition	13545205	150	\$495,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rothsay WMA addition	13545207	160	\$512,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rothsay WMA addition	13545217	480	\$1,536,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rothsay WMA addition	13545221	40	\$128,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rothsay WMA addition	13546210	320	\$960,000	No	Full	Not Applicable
Rothsay WMA addition	13546214	320	\$1,024,000	No	Full	Not Applicable

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

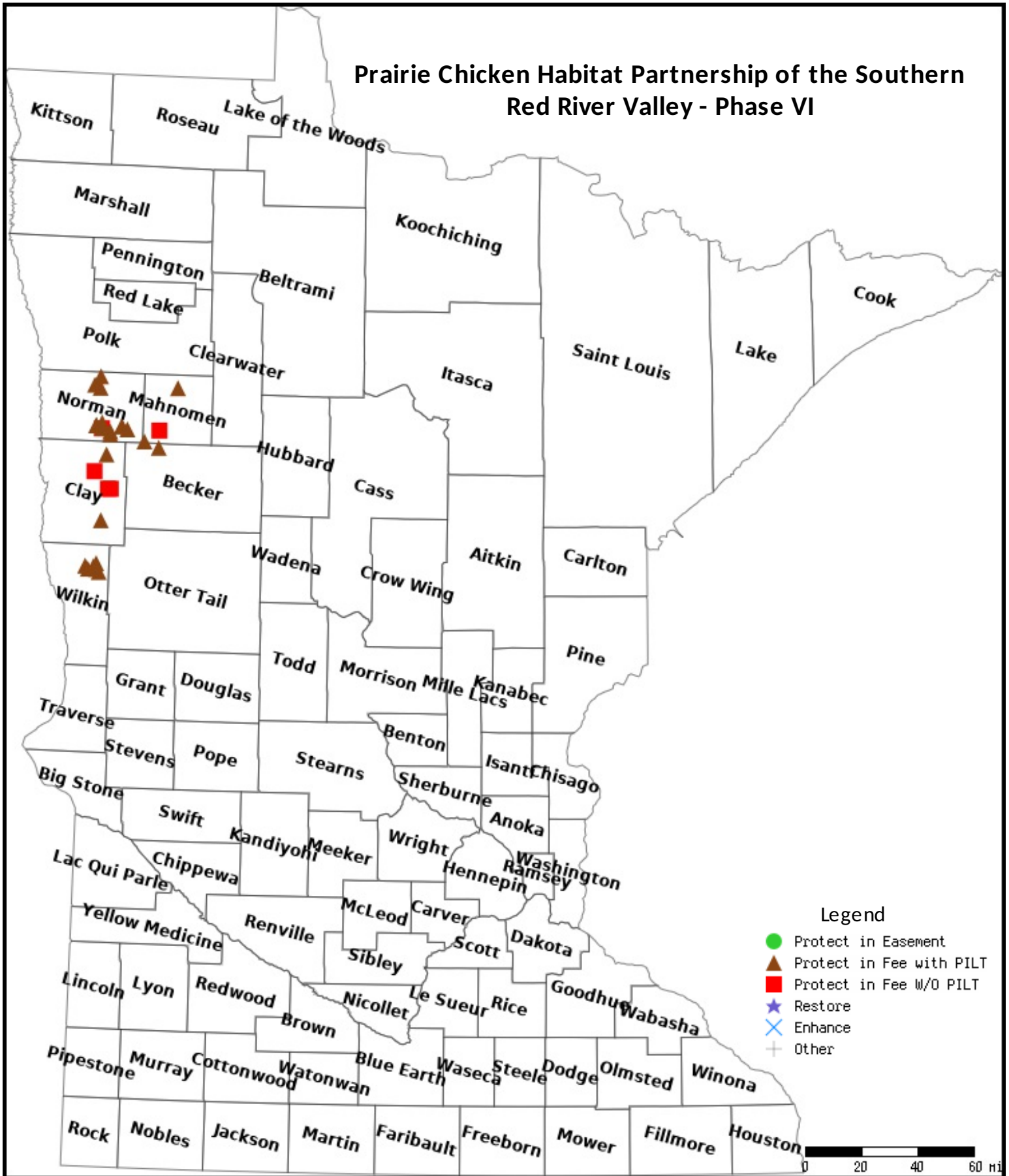
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Prairie Chicken Habitat Partnership of the Southern Red River Valley - Phase VI



Data Generated From Parcel List