

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2020 Accomplishment Plan



Date: December 11, 2019

Program or Project Title: Wetland Habitat and Protection Program - Phase 5

Funds Recommended: \$ 3,130,000

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

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

Appropriation Language:

County Locations: Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Swift, and Wilkin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Protect in Easement
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Prairie
- Wetlands

Abstract:

Phase 5 of the Wetland Habitat Protection and Restoration Program will result in the protection of 1,371 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 market-based 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 942 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 County northwest to Becker County, located along a vast glacial moraine system in 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 Phase 3 of this program, the Land Trust has procured 20 conservation easements protecting nearly 2,796 acres of habitat and 133,387 feet of shoreline (>25 miles).

Phase 5 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 942 acres of important prairie and wetland habitat on private lands already protected within the Program area. In addition, the Land Trust will protect 823 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 the full or partial value of an easement to 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 nexus 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 investments in wetland and upland habitat projects.

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:

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.

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 caused 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. Projects will also be located near other protected lands to help build larger habitat complexes comprised of both public and private lands. The vast majority of this landscape is in private ownership. For that reason, 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.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

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 easement acquisition are evaluated relative to each other to identify priorities among the pool of applicants. This relative ranking is based on three primary ecological factors (1. amount of habitat on the parcel (size) and abundance of SGCN; 2. the quality or condition of habitat; and 3. the parcel's context relative to other natural habitats and protected areas) and cost. The program serves to build upon past conservation investments in the program area, expand the footprint of existing protected areas (WMAs, WPAs, etc.), facilitate the protection of habitat corridors and reduce the potential for fragmentation of existing habitats. In addition, our partnership with USFWS will enable the Land Trust 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, because many private lands were not formally assessed through MBS.

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:

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

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:

- 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 to 2011. This proposed OHF grant accelerates the Land Trust's work in protecting critical wetland and associated upland habitat within the program area and does not supplant any existing funding sources.

Does this program include leverage in funds:

Yes

Through its market-based RFP process, the Land Trust expects private landowners to donate at least \$475,000 in easement value toward the program, which is shown as leverage. In addition, the USFWS will contribute \$12,000 in in-kind contributions toward restoration and enhancement projects on protected lands. In addition, the USFWS is committing \$12,000 in staff time for restoration planning and design.

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 through 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:

Not Listed

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 cases 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 on 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
2024 and in perpetuity	MLT Long-Term Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	
Every 4-6 years	USFWS, Landowners, MLT	Prescribed fire, tree control, invasive species control		

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

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. We restrict agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases where there are agricultural lands associated with the larger property, we will either exclude the agricultural area from the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may include a small percentage of agricultural lands if it is not feasible to exclude those areas. 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.

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?

Minnesota Land Trust.

Who will be the easement holder?

Minnesota Land Trust.

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

The Land Trust will procure 6-10 conservation easements depending on size and cost of the parcels.

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, the conservation easement permits the continued usage of established trails and roads so long as 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 accordance 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**

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

Restoration and enhancement may be completed on some parcels, depending on the the need and condition of each parcel.

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

Is the activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes**
(Permanently Protected Conservation Easements/Refuge Lands)

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Conservation easements completed or options secured	June 30, 2023
Restoration and enhancement projects completed	June 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 - **Yes**

Documentation

What are the types of funds?

Cash Match - \$0

In-Kind Match - \$12000

Other -

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 411 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 312 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 412 acres of wetland and upland habitat complexes and restore/enhance 630 acres of wetlands and prairies in the prairie region. Measure: Acres protected; acres restored; acres enhanced.*

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

The number of easements, acre protected and acres restored have been scaled proportionately from the original proposal.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 3130000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$348,000	\$12,000	USFWS	\$360,000
Contracts	\$555,000	\$0		\$555,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$1,582,600	\$475,000	Landowner donation of easement value	\$2,057,600
Easement Stewardship	\$288,000	\$0		\$288,000
Travel	\$21,000	\$0		\$21,000
Professional Services	\$158,000	\$0		\$158,000
Direct Support Services	\$94,000	\$0		\$94,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$13,400	\$0		\$13,400
Supplies/Materials	\$70,000	\$0		\$70,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$3,130,000	\$487,000		\$3,617,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.42	3.00	\$120,000	\$0		\$120,000
MLT Restoration Staff	0.80	3.00	\$228,000	\$0		\$228,000
FWS Restoration Designer	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$12,000	USFWS	\$12,000
Total	1.32	9.00	\$348,000	\$12,000		\$360,000

Amount of Request: \$3,130,000

Amount of Leverage: \$487,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 15.56%

DSS + Personnel: \$442,000

As a % of the total request: 14.12%

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.

What is included in the contacts line?

Restoration and enhancement accounts for \$475,000 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.

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 has committed cash and in-kind staff time toward restoration/enhancement projects.

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

The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000. This figure is derived from MLT's detailed stewardship funding "cost analysis" which is consistent with Land Trust Accreditation standards. MLT shares periodic updates to this cost analysis with LSOHC staff.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	25	191	0	0	216
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	1,371	1,371
Enhance	43	683	0	0	726
Total	68	874	0	1,371	2,313

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

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	42
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	51
Total	93

Table 2. Total Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$40,000	\$162,000	\$0	\$0	\$202,000
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	\$2,285,000	\$2,285,000
Enhance	\$79,600	\$563,400	\$0	\$0	\$643,000
Total	\$119,600	\$725,400	\$0	\$2,285,000	\$3,130,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	54	0	162	0	216
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	685	0	686	0	1,371
Enhance	0	258	0	468	0	726
Total	0	997	0	1,316	0	2,313

Table 4. Total Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$93,400	\$0	\$108,600	\$0	\$202,000
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	\$1,142,500	\$0	\$1,142,500	\$0	\$2,285,000
Enhance	\$0	\$273,900	\$0	\$369,100	\$0	\$643,000
Total	\$0	\$1,509,800	\$0	\$1,620,200	\$0	\$3,130,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$1600	\$848	\$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	\$0	\$0	\$1667
Enhance	\$1851	\$825	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$1730	\$0	\$670	\$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	\$1668	\$0	\$1665	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$1062	\$0	\$789	\$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

Grant

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
DVel	12743203	4	\$7,600	Yes

Otter Tail

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
CHanMSIa	13138207	188	\$167,900	Yes
DRen	13743205	198	\$27,400	Yes
FFFGCDem	13142227	211	\$165,500	Yes
FFFGCSau	13443236	102	\$100,400	Yes
JCMar	13242223	71	\$46,000	Yes
KEva	13140213	54	\$63,428	Yes
LWRog	13243222	76	\$60,000	Yes
RScoDBra	13244202	25	\$10,000	Yes

Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Ande	12438232	32	\$12,000	Yes
NEst	12438223	137	\$38,600	Yes

Swift

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Flad	12238223	182	\$22,000	Yes
Lehn	12243220	39	\$12,000	Yes

Wilkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
TMal	13645228	154	\$77,100	Yes

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

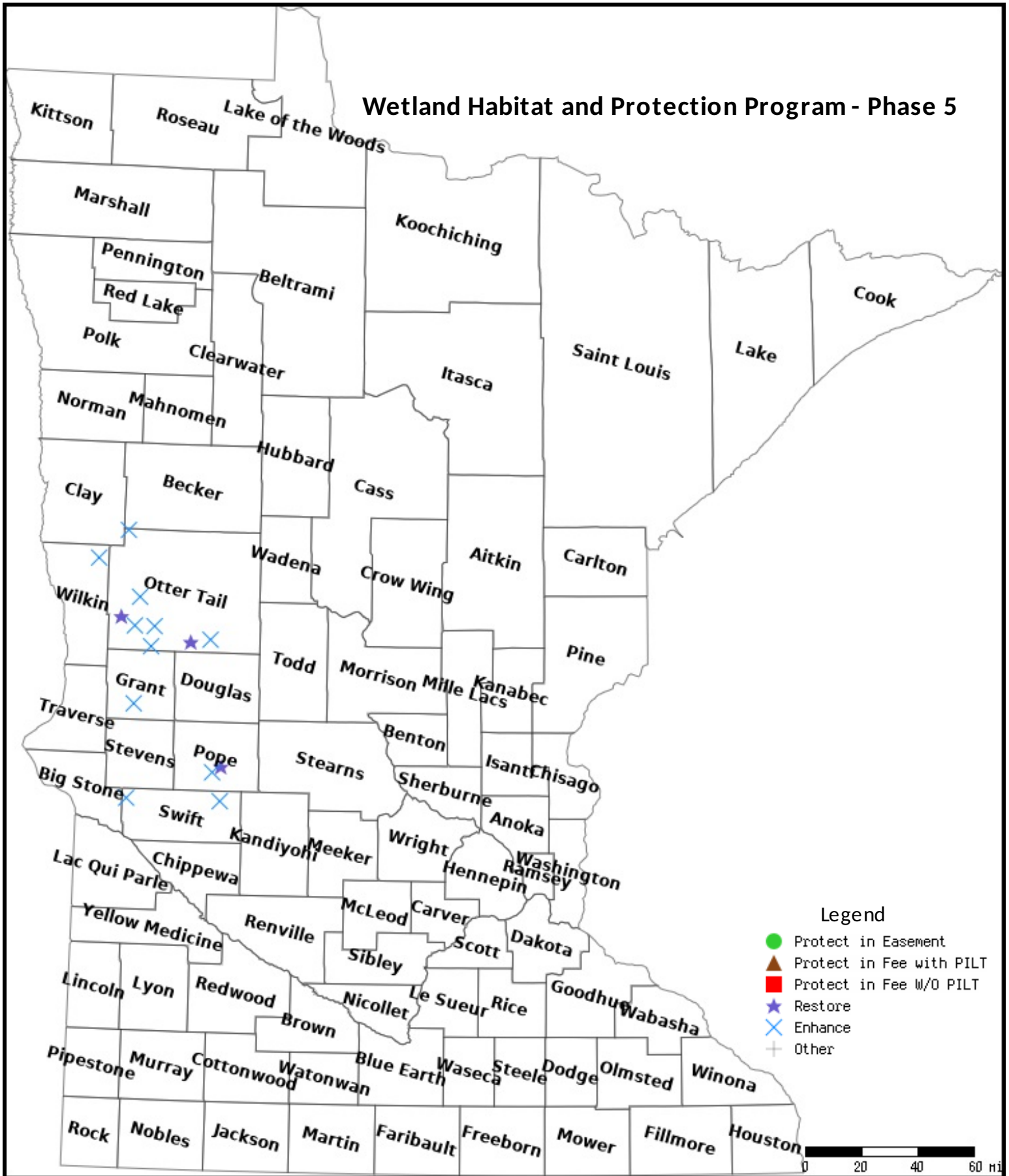
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Wetland Habitat and Protection Program - Phase 5



Data Generated From Parcel List