

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Laws of Minnesota 2009 Final Report

Date: July 18, 2013

Program or Project Title: Bluffland Prairie Protection Initiative

Funds Recommended: \$500,000

Manager's Name: Kris Larson

Title:

Organization: Minnesota Land Trust

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Legislative Citation: ML 2009, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(f)

Appropriation Language: \$500,000 in fiscal year 2010 is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Land Trust or successor to acquire permanent easements protecting critical prairie and grassland habitats in the blufflands in southeastern Minnesota. A list of proposed fee title and permanent easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

County Locations: Fillmore, and Houston.

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Southeast Forest

Activity Type:

- Protect in Easement

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Prairie

Abstract:

This initiative protected 548 acres of habit in the blufflands region of southeastern Minnesota--an area that contains unique and ecologically important prairie, oak savanna and grassland habitat along with outstanding forested bluffs, woodlands, floodplains and cold water trout streams.

Activity Detail

Design and Scope of Work:

The Mississippi River Blufflands ecological subsection is identified in Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as having the highest concentration of species in greatest conservation need in the entire State. This includes a high concentration of neo-tropical migrant birds and waterfowl, as well as reptiles, mammals, mollusks and insects. Many of these game and non-game species exist in part because of the rich tapestry of habitat types in the region--hardwood forests, floodplain wetlands, cold water streams--and the unique presence of bluff prairie, oak savanna and re-established grasslands.

This rich tapestry is threatened today by the destructive impacts of land fragmentation, bluff-top development and changes in agricultural practices. The Minnesota Land Trust has been engaged in the protection of the Blufflands for more than a decade, having preserved more than 6,000 acres of land through 42 projects, making it one of the organization's highest priorities.

The Land Trust completed four conservation easements and secured an option for a fifth. Through this program, the Land Trust also conducted landowner outreach and now has information on 20 other landowners that DNR has identified and ranked as having outstanding prairie property. Specific activities conducted under this grant included: further identifying and negotiating with these interested landowners, drafting and completing easements, documenting property conditions, and creating plans for and dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring, management and enforcement of those easements.

The conservation easements the Land Trust negotiated with each landowner were specifically designed to protect the natural features and habitat values of that landowner's particular tract of land, including the rare goat prairie and grasslands which was the primary habitat focus of this program. The easements limited commercial, industrial and residential development and division of the property, restricted inappropriate agricultural practices and required an approved land management plan to encourage proper management of the resource.

The use of conservation easements to protect critical habitat is a widely-accepted practice which has demonstrated great results both in Minnesota and around the country. The Minnesota Land Trust has an effective track record of using easements in a similar capacity for almost 20 years, holding more conservation easements than any other private conservation organization in the state--making it one of the most experienced organizations working with the unique conservation tool.

The success of conservation easements requires an effective partnership with the private landowners. As such, the Land Trust has developed an effective conservation easement stewardship program to both prevent future impacts through encouraging voluntary compliance with the terms of the easement and to enforce and defend the easement in the unlikely case of an easement violation. The Minnesota Land Trust and conservation organizations around the country have recognized the great importance of substantially investing in stewardship activity. Our successful history of easement stewardship is one of the important factors which led to the Minnesota Land Trust being one of the first accredited land trusts in the country. The Land Trust is committed to monitoring and enforcing the conservation easements secured under this program in perpetuity and has dedicated the funding necessary to fulfill this obligation.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Plans Addressed:

- Driftless Area Restoration Effort
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- Strategic Plan for Coldwater Resources Management in Southeastern Minnesota
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- Minnesota County Biological Survey

LSOHC Statewide Priorities:

- Address conservation opportunities that will be lost if not immediately acted on
- Address wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Are able to leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Target unique Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife

LSOHC Southeast Forest Section Priorities:

- Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties
- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant goat prairies

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- No Relationships Listed

Sustainability and Maintenance:

The land protected will be sustained through the best standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. Funding for easement stewardship was included in the budget and secured thanks to this grant. Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easement stewardship program includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and aggressively defending in the easement in the case of a real violation.

Outcomes

Programs in southeast forest region:

- No Programs Listed

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount: \$500,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	Request	Spent	Cash Leverage (anticipated)	Cash Leverage (received)	Leverage Source	Total (original)	Total (final)
Personnel	\$35,000	\$69,000	\$0	\$0		\$35,000	\$69,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$395,000	\$299,500	\$0	\$0		\$395,000	\$299,500
Easement Stewardship	\$65,000	\$60,000	\$0	\$0		\$65,000	\$60,000
Travel	\$3,000	\$3,100	\$0	\$0		\$3,000	\$3,100
Professional Services	\$0	\$40,300	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$40,300
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$2,000	\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$0
Total	\$500,000	\$471,900	\$0	\$0	-	\$500,000	\$471,900

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	Spent	Cash Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Conservation and Legal Staff	0.30	3.00	\$69,000	\$0		\$69,000
Total	0.30	3.00	\$69,000	\$0	-	\$69,000

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands (original)	Wetlands (final)	Prairies (original)	Prairies (final)	Forest (original)	Forest (final)	Habitats (original)	Habitats (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	300	548	0	0	0	0	300	548
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	300	548	0	0	0	0	300	548

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands (original)	Wetlands (final)	Prairies (original)	Prairies (final)	Forest (original)	Forest (final)	Habitats (original)	Habitats (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban (original)	Metro Urban (final)	Forest Prairie (original)	Forest Prairie (final)	SE Forest (original)	SE Forest (final)	Prairie (original)	Prairie (final)	N Forest (original)	N Forest (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	300	548	0	0	0	0	300	548
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	300	548	0	0	0	0	300	548

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban (original)	Metro Urban (final)	Forest Prairie (original)	Forest Prairie (final)	SE Forest (original)	SE Forest (final)	Prairie (original)	Prairie (final)	N Forest (original)	N Forest (final)	Total (original)	Total (final)
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$500,000	\$471,900

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles (original)

0 miles

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles (final)

0 miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Rushford Sand Barrens	10408227	148	\$105,000			

Houston

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Root River	10404225	145	\$15,000			
Root River - Nesbit Ridge	10404204	244	\$215,000			
Root River - Perkins Valley	10407225	11	\$19,500			

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.

Completed Parcel: Root River

of Total Acres: 145
County: Houston
Township: 104
Range: 04
Direction: 2
Section: 25
of Acres:
Wetlands/Upland:
of Acres: Forest: 107
of Acres:
Prairie/Grassland: 18
Amount of Shoreline: 4136 (Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable): NA
Has there been signage erected at the site: No -
This is a private easement. However, we will be working with all the landowners with easements funded through the OHF to erect signs with the OHF acknowledgement in strategic places on the properties.
Annual Reporting Organization Name: Minnesota Land Trust
Annual Reporting Manager Name: Kris Larson, Executive Director
Annual Reporting Address: 2356 University Ave. W., Suite 240
Annual Reporting City: St. Paul
Annual Reporting State: MN
Annual Reporting Zip: 55114
Annual Reporting Email: mnland@mnland.org
Annual Reporting Phone: 651-647-9590
Purchase Date: December 28, 2010
Purchase Price: \$62,500
Appraised Value: \$95,000
Donations: \$32,500
Easement Holder Organization Name: Same as above
Responsible Organization Name: Same as above
Underlying Fee Owner: Kenneth J. Visger

Completed Parcel: Root River - Nesbit Ridge

of Total Acres: 244
County: Houston
Township: 104
Range: 04
Direction: 2
Section: 04
of Acres:
Wetlands/Upland:
of Acres: Forest: 209
of Acres: 24
Prairie/Grassland:
Amount of Shoreline: 4890 (Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable): na
No -
Has there been signage erected at the site: This is a conservation easement property. However, the Minnesota Land Trust will work with all landowners with easements funded by OHF to place signs in strategic locations on their property.
Annual Reporting Organization Name: Minnesota Land Trust
Annual Reporting Manager Name: Kris Larson
Annual Reporting Address: 2356 University Ave., Suite 240
Annual Reporting City: St. Paul
Annual Reporting State: MN
Annual Reporting Zip: 55114
Annual Reporting Email: mnland@mnland.org
Annual Reporting Phone: 6516479590
Purchase Date: June 23, 2011
Purchase Price: \$200,000
Appraised Value: \$200,000
Easement Holder Organization Name: Same as above
Responsible Organization Name: Same as above
Underlying Fee Owner: Kent W. Holen and Cheryl K. Holen,

Completed Parcel: Root River - Perkins Valley

of Total Acres: 11
County: Houston
Township: 104
Range: 07
Direction: 2
Section: 25
of Acres:
Wetlands/Upland:
of Acres: Forest: 3
of Acres:
Prairie/Grassland: 8
Amount of Shoreline: (Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):
No -
Has there been signage erected at the site: This is a conservation easement property. However, the Minnesota Land Trust will work with all landowners with easements funded by OHF to place signs in strategic locations on their property.
Annual Reporting Organization Name: Minnesota Land Trust
Annual Reporting Manager Name: Kris Larson
Annual Reporting Address: 2356 University Ave., Suite 240
Annual Reporting City: St. Paul
Annual Reporting State: MN
Annual Reporting Zip: 55114
Annual Reporting Email: mnland@mnland.org
Annual Reporting Phone: 6516479590
Purchase Date: December 07, 2011
Purchase Price: \$4,500
Easement Holder Organization Name: Same as above
Responsible Organization Name: Same as above
Underlying Fee Owner: Scot R. Leddy

Completed Parcel: Rushford Sand Barrens

of Total Acres: 148
County: Fillmore
Township: 104
Range: 08
Direction: 2
Section: 27
of Acres:
Wetlands/Upland:
of Acres: Forest: 119
of Acres:
Prairie/Grassland: 20
Amount of Shoreline: 1536 (Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable): na
No -
Has there been signage erected at the site: This is a conservation easement property. However, the Minnesota Land Trust will work with all landowners with easements funded by OHF to place signs in strategic locations on their property.
Annual Reporting Organization Name: Minnesota Land Trust
Annual Reporting Manager Name: Kris Larson, Executive Director
Annual Reporting Address: 2356 University Ave. W., Suite 240
Annual Reporting City: St. Paul
Annual Reporting State: MN
Annual Reporting Zip: 55114
Annual Reporting Email: mnland@mnland.org
Annual Reporting Phone: 6516479590
Purchase Date: December 22, 2011
Purchase Price: \$90,000
Appraised Value: \$95,000
Donations: \$5,000
Easement Holder Organization Name: Same as above
Responsible Organization Name: Same as above
Underlying Fee Owner: Arlyss J. Peterson