

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Accomplishment Plan



Date: August 27, 2018

Program or Project Title: Wild Rice River Corridor Habitat Restoration

Funds Recommended: \$ 2,270,000

Manager's Name: Kevin Ruud

Title: Administrator

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Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(j)

Appropriation Language: \$2,270,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Wild Rice Watershed District to acquire land in fee and permanent conservation easement and to restore river and related habitat in the Wild Rice River corridor. A list of proposed acquisitions and restorations must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan. ML 2018, Ch. X, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd 10 Carryforwards: (b) The availability of the appropriation in Laws 2015, First Special Session chapter 2, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (j), for Wild Rice River Corridor Habitat Restoration is extended to June 30, 2021.

County Locations: Norman

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Prairie
- Wetlands

Abstract:

This is the first phase of a project to restore 23 channelized river miles to 50 miles of natural stream channel and protect and restore 1,850 acres of floodplain forest, wetland, and grassland habitat along the Wild Rice River.

Design and scope of work:

In the past 100 years, many rivers and streams in the Red River Basin were straightened, ditched, cleared, and snagged with a goal of improving drainage. These activities destroyed hundreds of miles of aquatic habitat and eliminated thousands of acres of riparian forest, wetland and grassland habitat. These habitat losses continue today and have directly resulted in reduced fish and wildlife populations within the channelized reaches of river corridors.

The Wild Rice River is a major Red River tributary, with a drainage area encompassing approximately 1,560 square miles. The Red River

Drainage Commission channelized the Lower Wild Rice River in the late 1800's with further channel "improvement" completed in the 1950's. These projects converted over 50 miles of natural sinuous channel and floodplain corridor into a 23 mile straightened channel. The channelized reach of the Wild Rice River currently provides little functional aquatic or riparian corridor habitat and reduces connectivity between the lower 49 miles of the river to the upstream 130 miles. Agriculture is the primary land use in this area, with only small remnants of natural habitat remaining.

Restoration of this river corridor is the highest rated project on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources stream restoration priority list (attached). The Wild Rice Watershed District, in partnership with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and state and federal agencies have developed a long term plan to restore the Wild Rice River. Acquisition of the corridor is the first phase on this long-term project, which will restore 50 miles of natural channel and over 6,500 acres of riparian forest, wetland, and prairie habitat. The long-term vision for the project includes establishment of a ½-mile wide protected corridor along the river channel, setting back existing ditch banks from the river channel, reconnecting oxbows and construction of natural river habitat, and restoration of perennial forest, wetland, and prairie plant communities. The stream rehabilitation will be based on the principles of natural channel design with an understanding of the hydrology and fluvial geomorphology at the site. The enhanced stream and associated riparian wetlands will improve habitat for Channel Catfish, Lake Sturgeon, Northern Pike, Smallmouth Bass, Walleye, and the other 50+ fish species documented in the Wild Rice River.

In addition to the fish habitat directly provided in the 50 mile restored stream channel, the associated floodplain forest, wetland, and grassland habitat will provide critical wildlife habitat. The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan lists restoration of channelized prairie river segments and cultivation of lands immediately adjacent to streams and ditches as critical challenges. This project addresses both of these concerns. In addition, the upstream portion of the project area lies within the corridor-based conservation area targeted to address connectivity of prairie plants and animals. Currently, 46% of the 6,359 acres within the primary Wild Rice River Corridor is classified as cultivated land (see attached Land Use document). The second most common type of land cover is wooded wetlands; accounting for 35% of the lands within the corridor.

Phase 1 of this project is targeted land acquisition. As part of the long term plan, the river has been divided into Reaches A to F. This funding request will target acquisition to Reach C of the corridor. This reach was selected for Phase 1 due to expressed landowner interest and the high percentage of cultivated land within the reach. Of the 1,425 acres within the primary corridor of this reach, 947 acres (67%) are classified as cultivated crops. The other primary land classifications within this reach are woody wetland (249 acres) and open water (149 acres). While land acquisition will be targeted to Reach C, any other opportunities to acquire and protect lands within the main corridor (A-F) and adjacent lands to the primary corridor in Reach C will also be considered. A total of 1,850 acres of land is targeted for acquisition in this phase of the project (1,425 acres within the primary corridor of Reach C and 425 acres adjacent land and opportunities for acquisition in other reaches).

The Wild Rice River Watershed District will lead this project. Numerous partners will be needed to ensure success. In the land acquisition phase of the project, the local Soil and Water Conservation District and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources will be critical to this success. LSOHC funding will be used to establish Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements with individual landowners. Additional legal agreements between the State of Minnesota, the Wild Rice Watershed District, and landowners will reserve rights needed to implement future phases of the project (e.g. moving levees, restoring the channel). RIM Easement payments will be calculated using standard township values at 90% of the Township Average Tillable Land Value on cropland acres, and 60% of this value on non-cropland.

In future channel restoration oriented phases of the project, the MNDNR and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will provide technical assistance, funding, and project monitoring to evaluate outcomes. The watershed district will be responsible for final design, engineering, and construction of the project. If funding for this corridor rehabilitation is not secured, the opportunity to rehabilitate this reach of the Wild Rice River Corridor will be lost and it will remain a poor functioning channelized river segment.

In the Budget, the Personnel line includes funds for Wild Rice Watershed District Staff for program management and project coordination. The Professional Services line includes a planned amount for Houston Engineering's assistance with surveying and design work. The Professional Services line also includes Title Agents' assistance with coordinating title clearing and conducting closings for acquired easements. The Contracts line is slotted for a contract with BWSR to conduct easement processing. The WRWD is pursuing a single/sole source contract with BWSR, as BWSR is the only entity identifiable that can perform this work in consideration of the appropriation's intended purpose and objectives.

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 project is the land acquisition phase of a long term project that will restore 50 miles of river and over 6,500 acres of habitat for associated fish and wildlife communities. The Wild Rice River and associated prairie and forest lowland habitats were identified as key habitats for species of greatest conservation need in the Red River Prairie ecoregion. Key among aquatic species is the Lake Sturgeon,

a species of special concern. The Wild Rice River provides sturgeon habitat and restoration of the river will help ensure successful reestablishment of sturgeon populations in the Red River basin. This project will also likely benefit mussel and insect populations in the Wild Rice River. Two species of mussels, black sandshell and fluted-shell are listed as species of special concern are known to be present in the upstream reaches of the Wild Rice River. Two species of caddisfly present in the Wild Rice River are also listed as species of special concern. Acquisition and restoration of the stream and associated riparian wetlands will also improve habitat for Channel Catfish, Northern Pike, Smallmouth Bass, Walleye, and more than 50 other fish species present in other reaches of the Wild Rice River.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

The restoration of the Lower Wild Rice River corridor is the highest priority project on the state river restoration priority list. The Minnesota Prairie Plan also lists restoration of channelized prairie river segments and cultivation of lands immediately adjacent to streams and ditches as critical challenges.

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

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams

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:

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

How does this program accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

The Watershed District has a long interest in restoration of the Wild Rice River Corridor. This project was initiated in the 1990's and a Feasibility Study was completed by the Corps of Engineers in 2005. Lack of funding has stalled implementation of this plan. Funding through the LSOHC is critical to accelerating and completing the land acquisition phase of this project. Securing funds now will allow the watershed district and partners to use the RIM program to acquire lands in targeted areas. If this LSOHC funding is not secured, the watershed district will continue to work on the project in small scale pieces as opportunities and funding become available.

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:

Not Listed

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
Multiple Years	Wild Rice Watershed District	1,270,000
Multiple Years	US Army Corps of Engineers	1,270,000

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

The Wild Rice River Watershed District will be responsible for all maintenance of this project. Sustainability and maintenance of this channel restoration is required within watershed district law (Minnesota Statutes 103D). Long term project maintenance is authorized and funded through established watershed district construction and maintenance funds. This project is designed to mimic natural, stable stream channels and should require less maintenance than the current channelized stream segment.

The watershed district is leading the land acquisition, project development, and engineering of this project with full cooperation of a watershed-based team composed of landowners and representatives of local, state, and federal agencies.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Annual	Watershed District	Monitoring and Maintenance of Channel Restoration		
Annual	Watershed District	Monitoring and Maintenance of Restoration in Acquired Lands		

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**

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Finalize Acquisition and Marketing Plan with Partners	January, 2018
Contact Landowners in Corridor	January, 2020
Land Acquisition	June, 2021

Date of Final Report Submission: 6/29/2021

Federal Funding:

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

Outcomes:

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife *This funding request will target acquisition to Reach C of the corridor. This reach was selected for this part of Phase 1 due to expressed landowner interest and the high percentage of cultivated land within the reach. Of the 3,235 acres within this reach, 2,647 acres (82%) are classified as cultivated crops. The other primary land classifications within this reach are woody wetland (275 acres) and open water (154 acres). While land acquisition will be targeted to Reach C, any other opportunities to acquire and protect lands within the main corridor (A-F) will also be considered.*

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 Lower Wild Rice River corridor habitat restoration project is a long term project. The recommended funding level is about 35% of the original request. The Watershed District accommodated this reduced level of funding by adjusting the expected number acquired acres from original request by about 35%.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 2270000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$50,300	\$0		\$50,300
Contracts	\$1,992,100	\$0		\$1,992,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$325,000	Wild Rice Watershed District	\$325,000
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$227,600	\$0		\$227,600
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,270,000	\$325,000		\$2,595,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Administration	0.16	3.00	\$50,300	\$0		\$50,300
Total	0.16	3.00	\$50,300	\$0		\$50,300

Amount of Request: \$2,270,000

Amount of Leverage: \$325,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 14.32%

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	40	394	6	40	480
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	40	394	6	40	480

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	0
Enhance	0
Total	0

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	\$135,000	\$1,980,000	\$20,000	\$135,000	\$2,270,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$135,000	\$1,980,000	\$20,000	\$135,000	\$2,270,000

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	0	0	480	0	480
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	480	0	480

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	\$0	\$0	\$2,270,000	\$0	\$2,270,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,270,000	\$0	\$2,270,000

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	\$3375	\$5025	\$3333	\$3375
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	\$0	\$0	\$4729	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Automatic system calculation / not entered by managers

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

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

Norman

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
ADA ELEVATOR CO - PRIMARY	14347203	46	\$212,400	No	Limited	Full
ADA ELEVATOR CO - PRIMARY	14447234	75	\$392,300	No	Limited	Full
ADA ELEVATOR CO - PRIMARY	14447235	117	\$625,800	No	Limited	Full
BORGEN/CHARLES A/JR - PRIMARY	14447226	7	\$37,200	No	Limited	Full
HANSON/CLIFFORD/INC. - PRIMARY	14347203	51	\$299,000	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/DWIGHT A & MARY L - PRIMARY	14446230	28	\$54,100	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/DWIGHT A & MARY L - PRIMARY	14447225	3	\$2,900	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/DWIGHT A & MARY L - PRIMARY	14447225	4	\$10,100	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/DWIGHT A & MARY L - PRIMARY	14447225	12	\$60,400	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/DWIGHT A & MARY L - PRIMARY	14447225	56	\$268,000	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/HOWARD & DELORES - PRIMARY	14447225	7	\$25,200	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/HOWARD & DELORES - PRIMARY	14447225	33	\$194,500	No	Limited	Full
HEITMAN/HOWARD & DELORES - PRIMARY	14447236	63	\$372,600	No	Limited	Full
LEE/MARGARET A/TRUST - PRIMARY	14347204	90	\$597,600	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WARREN & SHARON - PRIMARY	14347203	6	\$32,000	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WARREN & SHARON - PRIMARY	14447225	33	\$219,400	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WARREN & SHARON - PRIMARY	14447236	7	\$22,400	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WAYNE & LYNN - PRIMARY	14347203	45	\$212,000	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WAYNE & LYNN - PRIMARY	14347203	64	\$359,900	No	Limited	Full
LEE/WILLIAM R/TRUST - PRIMARY	14347203	31	\$131,400	No	Limited	Full
NELSON/DAVID ARTHUR - PRIMARY	14447236	24	\$163,800	No	Limited	Full
NELSON/DAVID ARTHUR - PRIMARY	14446230	35	\$90,700	No	Limited	Full
NELSON/DAVID ARTHUR - PRIMARY	14446231	46	\$208,400	No	Limited	Full
NELSON/DAVID ARTHUR - PRIMARY	14447225	30	\$152,100	No	Limited	Full
PAXTON/ARLO D - PRIMARY	14447235	51	\$349,300	No	Limited	Full
PLATT/ROBERT E - PRIMARY	14447225	42	\$49,600	No	Limited	Full
PLATT/ROBERT E - PRIMARY	14447225	3	\$21,300	No	Limited	Full
PLATT/ROBERT E - PRIMARY	14447225	10	\$45,100	No	Limited	Full
THIEL/WALTER A/JR ET AL - PRIMARY	14347203	9	\$24,400	No	Limited	Full
TOMMERDAHL/WILLIAM D - PRIMARY	14447235	31	\$148,300	No	Limited	Full
TOMMERDAHL/WILLIAM D - PRIMARY	14447235	31	\$158,400	No	Limited	Full
TUFTE/BRUCE, BLAIR & BRENT - PRIMARY	14347202	33	\$89,500	No	Limited	Full
TUFTE/BRUCE, BLAIR & BRENT - PRIMARY	14347203	59	\$185,700	No	Limited	Full
VIK/EUGENE G - PRIMARY	14447236	83	\$482,300	No	Limited	Full

VIK/EUGENE G - PRIMARY	14447235	126	\$691,300	No	Limited	Full
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Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

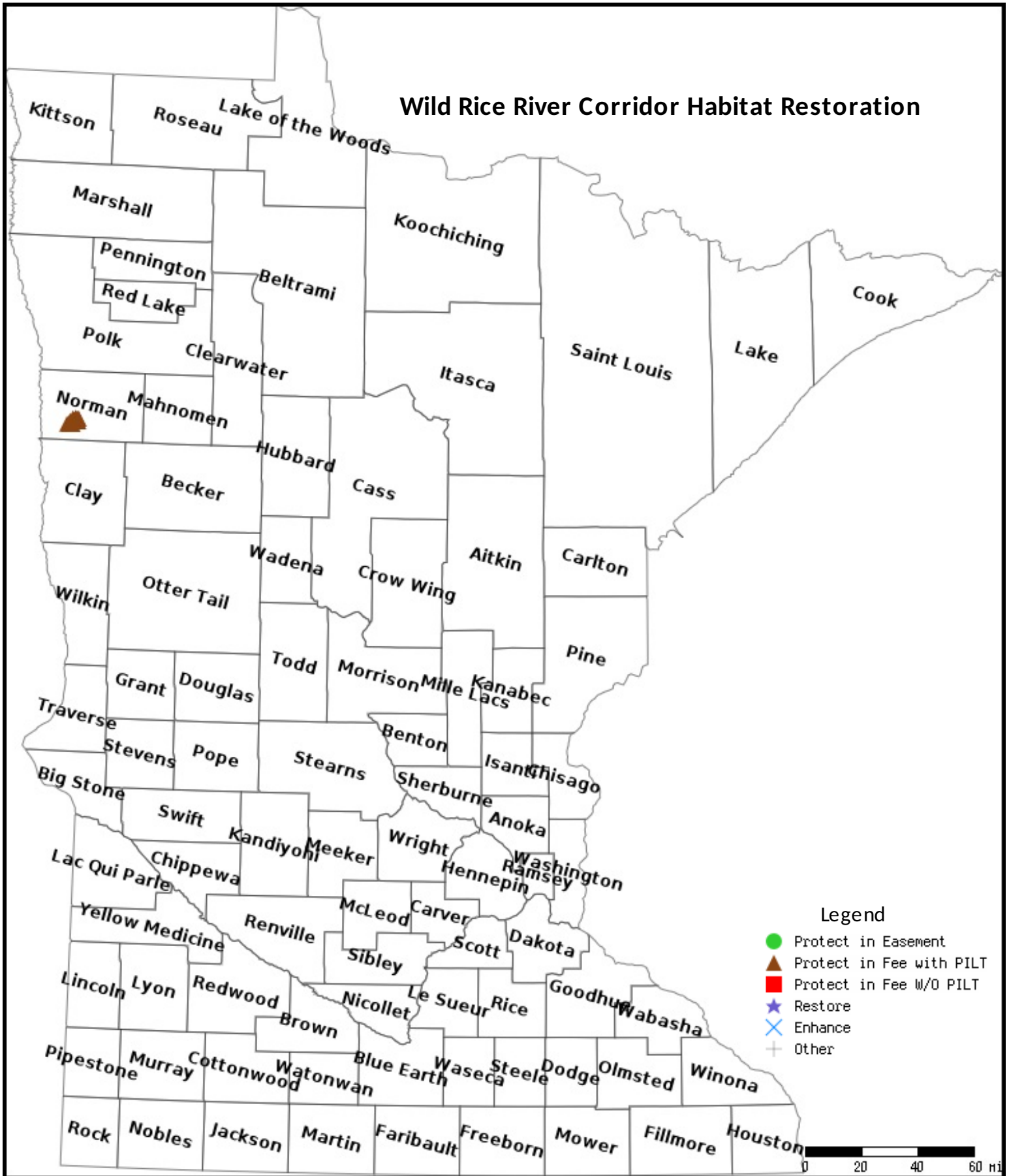
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Wild Rice River Corridor Habitat Restoration



Data Generated From Parcel List