



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 03/03/2021

Project Title: Laurentian Forest - St. Louis County Habitat Project

Funds Recommended: \$2,400,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(b)

Appropriation Language: \$2,400,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association in cooperation with The Conservation Fund and St. Louis County to acquire land in fee to be transferred to St. Louis County for wildlife habitat purposes for agreements as follows: \$2,292,000 to Minnesota Deer Hunter Association; \$108,000 to Conservation Fund. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Craig Engwall

Title: Executive Director

Organization: MN Deer Hunters Association

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Location Information

County Location(s): St. Louis.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

- Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Project Partners Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA) and The Conservation Fund (TCF) worked to cooperatively with St. Louis County to protect 1,600 acres of forest habitat at risk of being converted to uses that would degrade critical habitat for wildlife in Minnesota's northeast forest landscape.

Process & Methods

- On May 24, 2016, the St. Louis County Board unanimously endorsed the Laurentian Forest Project developed by the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA) and The Conservation Fund (TCF), and supported full funding of the joint application to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for this project.
- St. Louis County worked closely with TCF and MDHA to select private forest lands which were strategically important to St. Louis County's forest management program.
- MDHA purchased 1,600 acres of strategically selected forestlands on February 27, 2018.
- On October 22, 2019, the St. Louis County Board accepted a donation of 1,600 acres of land from the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA) in cooperation with The Conservation Fund to be managed for forestry, wildlife habitat, water quality and recreational purposes. These strategically located private forest lands were acquired by MDHA to manage and preserve forest habitat, protect water resources, and provide public hunting and recreational opportunities on lands that may not have remained open to the public.
- MDHA's and TCF's goals for purchasing 1,600 acres of private forest land in St. Louis County were seamlessly consistent with the St. Louis County's own resource management goals, which include improving forest health and productivity, protecting wildlife habitat and water quality, providing raw materials for local industry, and providing opportunities for tourism and recreation. Furthermore, the Laurentian Forest Project provided opportunities to consolidate public land ownership and expand the county's working forest land base which supports the County's traditional logger workforce and rural community economies.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

In addition to game species such as white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, woodcock and black bear, the project area contains numerous songbirds and species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern including moose, gray wolf, Canadian lynx, bald eagle, boreal owl, northern goshawk, northern long-eared bat, big brown bat, tricolored bat, red-shouldered hawk, and peregrine falcon. The parcels selected for this project will help to retain intact forest landscapes that will benefit all of these species.

White Lake Parcel – This 40 acre parcel located in southeastern St. Louis County is a mixture of younger aspen and red pine forest accessed via surrounding state tax forfeited lands. This parcel adds additional habitat and acreage to an existing and sizable public land unit.

New Independence – The 223 acres in south central St. Louis County creates a significant public forest land holding with access to a public road. The area consists of young aspen and lowland forest habitat.

Side Lake - This 200 acres of productive forest land near the western edge of St. Louis County further consolidates a large public land holding in the area. It is a nice addition of quality forest land habitat.

North Ban Lake – The 720 contiguous acres in northern St. Louis County further consolidates and provides access to a large block of forest habitat. The mixture of young upland and lowland forests combined with the existing

forest road, makes this a vital acquisition for future forest management, wildlife habitat and public access opportunities.

South Winchester Lake – This 417 acres in north central St. Louis County both consolidates and provides access to adjacent public forest habitat. The county has invested time and money for improvements to the Holms Forest Management Road which crosses the lands acquired. The land consists mainly of productive upland forests of various ages and adds vital forest habitat in an area targeted by both the county and state for public forest land acquisition.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

With the sale and transfer of large industrial private land holdings in Minnesota, parcelization has been a concern over the last decade. Historically, non-industrial private forests have been managed for forestry purposes and have provided access to intermixed County-managed lands. The parcelization and sale of these lands has resulted in loss of access to some County forest lands, loss of timber supply to industry, and increased development in rural areas which often leads to the degradation of wildlife habitat.

The project partners worked cooperatively with St. Louis County to protect in fee approximately 1,600 acres of forest habitat at risk of being converted to uses that would degrade critical habitat for wildlife in Minnesota's northeast forest landscape. Targeted parcels were considered vital to maintaining large, unfragmented blocks of forest that deliver the greatest habitat benefits. Adjacency to county, state and federal lands was a key focus in leveraging the habitat benefits provided by project parcels.

MDHA used the best scientific data available from the MN DNR, USFWS and other sources to make informed decisions as to which parcels are the highest priority. MDHA, in partnership with St. Louis County evaluated the parcels for selection using the following criteria to prioritize those parcels to be included in the project:

- Habitat quality.
- Specific habitat cover-type with an emphasis on mixed-age forest lands.
- Immediacy of threat of conversion; and
- Adjacency to other large forest blocks to maximize habitat benefits.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Minnesota Deer Hunters Association's (MDHA) project partners included The Conservation Fund (TCF), The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) and St. Louis County Lands Department. TCF assisted MDHA in the land acquisition process while MDHA worked directly with St. Louis County throughout the project.

In developing this proposal, MDHA actively engaged the St. Louis County Board and sought their support. The County Board expressed its endorsement of the project by unanimously passing a resolution supporting it and urging full funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

During the acquisition phase of this project, strong local support was received from area townships and county board.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

The Land and Minerals Department has historically managed state-owned tax forfeited lands in Trust for the taxing districts. State tax forfeited lands are governed by a unique set of state statutes. The project lands were donated to

St. Louis County in fee status; therefore, the Land and Minerals Department is being charged for the first time to actively manage sizable County fee lands into perpetuity. This charge will result in proactive forest inventory, modeling and forest planning of County fee lands. Accounting procedures will need to be developed for these county-owned lands so that revenues and costs can be tracked separately from tax forfeited trust lands.

What other funds contributed to this program?

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

- The St. Louis County Land and Minerals Department has been certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) © Standard since 2004. The lands donated by MDHA were incorporated into the Department’s Environmental Management System and the SFI Standard.
- SFI © Forest Management Standard (2015-2021) promotes sustainable forestry practices based on 13 Principles, 15 Objectives, 37 Performance Measures and 101 Indicators. These requirements include measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.
- The Land and Minerals Department maintains a yearly internal audit conducted by trained staff, and a yearly external audit conducted by an independent third party certification organization that has the technical expertise for verifying that on-the-ground practices conform to the certification standard.
- The Land and Minerals Department obtained forest stand inventory information for the donated lands from Potlatch via TCF, and incorporated the spatial inventory data into the Department’s GIS forest cover layer.
- The donated lands and inventory information will be incorporated into the Land and Mineral Department’s forest panning model to determine sustainable harvest levels, regulate age classes and improve forest management planning to maximize financial and ecological benefit. The Department has contracted with a private firm utilizing RemSoft computer software, to develop a modern and flexible forest management model for future management of forest lands under county administration.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
on going	St. Louis County	per the County forest mgmt plan	-	-

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$116,900	\$17,500	-	-	-	\$116,900	\$17,500
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,207,300	\$1,474,500	-	-	-	\$2,207,300	\$1,474,500
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,000	-
Professional Services	\$40,000	\$23,200	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$23,200
Direct Support Services	\$13,000	\$1,900	-	-	-	\$13,000	\$1,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$19,800	\$200	-	-	-	\$19,800	\$200
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300	-	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300

Partner: CF

Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$52,000	\$13,400	-	-	-	\$52,000	\$13,400
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,000	-
Professional Services	\$40,000	\$23,200	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$23,200
Direct Support Services	\$13,000	\$1,900	-	-	-	\$13,000	\$1,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$108,000	\$38,500	-	-	-	\$108,000	\$38,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MN State Director	0.25	3.0	\$5,600	-	-	\$5,600
MN Real Estate Associate	0.15	3.0	\$7,800	-	-	\$7,800

Partner: MDHA

Totals

Item	Request	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$64,900	\$4,100	-	-	-	\$64,900	\$4,100
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,207,300	\$1,474,500	-	-	-	\$2,207,300	\$1,474,500
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$19,800	\$200	-	-	-	\$19,800	\$200
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,292,000	\$1,483,800	-	-	-	\$2,292,000	\$1,483,800

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grant Manager	0.13	3.0	-	-	-	-
Fiscal Agent	0.04	3.0	-	-	-	-
Project Manager	0.05	3.0	\$4,100	-	-	\$4,100

Direct Support Services

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

The Conservation Funds real estate support staff keeps hourly time sheets to track direct time spent on projects by grant source. We have used those past metrics to estimate the costs for this grant. MDHA keeps hourly time sheets of the time spend on this specific grant project.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Some of the lands (658-acres) that were intended to be protected with the grant did not have legal access. Potlatch was not willing to sell these lands at the time of the closing in February 2018 and were split off as a potential Phase 2. TCF tried over the next two years to secure these lands with the grant funds but were unable to convince the seller to sell within the appraised value, which is reduced when lands do not have legal access.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

- E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (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	2,500	1,600	0	0	2,500	1,600
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	2,500	1,600	0	0	2,500	1,600

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	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	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,500	1,600	2,500	1,600

Fee w/o State PILT Liability													
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	0	2,500	1,600	2,500	1,600								

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300	\$2,400,000	\$1,522,300

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$960	\$951	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability										
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$960	\$951
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *The 1,600 acres of high-quality northern forest habitat acquired with this funding have added protected lands to large contiguous blocks that were once at high-risk of being sold for recreational development. Parcelization of smaller properties is one of the major threats to forestlands in Minnesota, and identification of key parcels continues to be evaluated by forest managers for permanent protection.*

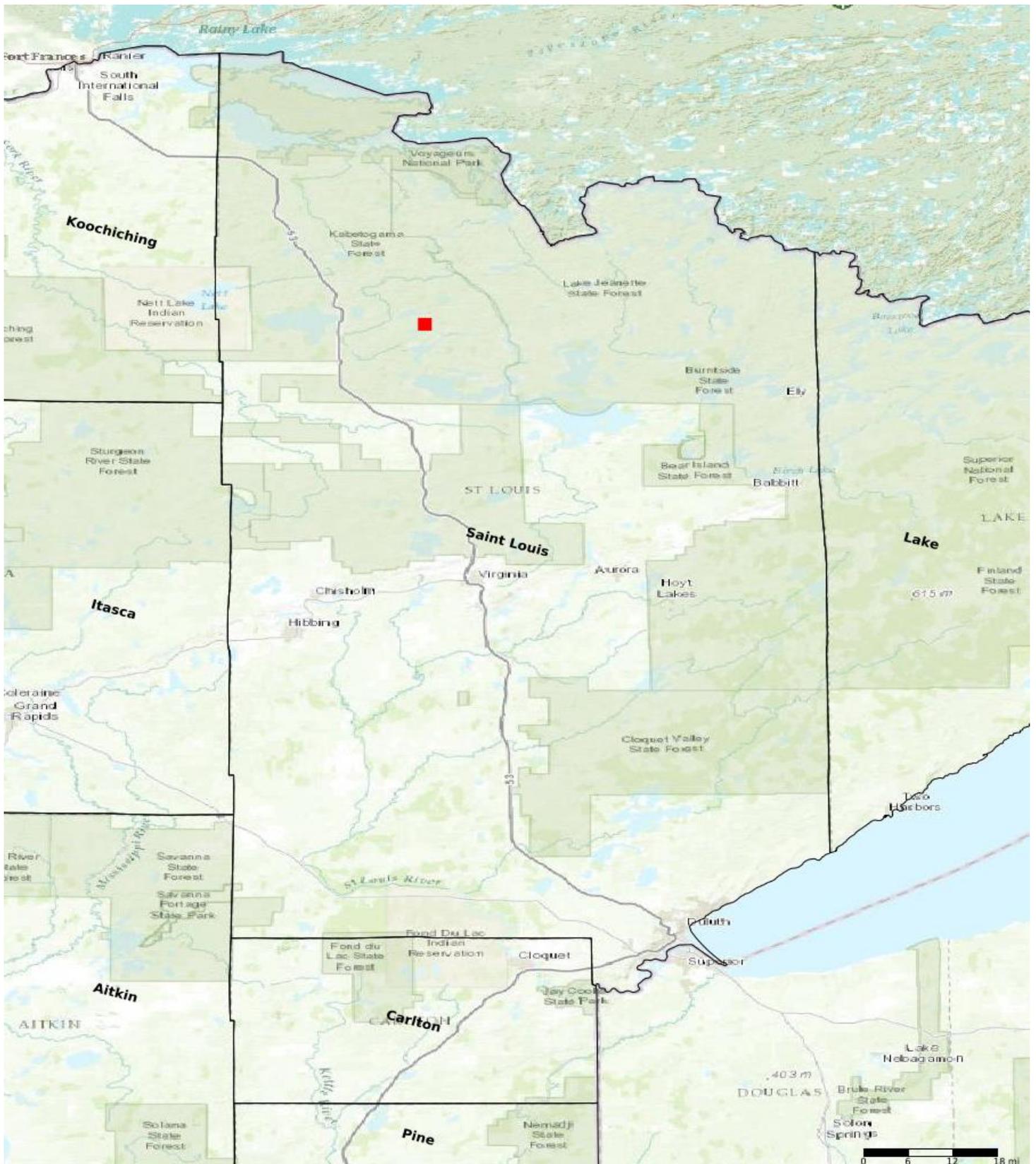
Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
St. Louis County All Parcels 275-288 and 413-435 MDHA	St. Louis	06418204	1,600	\$1,400,000	No



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other

Parcel Map
Laurentian Forest - St. Louis County Habitat Project
(Data Generated From Parcel List)