



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Critical Shoreland Habitat Program - Phase V

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 10/23/2023

Project Title: Critical Shoreland Habitat Program - Phase V

Funds Recommended: \$1,094,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 3(e)

Appropriation Language: \$1,094,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Minnesota Land Trust to acquire permanent conservation easements along rivers and lakes in the northern forest region. Of this amount, up to \$120,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Cass, Itasca, St. Louis and Lake.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands

- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Phase 5 of the Minnesota Land Trust's Critical Shoreland Habitat Program protected approximately 3.75 miles of shoreland and 417 acres of associated high-quality habitat in Minnesota's Northeast region by securing five permanent conservation easements in strategic locations along priority lakes and rivers. Conservation easements secured under this program are perpetual and will prevent fragmentation and destruction of existing habitat. These easements ensure that sensitive habitat will remain ecologically viable and productive for fish, game, and other wildlife by prohibiting land uses that negatively impact important habitat values.

Process & Methods

In this fifth phase of the program, the Minnesota Land Trust strategically concentrated its activities on important aquatic resources and associated forest habitat within northeast Minnesota, including DNR-designated high priority trout streams along the North Shore, sensitive shoreland along the deep-water border lakes and other high-quality aquatic habitats in the region. The Land Trust protected 3.75 miles and 417 acres of threatened shoreland habitat by acquiring permanent conservation easements from willing landowners. The program targeted projects that helped complete gaps in existing protected land, contained the highest-quality habitat, and provided the greatest leverage to the state. The Land Trust received \$195,500 donated easement value that enabled a greater impact with the funds received through this grant.

The development and disturbance of the state's remaining sensitive shoreland habitat continues to be a threat identified in many of the State's resource protection plans. Science conducted by the DNR and others indicate that the shoreland zone is one of the most biologically diverse and important habitat types for a variety of wildlife species. It is also one of Minnesota's most threatened resources due to the intensity of shoreland development and non-compatible management. Fortunately, there is an opportunity to address this threat. Outreach conducted under Phases 1 -4 of this program has generated significant landowner interest that was tapped during Phase 5 (FY2019) of this program.

Conservation easements secured under this program are perpetual and were crafted to protect the conservation values of each property. These easements will ensure that the sensitive shoreland habitat remains ecologically viable and productive for fish, game and wildlife by prohibiting land uses that negatively impact the important habitat values and requiring habitat management plans to maximize the benefits of shoreland and associated forested uplands.

Outcomes from this project included: 1) healthy populations of trout and other fish species, waterfowl, and other Species in Greatest Conservation Need; 2) maintaining water quality of aquatic resources; 3) increased participation of private landowners in habitat protection projects; and 4) enhancement of prior state and local investments made in shoreland and forest conservation in the region. The Land Trust strategically targeted complexes of protected lands in which these outcomes were maximized.

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?

The central goal of Minnesota Land Trust's Critical Shoreland Habitat Program is to protect, through permanent conservation easements, high-quality shoreland habitat along priority lakes and rivers in northeast Minnesota. Natural shoreland around Minnesota's celebrated lakes and rivers comprises one of the most biologically

important systems in the state for fish and wildlife; it is also one of the most threatened. Protection of these habitats is identified as a conservation priority for Minnesota through the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, DNR Aquatic Management Area program, State Conservation and Preservation Plan, and DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda.

Five conservation easement projects protecting 417 acres and 19,837 feet of shoreline were completed by under this grant:

King Lake (Guckenbergl 2) - This easement protects 70 acres and 5,116 feet of shoreline on King Lake, Kookoosh Lake, and Spring Creek, a designated trout stream. The nine high-quality native plant communities on the property lack anthropogenic disturbance and invasive species.

Encampment River (Welsh) - This 39-acre conservation easement protects 4,144-feet of shoreline on the Encampment River, a designated trout stream, and its tributaries. The property has Outstanding Biodiversity Significance. Forests on the property support a variety of SGCN, including bay-breasted and Cape May warblers, boreal owl, and American woodcock.

Deer Lake (Lauterbach) - This 43-acre conservation easement protects mesic hardwood forest, wet forest, small wetlands, and 404 feet of shoreline on Deer Lake, a Lake of Outstanding Biological Significance. Protection of the property builds on a complex of existing protected conservation lands including the adjacent Wabu Woods SNA and nearby Balsam-Deer Islands Wildlife Management Area.

Sax-Zim (Wallace-Loiselle) - This easement protects 117 acres of high-quality forest and 2,732 feet of the St. Louis River. The property is part of a larger landscape of protected natural lands including the adjacent Sax-Zim Bog Important Birding Area.

Stoney Brook (Massey) - This conservation easement protects 148 acres of high-quality native plant communities and 7,441 feet of shoreline on Stoney Brook, a designated trout stream. Protection of the property contributes to the water quality of the Stoney Brook AMA and Gull Lake.

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.

Project solicitation, identification and evaluation utilized criteria and recommended actions from existing science-based conservation plans. These plans included Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025, the Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Strategic Land Protection Plan, Watershed Protection and Restoration Strategies, and others. Working with these plans and strategies as a base, the Minnesota Land Trust identified Priority Conservation Program Areas where conservation easements could be targeted to complement existing and ongoing protection actions or fill gaps in existing conservation program areas. Project specific evaluation of potential projects utilized data from DNR and others for prioritizing projects and for establishing conservation values to be protected in easements.

Data sources used included Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS; sites of significant biodiversity, native plant communities, lakes of significant biodiversity), Natural Heritage Information System (rare features data), hydrologic information and classification of streams and lakes (e.g., trout streams, sensitive shorelands, cold water refuge lakes, wild rice lakes), land ownership and administration (to determine adjacency of other conservation lands and opportunities to establish complexes and buffers), and public water access locations. Incorporating these data in project evaluation allowed prioritization of conservation easements on lands with known high-quality

resources (e.g., MBS areas) and with importance from the perspective of landscape context (e.g., corridors, complexes, and reduced fragmentation).

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

The program benefitted from involvement of government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the Minnesota DNR, Board of Water and Soil Resources, various County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and local county staff. Partnerships with NGO organizations, including Northern Waters Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Encampment Forest Association, Listening Point Foundation, and others, fostered collaboration on conservation opportunities.

Our partners recognized the Minnesota Land Trust's expertise and capacity to complete conservation easements, which led to identification of high-quality potential projects. Past conservation easement work in the program area also created a network of landowners who advocate conservation to their neighbors and friends.

Landowner outreach was conducted with the support of local NGO staff, county staff, DNR and BWSR staff, and community members at large. Outreach was conducted via in-person conversations, referrals from partner organizations, and social media promotion.

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

The single most significant challenge encountered during the fulfillment of this grant was the impact of COVID-19 that curtailed our ability to meet and engage with landowners, conduct effective outreach, and efficiently move conservation easement projects through to completion with professional service providers and contractors. The Land Trust requested and received two grant extensions due to COVID-19.

Despite these delays, Minnesota Land Trust significantly exceeded the acreage (417 acres protected vs 225 acres proposed; 185% of goal), shoreline (19,837 feet protected vs 3,168 feet proposed; 626% of goal), and leverage (\$195,500 received vs \$165,000 proposed; 118% of goal) goals for this grant. This leverage, in the form of donated easement value from landowners, allowed for increased conservation impact across the grant as a whole.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- N/A

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

Land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through the best standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally accredited and insured land trust with a 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 case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities was provided through the grant and is now included within the Land Trust's Monitoring and Enforcement Fund.

In addition, the Land Trust helped landowners develop comprehensive habitat management plans to help ensure that the land will be managed for its wildlife and water quality benefits. Depending upon the needs of a specific property, Land Trust staff will explore with associated private landowners opportunities for restoration and enhancement work. The Land Trust will assist landowners in procuring funding for these activities or otherwise connecting with appropriate agencies as such needs and opportunities arise.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023 (and in perpetuity)	Minnesota Land Trust Monitoring and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of conservation easement in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$81,000	\$112,000	\$114,200	-	-	-	\$81,000	\$114,200
Contracts	\$30,000	\$72,000	\$72,000	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$72,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$744,100	\$664,000	\$660,400	\$165,000	\$195,500	Private landowner donation of easement value	\$909,100	\$855,900
Easement Stewardship	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	-	-	-	\$120,000	\$120,000
Travel	\$6,000	\$2,000	\$1,700	-	-	-	\$6,000	\$1,700
Professional Services	\$90,000	\$94,000	\$94,400	-	-	-	\$90,000	\$94,400
Direct Support Services	\$21,900	\$30,000	\$31,000	-	-	-	\$21,900	\$31,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$1,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,000	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,094,000	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700	\$165,000	\$195,500	-	\$1,259,000	\$1,289,200

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.24	5.0	\$114,200	-	-	\$114,200

Direct Support Services

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.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Splitting project costs, and resulting deliverables, between this final phase of the Critical Shorelands program and the follow-on Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance program allowed for the completion of the Stoney Brook project, a large project meeting the objectives of both programs. As such, we were able to close on additional project through this grant. This allowed for the efficient and effective use of funds in the grant budgets while protecting a large parcel that may not have otherwise been achievable.

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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	225	417	225	417
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	225	417	225	417

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700

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 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	0	0	0	0	225	417	225	417
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	225	417	225	417

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700	\$1,094,000	\$1,093,700

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

3.75

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Permanent conservation easements were secured on five properties protecting 417 acres and 19,837 feet (3.75 miles) of shoreline in northeastern Minnesota. This represents 185% of the target acres and 626% of the target shoreline.*

Measure: Acres protected.

Parcels

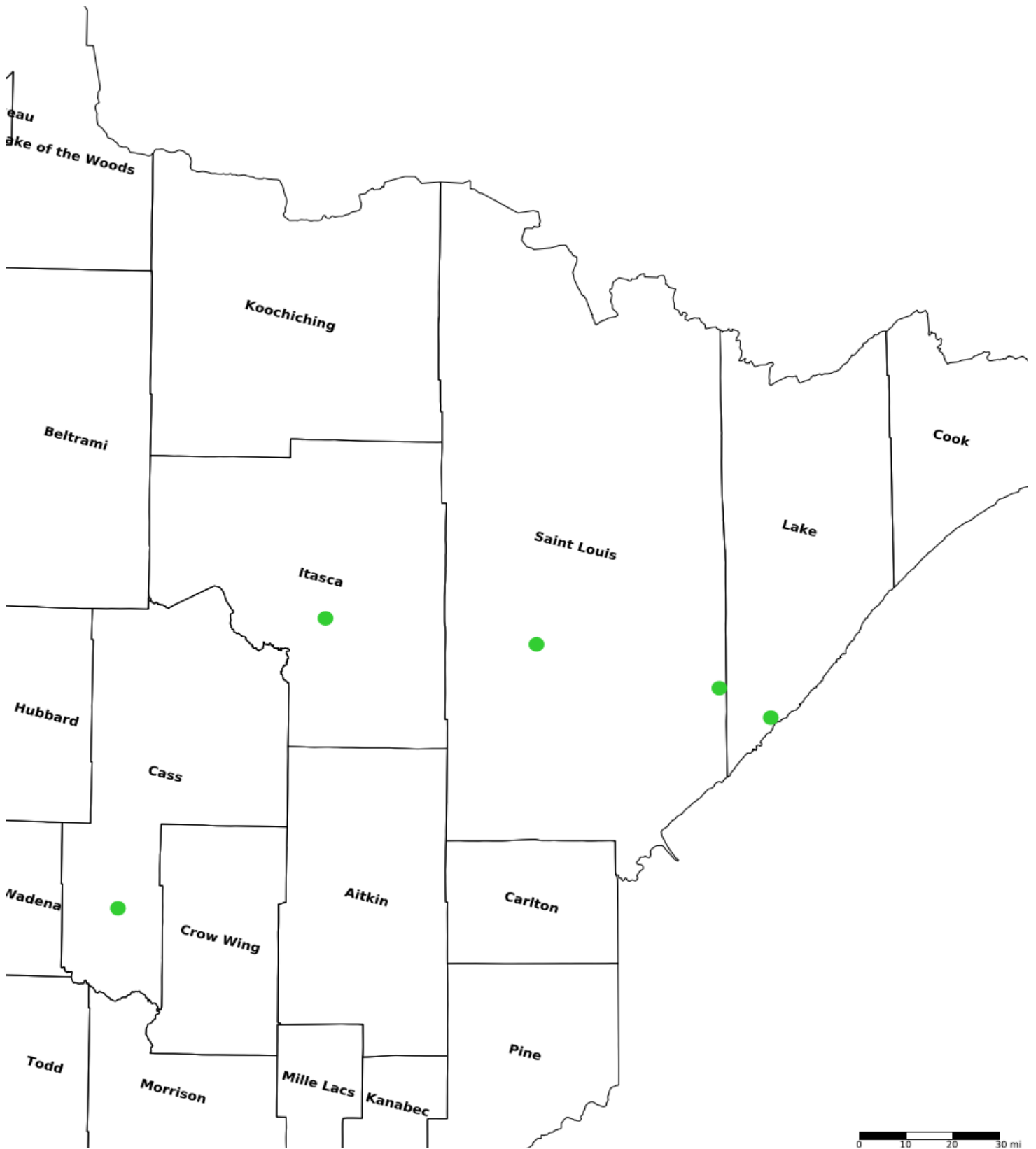
Sign-up Criteria?

No

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Stoney Brook (Massey)	Cass	13631225	148	\$100,000	No
Deer Lake (Lauterbach)	Itasca	05726226	43	\$442,000	No
Encampment River (Welsh)	Lake	05310203	39	\$0	No
King Lake (Guckenber 2)	St. Louis	05412202	70	\$0	No
Sax-Zim (Wallace-Loiselle)	St. Louis	05618220	117	\$118,400	No

Parcel Map



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