



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Enhanced Public Land – Open Landscapes
Laws of Minnesota 2019 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 03/05/2024

Project Title: Enhanced Public Land – Open Landscapes

Funds Recommended: \$955,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd, 3(e)

Appropriation Language: \$955,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Pheasants Forever, in cooperation with the Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society, to enhance and restore early successional open landscape habitat on public lands. A list of proposed restoration and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Sabin Adams

Title: MN Project Manager

Organization: Minnesota Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society/Pheasants Forever, Inc.

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Location Information

County Location(s): Carlton, St. Louis, Lake of the Woods, Pine and Aitkin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

Narrative

Abstract

This proposal will enhance 2,910 acres of open landscape habitat in the Northern Forest Region to create early successional habitat that benefits sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife species. Habitat will be enhanced through tree removal, prescribed fire, diversity seeding, conservation grazing, brush mowing, and shearing. Enhancements will take place on permanently protected lands open to public hunting including Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), state forest lands, and county-owned lands.

Design and Scope of Work

The sharp-tailed grouse was once common on Minnesota's open and brushland habitats. However, the loss of habitat to cropland, tree plantations and natural succession, have significantly decreased the acreage of suitable habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and other early successional habitat dependent species. A long-term decline in sharp-tailed grouse populations has caused them to be listed as a Minnesota species of greatest conservation need.

In the Northern Forest Region of Minnesota, activities that enhance and restore open landscapes such as prescribed fire, mowing and shearing, tree removal, diversity seeding, and conservation grazing will be implemented to ensure our public lands are reaching their full potential for wildlife habitat.

Prescribed fire is the primary management tool for managing or creating early successional habitat where conditions are appropriate. Prescribed fire increases vigor, sets back natural succession of woody species, and removes built up residue.

In some cases where fire is not possible due to site conditions or type of vegetation, mowing and shearing of small diameter brush and trees will be used.

In areas with larger trees that cannot be burned or mowed, tree removal will be done. Tree removal will not occur in areas where timber harvest would be marketable because most projects are too small to make them profitable for logging and/or are removing smaller undesirable trees and brush.

We will use a site-specific combination of techniques (e.g. cultivation, tree removal, herbicide, and prescribed fire) to bring back productivity to these public lands. A diverse mixture of native grasses and forbs is ideal for nesting and brood rearing of upland nesting birds such as sharp-tailed grouse. In close collaboration with the land managers we are ensuring only native species to the region are planted. We will seed a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs that are well adapted to site conditions. Mowing will be used as needed to manage annual weed pressure and to ensure establishment.

Conservation grazing is an important enhancement tool for sites that are difficult to conduct prescribed fire or need to target specific enhancement needs (e.g. cool season grass, brush, and tree suppression). Permanent infrastructure with a lifespan of 30+ years will be installed to conduct conservation grazing plans written to benefit wildlife on WMAs only with appropriate site conditions where livestock producers are currently nearby.

The primary objective of these activities is to create early successional habitat, set back tree encroachment, and

reestablish open landscapes. As a secondary outcome we will be making future management and preservation of this habitat more practical. These enhancement activities will be prioritized around areas with existing and historic sharp-tailed grouse leks, as well as open landscape areas that will benefit species such as ring-necked pheasants, bobolinks, Henslow's sparrow, and eastern meadowlarks.

A request for proposal will be sent to land managers within the work area. A ranking process has been developed that allows us to identify, rank, and deliver the projects that have the most impact for wildlife.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

This proposal seeks to enhance open landscapes and early successional habitats. These areas are of great importance to sharp-tailed grouse as well as many declining species such as bobolinks, loggerhead shrikes, short-eared owls, yellow rails, eastern meadowlarks, American bittern, northern harrier, golden-winged warblers, Henslow's sparrow, Le Conte's sparrow, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, and American woodcock. Six of these species are state listed as endangered, threatened or special concern.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

The sharp-tailed grouse is an indicator species of quality open landscapes and brushland habitat. By prioritizing projects around existing and historic sharp-tailed grouse leks, this proposal will improve the quality of existing open lands complexes. Additionally, by working with foresters and wildlife managers at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources along with county land managers to identify areas with the highest potential for quality open landscape habitats we can ensure enhancement activities will have the greatest benefits to wildlife.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Northern Forest

- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *Sharp tail Leks are monitored annually in the northern forest region by the MN DNR. The number of leks identified is a good measure of quality open landscape habitat.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Available funding continues to be a limiting factor for enhancement programs. This proposal builds upon past appropriations awarded to MSGS and PF. Habitat enhancement efforts must be accelerated to sustain and grow quality wildlife habitat on Minnesota's public lands. This grant significantly accelerates our ability to enhance priority parcels. This proposal accelerates the enhancement of valuable open landscape habitat that focus on sharp-tail grouse and other wildlife while providing improved outdoor recreation activities such as hunting, bird watching, and trapping in Minnesota's great outdoors.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain 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.

This proposal supplements past investments and is aimed at accelerating the enhancement of strategic parcels.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2002-2010	Heritage Enhancement Grants	-
2015-2017	NAWCA	-

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

The portions of enhancement work that will be completed by this proposal will generally allow the unit to be managed more effectively by the resource manager, whether that be on a WMA, county property or State Forest. While it's difficult for a third party like Pheasants Forever to provide an analysis of future costs on existing public land, work done under this proposal will facilitate future management activities by establishing grazing infrastructure, establishing fire breaks, or setting back natural succession.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Post Project Completion - WMA	MN DNR - Game and Fish Funds	Monitoring	Maintenance	-

Activity Details**Requirements****If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?**

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- County/Municipal
- State Forests

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Distribute Project Request for Proposals to Area Land Managers	Fall 2019
Review Project RFPs with project selection committee	Winter 2019-20
Select Projects for completion and hire contractors. Start enhancement/restoration work	Winter 2019-20
Enhancement / Restoration work continues	Spring, Summer Fall 2020
Re-evaluate project status/budget and solicit additional projects as needed	Winter 2021
Enhancement / Restoration work completed	Summer 2024

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2024

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. Unless otherwise provided, the amounts in this section are available until June 30, 2022. For acquisition of real property, the amounts in this section are available until June 30, 2023, if a binding agreement with a landowner or purchase agreement is entered into by June 30, 2022, and closed no later than June 30, 2023. Funds for restoration or enhancement are available until June 30, 2024, or five years after acquisition, whichever is later, in order to complete initial restoration or enhancement work. If a project receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds, the time of the appropriation may be extended to equal the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if that federal funding was confirmed and included in the original draft accomplishment plan. Funds appropriated for fee title acquisition of land may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$63,000	-	-	\$63,000
Contracts	\$873,000	\$12,100	Federal, Private, PF, MSGS	\$885,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$14,000	-	-	\$14,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$955,000	\$12,100	-	\$967,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
PF Field Staff	0.1	3.0	\$38,800	-	-	\$38,800
PF Grant Staff	0.08	3.0	\$19,400	-	-	\$19,400
State Coordinator-MN	0.02	3.0	\$4,800	-	-	\$4,800

Amount of Request: \$955,000

Amount of Leverage: \$12,100

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 1.27%

DSS + Personnel: \$77,000

As a % of the total request: 8.06%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

We have reduced accomplishments/costs proportionately across the overall program to accommodate the reduced appropriation. As a result of the reduction, we will be able to enhance fewer acres. As in past appropriations, we will focus on the most strategic, highest priority projects.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is expected from multiple sources including but not limited to federal sources, contractor donations, MSGS, and PF. Not every source is 100% confirmed at this point. However, PF and MSGS have an exemplary track record of delivery and over-achievement of match commitments that further stretch OHF funding.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

We anticipate that all of the contract funding will be used for enhancement activities.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

n/a

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

No

Direct Support Services

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

PF utilizes the Total Modified Direct Cost method. This methodology is annually approved by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Business Center as the basis for the organization's Indirect Cost Rate agreement. PF's allowable direct support services cost is 4.12%. In this proposal, PF has discounted its rate to 1.5% of the sum of personnel, contracts, and travel. We are donating the difference in-kind.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

No

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
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	0	0
Enhance	0	0	2,910	0	2,910
Total	0	0	2,910	0	2,910

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$955,000	-	\$955,000
Total	-	-	\$955,000	-	\$955,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
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	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	2,910	2,910
Total	0	0	0	0	2,910	2,910

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	\$955,000	\$955,000
Total	-	-	-	-	\$955,000	\$955,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$328	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	\$328

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

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.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

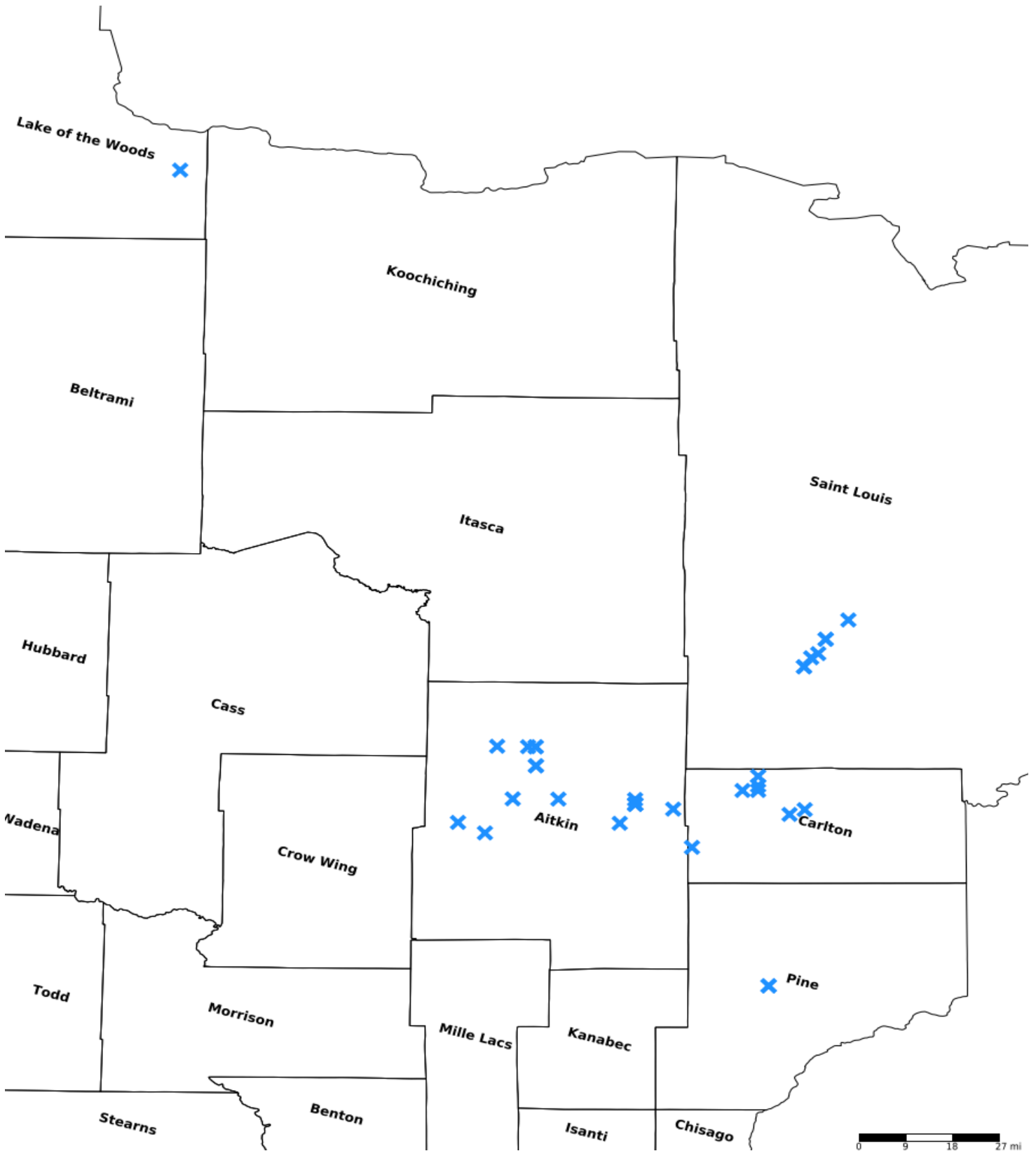
[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Aitkin Area Accelerated Prescribed Burn Program - Gun Lake WMA	Aitkin	04825205	2	\$441	Yes
Grayling WMA STGR Habitat Enhancement	Aitkin	04823212	186	\$37,138	Yes
Grayling WMA STGR Habitat Enhancement	Aitkin	04823212	9	\$2,285	Yes
Grayling WMA STGR Habitat Enhancement	Aitkin	04823212	143	\$5,509	Yes
Aitkin Area Accelerated Prescribed Burn Program - Willowsippi WMA	Aitkin	05025211	11	\$2,832	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Deer Run WMA	Aitkin	04826231	154	\$15,400	Yes
Grayling WMA STGR Habitat Enhancement	Aitkin	04823201	141	\$42,272	Yes
Grayling WMA STGR Habitat Enhancement	Aitkin	04823212	220	\$5,509	Yes
Aitkin County Lands	Aitkin	04824205	494	\$74,122	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Aitkin WMA	Aitkin	04726210	134	\$20,070	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Tamarack State Land	Aitkin	04822214	294	\$44,046	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Wagner State Land	Aitkin	05026212	293	\$43,908	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - McGregor SNA State Land	Aitkin	04823234	303	\$45,445	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Sherman State Land	Aitkin	05025235	436	\$65,403	Yes
Aitkin Area Brushland Mow - Willowsippi	Aitkin	05025210	193	\$28,978	Yes
Aitkin Area Accelerated Prescribed Burn Program - Willowsippi WMA	Aitkin	05025211	11	\$2,832	Yes
Aitkin Area Accelerated Prescribed Burn Program - Sherman State Land	Aitkin	05025235	8	\$2,072	Yes
Firebird WMA	Carlton	04721230	30	\$7,500	Yes
Cloquet Area Brushland Enhancement - 2020 Prescribed Burn Firebreaks - Cromwell	Carlton	04920227	5	\$1,150	Yes
Cloquet Area Brushland Enhancement - 2020 Prescribed Burn Firebreaks - Kettle Lake	Carlton	04819215	10	\$3,540	Yes
Kettle Lake Brushland Enhancement	Carlton	04819220	110	\$22,000	Yes
Cromwell Area Brushland Enhancement - Cross Lake West Site	Carlton	04920229	266	\$53,260	Yes
Cromwell Area Brushland Enhancement - Cross Lake East Site	Carlton	04920222	234	\$46,800	Yes
Cromwell Area Brushland Enhancement - Hasty Brook Site	Carlton	04920210	270	\$54,079	Yes
Morris Mow- LOW State Forest	Lake of the Woods	15930221	197	\$28,315	Yes
Sandstone WMA Openland Management	Pine	04220223	14	\$6,175	Yes
Sandstone WMA Openland Management	Pine	04220223	200	\$43,000	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Racek	St. Louis	05319202	48	\$9,660	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Hwy 29	St. Louis	05419236	134	\$26,800	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Simek Island	St. Louis	05418218	82	\$16,440	Yes
Tower Area WMA and County	St. Louis	05518227	270	\$76,500	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Alborn ATV Trail	St. Louis	05319215	11	\$2,980	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Alborn Trail	St. Louis	05319215	15	\$2,980	Yes
Hwy 29 Brushland Complex Enhancement - Simek Island	St. Louis	05418218	21	\$4,280	Yes

Parcel Map



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