



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Protection Program - Phase VIII
Laws of Minnesota 2020 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 08/19/2022

Project Title: Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Protection Program - Phase VIII

Funds Recommended: \$2,712,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2020, Ch. 104, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 3(a)

Appropriation Language: \$2,712,000 the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, in cooperation with the Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District, to acquire permanent conservation easements and restore and enhance forest wildlife habitat within the boundaries of the Minnesota National Guard Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape and Army Compatible Use Buffer. Of this amount, up to \$143,000 is to establish a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Shannon Wettstein

Title: District Manager

Organization: Morrison SWCD

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Location Information

County Location(s): Cass and Morrison.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest

Narrative

Abstract

Phase VIII of the RIM Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Partnership will utilize permanent conservation easements to acquire 1,700-acres of high quality habitat along the Crow Wing, Long Prairie, Gull, Nokasippi, and Mississippi River corridors and lake watersheds. Approximately 6 easements will be secured within the project area. BWSR will utilize the RIM easement process in partnership with the Morrison SWCD to secure habitat corridor easements on sites within Crow Wing, Cass, and Morrison counties during the appropriation term.

Design and Scope of Work

Phase VIII will protect approximately 1,700-acres of fish, game, migratory bird, and forest habitat along the Crow Wing, Long Prairie, Gull, Nokasippi, and Mississippi River corridors and lake watersheds within a 5-mile radius of Camp Ripley. This phase will secure approximately 6 permanent conservation Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements, utilizing partnerships with Camp Ripley, a State Game Refuge, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Easement acquisition will occur in portions of Morrison, Crow Wing, and Cass County that lie within this 5-mile radius.

Easement acquisition in this area will protect river and lake habitat corridors that are critical to the general public for fishing, hunting, and recreational opportunities. These riparian corridors are critical protection for the State of Minnesota, MN National Guard (MNNG) and National Guard Bureau (NGB) and its mission to sustain military training of soldiers, our local economy, the National Mississippi River Flyway, and Mississippi Headwaters Board mission.

Parcels are targeted that have quality existing habitat, protect corridors and large habitat complexes and reduce future fragmentation. Evaluation criteria include ecological and habitat factors for resident and migratory wildlife species. The target area has been limited to ensure a concentration of easement acquisitions that provide landscape scale benefits and will allow for protection of large forested parcels that are in imminent threat of conversion.

The forested region of these three counties is where agriculture transitions to existing forested lands. Thousands of acres just outside of this work area are being converted from forest to annual cropping, primarily for potato/corn production. Forests not only provide critical wildlife habitat for game and non-game species, but forests lessen the impact of water quality contamination from land use practices. This region of the state, most specifically Morrison County, is the fastest growing county in the state for the loss of grazing land to annual cropping. The loss of forests would exacerbate problems associated with conversion. Drinking water standards in the area are also in jeopardy with the increase in irrigation and large scale livestock operations, so protecting the forested lands has become a critical issue.

In 2016 Camp Ripley was designated as a federal Sentinel Landscape, one of seven in the nation. This designation by both State and Federal entities coordinates strategies to protect this landscape. Many agencies have identified their scope of priorities within the Sentinel Landscape 10-mile boundary. The Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape

Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program has never had less than 250-interested landowners on the waiting list for participation. To date Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) support of \$9M has leveraged \$39M in federal dollars and protected 30,000-acres.

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?

The forest habitat protected by this proposal falls within the Camp Ripley-Pillsbury-Lake Alexander Important Bird Area (IBA). The 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies 346 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) 92 being birds. This project area supports the greatest concentration of nesting Red-shouldered Hawks in the state along with 65 other SGCN birds. Thirty six other non-avian SGCN have also been identified within this area totaling nearly 30% of all SGCN within the state. This project directly addresses two primary causes of SGCN declines, habitat fragmentation and climate change impacts.

Lands in this proposal are also occupied by two federally listed species, the gray wolf and the northern long-eared bat. Populations of these species rely on unbroken tracts of forest which are the focus of this proposal. Many studies have indicated that road density has direct, negative, impact on wolf habitat utilization especially during their breeding season. The project area is on the fringe of forest habitat that is under extreme pressure from development leading to habitat fragmentation. Permanent protection of these parcels is critical to the long term recovery of these species under the Endangered Species Act as well as many of the state listed SGCN neotropical migratory birds in the area.

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:

Parcels are targeted that have quality existing habitat, protect corridors and large habitat complexes and will reduce future fragmentation. Evaluation criteria include ecological and habitat factors for resident and migratory wildlife species. The target area has been limited to ensure a concentration of easement acquisitions that provide landscape scale benefits. The target work area also contains high value existing habitat and public access via existing Wildlife Management Areas that are being buffered with easements.

The MN County Biological Survey has identified several native plant communities within this project area that are vulnerable to extirpation as well as sites with existing high biodiversity. Most of these identified areas lie within the northern extent of this 5-mile project boundary under high development pressure due to their proximity to the cities of Baxter & Brainerd. Protecting these parcels is a high priority for the ACUB Program.

In the fall and spring of 2018/19 DNR staff have started an amendment process to the State Wildlife Action Plan that would include the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape within a future Conservation Focus Area. This effort is expected to be completed in 2019. The largely forested 50-mile section of the Mississippi River, its associated major tributaries, wetland and lake systems all elevate the habitat significance of this program geography.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Northern Forest

- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

The Department of Defense (DOD) Readiness Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program requires a 25% match to those federal funds. The OHF has been a critical piece in the ACUB now Sentinel Landscape partnership success. The Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape partnership with Morrison SWCD as the fiscal will apply for NRCS-Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) dollars (\$10 million) in the fall of 2019 to further leverage the total partnership funding. In addition, but not secured, year end funding is often appropriated from REPI. In the last fiscal year the program also received a private donation of land (120-acres) to support the program.

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 is not supplanting or a substitution for any previous funding not from Legacy Fund sources or for the same purpose.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2007 - Present	Department of Defense (DOD)/National Guard Bureau (NGB)	-
2010 - Present	LCCMR: Camp Ripley Crow Wing/Morrison SWCD and city of Baxter	-
2016 - Present	NRCS-RCPP funding from USDA	-

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement into perpetuity. The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and enforcement of its conservation easements. Easements are monitored for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site monitoring is performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and partners’ staff document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2020-Ongoing	Stewardship Account	Compliance Checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations.	Enforcement Action taken by MN Attorney Generals office.
2020-Ongoing	Landowner Responsibility	Maintain compliance with easement terms.	-	-

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?

Yes

Who will manage the easement?

BWSR will be the responsible party for monitoring and enforcing easements.

Who will be the easement holder?

BWSR will be the easement holder.

What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

The anticipated number of easements we plan to accomplish is 6 for a total of 1,700 acres.

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

No

Will the eased land be open for public use?

No

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

This appropriation is funding a program that will have a parcel list identified at a later time. Roads or trails are typically excluded from the easement area if they serve no beneficial purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring, or enforcement. This question is being answered with utmost flexibility in absence of a LSOHC definition of trails and specified trail types (permanent or temporary, beneficial for maintenance, animal trails, etc.).

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the BWSR RIM Reserve Program that has over 6,500 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5-years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the RIM Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Though uncommon, there could be a potential for new trails to be developed, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). This question is being answered with utmost flexibility in absence of a LSOHC definition of trails and specified trail types (permanent or temporary, beneficial for maintenance, animal trails, etc.).

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the BWSR RIM Reserve Program that has over 6,500 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5-years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the RIM Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30,2023
Allocations to specific parcels	June 30,2023
Easements recorded	June 30, 2023
Final report submitted	November 1, 2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2023

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, 2023. For acquisition of real property, the amounts in this section are available until June 30, 2024, if a binding agreement with a landowner or purchase agreement is entered into by June 30, 2023, and closed no later than June 30, 2024. Funds for restoration or enhancement are available until June 30, 2025, 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 the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved 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	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$110,000	-	-	\$110,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,454,000	-	-	\$2,454,000
Easement Stewardship	\$39,000	-	-	\$39,000
Travel	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
Professional Services	\$102,000	-	-	\$102,000
Direct Support Services	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
Supplies/Materials	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,712,000	-	-	\$2,712,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.35	4.0	\$54,400	-	-	\$54,400
Easement Processing	0.32	3.0	\$55,600	-	-	\$55,600

Amount of Request: \$2,712,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$114,000

As a % of the total request: 4.2%

Easement Stewardship: \$39,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 1.59%

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

The program will accommodate the reduced appropriations by limiting the number of easements to 25 and the number of acres to 1,546.

Easement Stewardship

What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?

Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement.

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

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

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?

BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type that is done.

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	1,700	0	1,700
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1,700	0	1,700

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	-	-	\$2,712,000	-	\$2,712,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$2,712,000	-	\$2,712,000

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	1,700	0	0	0	1,700
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1,700	0	0	0	1,700

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	-	\$2,712,000	-	-	-	\$2,712,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	\$2,712,000	-	-	-	\$2,712,000

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	-	-	\$1,595	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

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	-	\$1,595	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

2.3

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Rivers and streams provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west ~ *A summary of the total of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. Sustained habitat availability within a certain region is expected to maintain the carrying capacity of associated wildlife within that region. This would affect both game and nongame species. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *A summary of the total of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. Sustained habitat availability within a certain region is expected to maintain the carrying capacity of associated wildlife within that region. This would affect both game and non-game species. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured.*

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](#)

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

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
11-01-20-04- -	Cass	13330212	29	\$31,700	No
11-02-20-04- -	Cass	13330212	78	\$85,500	No
49-07-20-04- -	Morrison	13030216	7	\$14,000	No
49-02-20-04- -	Morrison	13131204	755	\$1,159,900	No
49-01-20-04- -	Morrison	13231233	709	\$919,700	No

