



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Protection Program - Phase VIII

Laws of Minnesota 2020 Final Report

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### General Information

**Date:** 08/08/2024

**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

**Address:** 16776 Heron Rd

**City:** Little Falls, MN 56345

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Crow Wing, Morrison and Cass.

**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
- Habitat
- Prairie

## Narrative

### Summary of Accomplishments

Phase VIII of the RIM Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Partnership utilized permanent RIM conservation easements to acquire 1,755-acres of high quality habitat within the ACUB work area. We secured 7 easements including the two one contiguous block but done as two easements for legal reasons) Cushing Land Company easements that totaled 1,464 acres. In total one of the largest RIM easements ever acquired.

### Process & Methods

The project protected 1,755 acres of fish, game, migratory bird, and forest habitat along the Crow Wing, Gull, Nokasippi, and Mississippi River corridors through seven conservation easements. This project utilized the longstanding partnership between Camp Ripley, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to implement natural resource management. These river corridors are critical to the general public for fishing, hunting, and recreational opportunities. In addition, the corridors are a high priority for protection locally and to the State of Minnesota, MN National Guard (MN NG) and National Guard Bureau (NGB), MN DNR fish surveys on the Crow Wing River (Staples to confluence of Mississippi) and Mississippi River (Brainerd to Little Falls) indicate high quality fish communities of walleye, muskellunge, and small-mouth bass. Camp Ripley is also home to one of the southern-most wolf populations in Minnesota and 65 species of Greatest Conservation Need including the state's highest population of red-shouldered hawks. The river corridors contain wildlife habitat and provide public recreation opportunities. Camp Ripley, along with the MN DNR, hosts the largest public archery hunt in the United States with over 5,000 participants. Additionally, Camp Ripley hosts other deer hunts, i.e. Disabled American Veterans (DAV), youth hunt, Deployed Soldier Archery, and Deployed Soldier Muzzleloader. A Deployed Soldier and DAV turkey hunt are also hosted along with a Trolling for the Troops fishing event. More than 13,000 hunting/angling person-days occur on Camp Ripley annually. Camp Ripley also makes available to the general public access to over 1,800 acres for walk-in recreational activities to include hunting on Camp lands. The Crow Wing and Mississippi Rivers contain over 15 public access points from Staples to the confluence of Mississippi and from Brainerd to Little Falls respectively. This project will protect the current habitat along existing public access areas. Development along these corridors will have adverse effects to existing high quality wildlife habitat, local economies, and to the MN NG training program. Camp Ripley is located immediately adjacent to the confluence of the Crow Wing and Mississippi Rivers. Camp Ripley contains 18 miles of Mississippi River frontage and 8 miles of Crow Wing River frontage. Development adjacent to military training sites has limited the facilities' ability to maintain their military mission. For example, the east shore of the Mississippi River has experienced high decibel levels due to weapon firing, and is also near the flight path of the Camp Ripley airfield. For that reason, the MN NG asked the partnership to focus on parcels directly adjacent to the Mississippi and Crow Wing Rivers to help reduce potential conflicts with homeowners. Camp Ripley is the largest employer in Morrison County. The project built on the Camp Ripley partnership's success with the Army Compatible Use Buffer program (ACUB). This federal program provides funds to protect adjacent lands from encroaching development and in the process protects the training center.

## **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 Camp Ripley partnership completed conservation easements along the Mississippi, Crow Wing, and Nokasippi Rivers. Additionally, Crow Wing and Morrison SWCDs worked with landowners to assist with forest management and cost-share forestry programs. The partnership protects high quality riparian habitat before it is developed or converted to agricultural uses targeting landowners who are interested in conservation easements. The river corridors are vulnerable to habitat degradation through development and forest to cropland conversion. The Hwy 371 Little Falls to Brainerd corridor has some of the highest growth rates outside the metropolitan area. The City of Baxter's population increased over 51 percent and Cass County's population increased by over 12 percent from 2000 to 2020.

The majority of the lakes have been developed leaving major rivers vulnerable to new development. The majority of the project area falls within the Anoka Sand Plain and the Hardwood Hills Ecological Subsections. Currently much of the Hardwood Hills subsection is farmed. Important areas of forest and prairie exist, but they are small and fragmented. Urban development and agriculture occur in 1/3 of the Anoka Sand Plain.

## **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.**

Parcels within an approximately five mile radius around Camp Ripley adjacent to one another to create habitat corridors consistent with natural resource management were targeted. The target area has been limited to ensure a concentration of easement acquisitions that provide landscape scale benefits and will allow for protection of some very large forested parcels that are in imminent threat of conversion. The targeted work area contains high value existing habitat and public accessibility. Parcels were targeted that have quality existing habitat, protect corridors and large habitat complexes and reduce future fragmentation. Evaluation criteria also included ecological and habitat factors for resident and migratory wildlife species.

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 boundary, which also happens to face high development pressure due to its proximity to the cities of Baxter & Brainerd. Protecting these parcels is a high priority for the ACUB Program.

## **Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition**

The project utilized Camp Ripley's partnership with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Local support for the ACUB program continues to be strong with a waiting list of landowners to enroll in the program.

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

This phase went well and we didn't have any major challenges or issues. We feel particularly good about the large Cushing Land Company easement as its not often that you have the opportunity to protect over 1,450 acres of quality habitat at one time.

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

- Other : Dept. of Defense and National Guard Bureau

### **How were the funds used to advance the program?**

During 2020, 16 easements were recorded using DOD and NGB funds for a total of 1123 acres and over \$1.8 million in landowner payments.

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

BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring into perpetuity for RIM easements. BWSR partners with Morrison SWCD to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of the conservation easements for this program. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years after the first five years. Morrison SWCD reports to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and 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 any enforcement necessary.

## Budget

### Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$227,200	\$107,400	\$107,000	-	-	-	\$227,200	\$107,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,211,700	\$2,455,100	\$2,455,100	-	-	-	\$2,211,700	\$2,455,100
Easement Stewardship	\$143,000	\$45,500	\$45,500	-	-	-	\$143,000	\$45,500
Travel	\$4,700	\$1,000	\$100	-	-	-	\$4,700	\$100
Professional Services	\$102,000	\$102,000	\$102,000	-	-	-	\$102,000	\$102,000
Direct Support Services	\$14,600	\$1,000	-	-	-	-	\$14,600	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$6,800	-	-	-	-	-	\$6,800	-
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,000	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,709,700</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,709,700</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.35	4.0	\$53,000	-	-	\$53,000
Easement Processing	0.32	3.0	\$54,000	-	-	\$54,000

### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Amendments were completed through out the process as usual. We spent less on personnel and administrative costs and a bit more on landowner payments than originally estimated. None the less we came in with 360 acres more than originally estimated and a few thousand dollars under budget.

**Total Revenue: \$0**

**Revenue Spent: \$0**

**Revenue Balance: \$0**

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

## 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	559	0	10	1,325	1,175	0	11	1,325	1,755
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>1,175</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>1,755</b>

**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	-	-	-	-	\$2,712,000	\$2,709,700	-	-	\$2,712,000	\$2,709,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,709,700</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,709,700</b>

**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	1,325	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,755	1,325	1,755
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,755</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>1,755</b>

## 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	-	-	\$2,712,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,709,700	\$2,712,000	\$2,709,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>\$2,709,700</b>	<b>\$2,712,000</b>	<b>\$2,709,700</b>

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1.9

## Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

The two very large Cushing Land Company (over 1450 ac) easements allowed us to exceed the original goal by 430 ac but still stay within budget.

## 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 ~ *Camp Ripley lies along 18 miles of the Mississippi, and 8 miles along the Crow Wing River that are critical habitat for waterfowl and other Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Parcels within an approximately five mile radius around Camp Ripley were targeted to create habitat corridors consistent with natural resource management, sustaining large tracts of green space/forested land. The easement parcels are within 1.5 miles of the Crow Wing, Nokasippi, Mississippi, a tributary or a lake within the watershed. Lands under easement do not allow development and include enhanced conservation practices to improve habitat and land management.*

### Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Camp Ripley lies along 18 miles of the Mississippi, and 8 miles along the Crow Wing River that are critical habitat for waterfowl and other Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Parcels within an approximately five mile radius around Camp Ripley were targeted to create habitat corridors consistent with natural resource management, sustaining large tracts of green space/forested land. The easement parcels are within 1.5 miles of the Crow Wing, Nokasippi, Mississippi, a tributary or a lake within the watershed. Lands under easement do not allow development and include enhanced conservation practices to improve habitat and land management.*





## Parcels

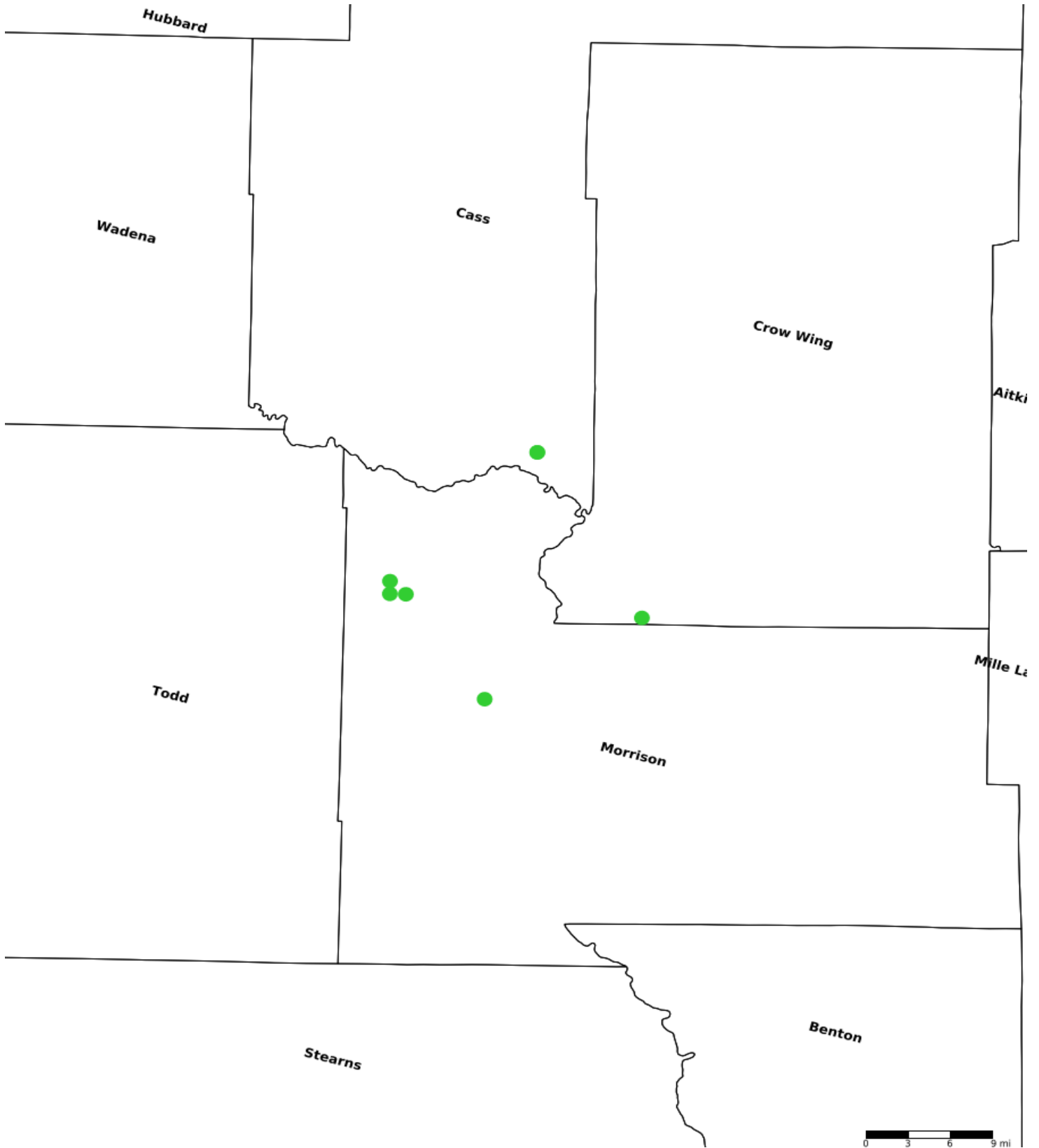
### Sign-up Criteria?

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

### Easement 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
18-02-22-04- -	Crow Wing	04331233	139	\$174,700	No
49-01-20-04- -	Morrison	13231233	709	\$919,700	No
49-07-20-04- -	Morrison	13030216	7	\$14,000	No
49-15-22-04- -	Morrison	13131203	38	\$61,800	No
49-02-20-04- -	Morrison	13131204	755	\$1,159,900	No

## Parcel Map



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