



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR WMA and SNA Acquisition, Phase XIII
Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 02/19/2025

Project Title: DNR WMA and SNA Acquisition, Phase XIII

Funds Recommended: \$1,948,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(a)

Appropriation Language: \$1,948,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire in fee and restore and enhance lands for wildlife management under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, and to acquire land in fee for scientific and natural area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquiring lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Rick Walsh

Title:

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Location Information

County Location(s): Faribault, Blue Earth and Renville.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Forest

Narrative**Abstract**

Acquire approximately 325 acres of high priority habitat for designation as Wildlife Management Area or Scientific and Natural Area in the LSOHC Prairie, Forest/Prairie Transition, and Northern Forest Planning Sections emphasizing Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and Conservation That Works, 3.0 WMA and AMA Acquisition & Management Strategic Plan guidance, and coordination with partners. All lands will be open for public hunting and fishing (a limited number of SNA's are proposed for limited hunting for instance archery only or hunting but no trapping).

February 2022 amendment request to add two WMA parcels: Ivanhoe tr3 and Meadow Creek tr11.

Design and Scope of Work

Approximately 325 acres of wildlife habitat will be protected through fee title acquisition and development as Wildlife Management Areas or Scientific & Natural Areas. While no match is indicated in this proposal, Outdoor Heritage appropriations to DNR for WMA and SNA acquisitions have historically been enhanced through donations, Reinvest in Minnesota Critical Habitat Match, and Surcharge (a \$6.50 surcharge on small game license sales to be used in part for land acquisition).

Wildlife Management Areas. WMAs protect lands and waters which have a high potential for wildlife production and develop and manage these lands and waters for public hunting, fishing and trapping, and for other compatible outdoor recreational uses such as wildlife watching and hiking.

While highly successful, the current WMA system does not meet all present and future needs for wildlife habitat, wildlife population management, hunter access, and wildlife related recreation. This is notably true in the LSOHC Prairie Planning Section where public ownership in many counties is 2 percent or less. DNR Section of Wildlife uses a GIS-based tool to identify the highest priority tracts for potential WMA acquisitions. This quantitative approach scores and ranks acquisition proposals based on a set of weighted criteria and creates a standardized method for evaluating proposed acquisitions on a statewide level.

Criteria and weights are periodically reviewed and adapted to changing priorities. This ensures funds that are used to acquire lands align with DNR strategic priorities and support the 2002 Citizens' Committee report and the Conservation That Works, 3.0 WMA and AMA Acquisition & Management Strategic Plan for WMA acquisition.

Potential acquisition opportunities from willing sellers are coordinated with stakeholders and partners to eliminate duplication and identify concerns and support. Coordinating with partners has been successful to ensure we are working cooperatively and on priority parcels.

Scientific & Natural Areas. The SNA Program will increase public hunting and fishing opportunities while protecting sites with outstanding natural values. Protection is targeted at high priority areas identified in the SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan with emphasis on prairie core areas identified in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. A quantitative system scores and ranks acquisition proposals based on a weighted set of six criteria. Priority is given to sites of high and outstanding biodiversity significance by the Minnesota Biological Survey, high quality native plant communities and habitat for endangered and threatened species. Larger parcels which adjoin other conservation lands, improve habitat management, are under imminent threat and are partially donated are also rated highly.

Properties acquired through this appropriation require County Board of Commissioners' written approval in the county of acquisition, will be designated as WMA or SNA through a Commissioner's Designation Order, brought up to minimum DNR standards, and listed on the DNR website. Basic site improvements will include boundary and LSOHC acknowledgement signs and may include any necessary site cleanup and parcel initial development.

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?

Potential acquisitions for WMAs and SNAs are objectively scored for their wildlife habitat value. The DNR uses weighted criteria and prioritizes high scoring parcels for acquisition. For example, candidates for WMAs score higher with a prairie grouse lek, in a pheasant habitat complex, presence of shallow lakes, and occurrence of deer wintering areas; candidates for WMAs and SNAs score higher which contain threatened, endangered, and other rare species and species of greatest conservation need and which are high quality native plant communities which support wildlife. As a focus on native prairie protection, parcels with native prairie are prioritized.

Native plant communities with exceptional value as wildlife habitat to be protected through this proposal include Southern dry prairie, dry sand-gravel prairie, mesic prairie, dry hill prairie, northern wet prairie, mesic brush prairie, wet seepage prairie, Southern drymesic oak hickory woodland, mesic hardwood forest, wet forest, forest and open rich peatlands, northern jack pine/black spruce woodland, and other priority plant communities.

The following species of greatest conservation need and rare species targeted in this proposal include but are not limited to: mammals – white-tailed jackrabbit, prairie vole, harvest mouse, northern grasshopper mouse, and western harvest mouse; birds – bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, oven bird, chestnut-collared longspur (endangered), upland sandpiper, American bittern, marbled godwit, Nelson's sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, black-throated blue warbler, red-shouldered hawk, Loggerhead shrike, cerulean warbler; reptiles/amphibians - wood turtle (threatened) and mudpuppy; Topeka shiner; invertebrates – regal fritillary, Dakota skipper, Iowa Skipper, Ottoo Skipper, Pawnee Skipper, Poweshiek skipper, leadplant flowermoth, phlox moth, and plants/trees – small white lady's-slipper and Western prairie fringed orchid, slender naiad, butternut.

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 DNR uses GIS-based scoring systems to objectively rank potential acquisitions and develop statewide priority lists.

These systems incorporate scientific data giving priority to locations within and that add to: 1) an important

habitat corridor or complex (such as identified by the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Pheasant Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan), 2) native plant communities and sites of outstanding and high biodiversity significance mapped by Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS), and 3) parcels that adjoin existing units or other conservation lands.

In addition, scoring takes into account habitat containing endangered, threatened, and other rare species, watershed/wetland qualities as well as habitat management considerations and suitability for public access, hunting and fishing.

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

H1 Protect priority land habitats

H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Area's Long Range Plan

Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

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

Prairie

Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Acres of habitat acquired that support nesting and migratory habitat and upland birds and Species in Greatest Conservation Need. Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *Acres of habitat acquired that support endangered, threatened and special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need. Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.*

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Acres of grassland/wetland habitat complexes acquired that support upland game birds, migratory waterfowl, big-game, and unique Minnesota species (e.g. endangered, threatened, and*

special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need). Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Historically, Outdoor Heritage Fund appropriations to DNR for WMA and SNA acquisitions have been matched by land owner donations of value, Reinvest in Minnesota Critical Habitat Match, and Surcharge (a \$6.50 surcharge on small game license sales to be used in part for land acquisition). The amount of match has varied with each appropriation. While no leverage is being listed in this proposal, we anticipate this trend will continue and OHF dollars will be matched by the other funding sources listed above.

Some of the landowners that sell to the State do so out of a conservation ethic and are willing to donate value. In prioritizing parcels that have similar habitat value, a landowner willing to donate value will be the priority. Our practice is to inform all landowners of the appraised value of their respective property. It is up to them if they want to donate a portion of the value.

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 request is an acceleration of the DNR WMA and SNA acquisition program work to a level not attainable but for the appropriation.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2009	WMA RIM CHM	\$3,072,138
2012	SNA RIM CHM	\$720,000
2013	WMA Surcharge	\$1,500,000
2014	WMA Bonding RIM CHM	\$2,000,000
2014	WMA Surcharge	\$1,860,000
2014	SNA ENRTF	\$2,348,300
2015	WMA Surcharge	\$1,615,000
2015	WMA ENRTF	\$400,000
2015	SNA ENRTF	\$2,348,300
2016	WMA RIM CHM	\$2,548,300
2016	WMA Surcharge	\$1,561,913
2009	SNA ENRTF	\$102,600
2016	SNA RIM CHM	\$400,000

2017	WMA RIM CHM	\$591,400
2017	WMA Surcharge	\$750,000
2017	SNA ENRTF	\$10,400
2018	WMA RIM CHM	\$1,740,800
2018	WMA Surcharge	\$750,000
2018	SNA ENRTF	\$1,500,000
2019	WMA RIM CHM	\$855,000
2019	WMA Surcharge	\$450,000
2019	SNA ENRTF	\$1,940,000
2010	WMA Bonding	\$500,000
2019	SNA RIM CHM	\$45,000
2010	WMA RIM CHM	\$2,308,358
2010	SNA ENRTF	\$471,400
2011	WMA Surcharge	\$1,830,000
2011	WMA WMA CHM	\$824,259
2011	SNA ENRTF	\$679,600
2012	WMA RIM CHM	\$864,750

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

According to WMA/AMA Directive on development standards, WMAs are developed to at least minimum standards within two years of acquisition for facility and habitat development that will provide basic asset preservation, public access and safety, environmental and cultural resource protection and soil and water resource conservation. Initial development efforts can extend 2-3 years beyond the “minimum standard” time table to establish high quality native plant communities. All new WMA acquisitions require a WMA Initial Development Plan (IDP) be completed by the Area Wildlife Supervisor responsible for land management and approved by the Region.

SNAs have similar standards with site specific work being directed by each site’s Adaptive Management Plan. As part of the state outdoor recreation system, ongoing maintenance will be accomplished through routine management activities accomplished by our network of DNR offices. Periodic enhancements will be accomplished by staff, CCM crews, temporary project staffing, through vendor contract or by volunteers if appropriate.

Long-term management costs (e.g., invasive species treatments, prescribed fire, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination funding sources, including, but not limited to the Game and Fish Fund, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund, federal grants, and small game surcharge.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023	Outdoor Heritage, ML21	Boundary survey, parking area development, boundary signs and other sign posting	Additional initial site development	-
2025	Outdoor Heritage, ML21	Initial habitat development, native vegetation established, invasive species control, wetlands restored (as needed)	-	-
2026 and beyond	Game and Fish Fund, Surcharge, other	Ongoing management to DNR standards for WMA and SNA units	-	-

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

Yes

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

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

Some lands proposed for acquisition may contain a portion of protected land. In these cases, we will appraise protected acres separately and seek to have that value donated or pay for them using non-OHF funds.

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?

Yes

Explain what will be planted and include the maximum percentage of any acquired parcel that would be planted into foodplots by the proposer or the end owner of the property:

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To

fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife.

Lands proposed to be acquired as WMAs may include initial development plans to utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites

for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest to prepare the seedbed for native seed planting. On a small

percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in

agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources.

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

All WMA lands to be acquired will be open for hunting and fishing with no variations from State of Minnesota regulations.

All SNAs acquired with this funding would be open to the most appropriate types of hunting for the particular parcels. Priority will be given to acquiring lands to be open to all hunting, trapping and fishing.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of MN

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA

SNA

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

3-5

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

No

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

No

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

Yes

We will use funds from this appropriation to complete initial habitat development on acquired parcels. The initial habitat development needs will vary with each parcel but in the case of WMA's could include restoration or enhancement of upland grassland habitat and restoration and enhancement of wetlands.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?

Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Acquire in fee 325 acres for designation as Wildlife Management Areas and Scientific and Natural Areas	6/30/2025
Develop acquired lands to minimum WMA/SNA standards including signage, parking areas, and native vegetation planting if necessary	6/30/2029

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. For acquiring real property, the amounts in this section are available until June 30, 2025. Money for restoration or enhancement is available until June 30, 2026. Money for restoration and enhancement of land acquired with an appropriation in this article is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2029. 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. Money appropriated for acquiring land in fee title 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	\$46,100	-	-	\$46,100
Contracts	\$54,000	-	-	\$54,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,610,000	-	-	\$1,610,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Professional Services	\$135,000	-	-	\$135,000
Direct Support Services	\$12,900	-	-	\$12,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$85,000	-	-	\$85,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,948,000	-	-	\$1,948,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Regional SNA Specialist	0.04	3.0	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
SNA Acquisition Coordinator	0.06	3.0	\$16,100	-	-	\$16,100
WMA Acquisition Coordinator	0.1	3.0	\$24,000	-	-	\$24,000

Amount of Request: \$1,948,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$59,000

As a % of the total request: 3.03%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

We will scale our Accomplishment Plan activity, outputs, and budget to accommodate the reduction in funding. We will acquire fewer acres than originally proposed, and will focus on the highest priority parcels.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Expenditures for contracted services related to the initial development and restoration of parcels acquired with this appropriation. For instance it could include (but not be limited to) activities/expenditures for; restoring existing bare ground to native vegetation, wetland restoration, access development, site clean-up, etc.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

We anticipate 3-5 successful fee title acquisition transactions. However we may need to attempt more transactions, as not every acquisition attempt is successful.

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

Approximately 90% is fleet charges for equipment such as tractors, mowers, etc needed for initial site development of acquired parcels.

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

Yes

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 MN DNR uses a standardized DSS calculator that has been developed by our Office of Management and Budget Services.

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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	15	230	80	-	325
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	15	230	80	-	325

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$118,000	\$1,500,000	\$330,000	-	\$1,948,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$118,000	\$1,500,000	\$330,000	-	\$1,948,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	45	-	210	70	325
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	45	-	210	70	325

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	-	\$235,000	-	\$1,412,000	\$301,000	\$1,948,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	\$235,000	-	\$1,412,000	\$301,000	\$1,948,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$7,866	\$6,521	\$4,125	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
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	-	\$5,222	-	\$6,723	\$4,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

The DNR uses GIS-based scoring systems to objectively rank potential acquisitions and develop statewide priority lists.

These systems incorporate scientific data giving priority to locations within and that add to: 1) an important habitat corridor or complex (such as identified by the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Pheasant Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and the new Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan), 2) native plant communities and sites of outstanding and high biodiversity significance mapped by Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS), and 3) parcels that adjoin existing units or other conservation lands.

In addition, scoring takes into account habitat containing endangered, threatened, and other rare species, watershed/wetland qualities as well as habitat management considerations and suitability for public access, hunting and fishing.

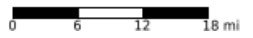
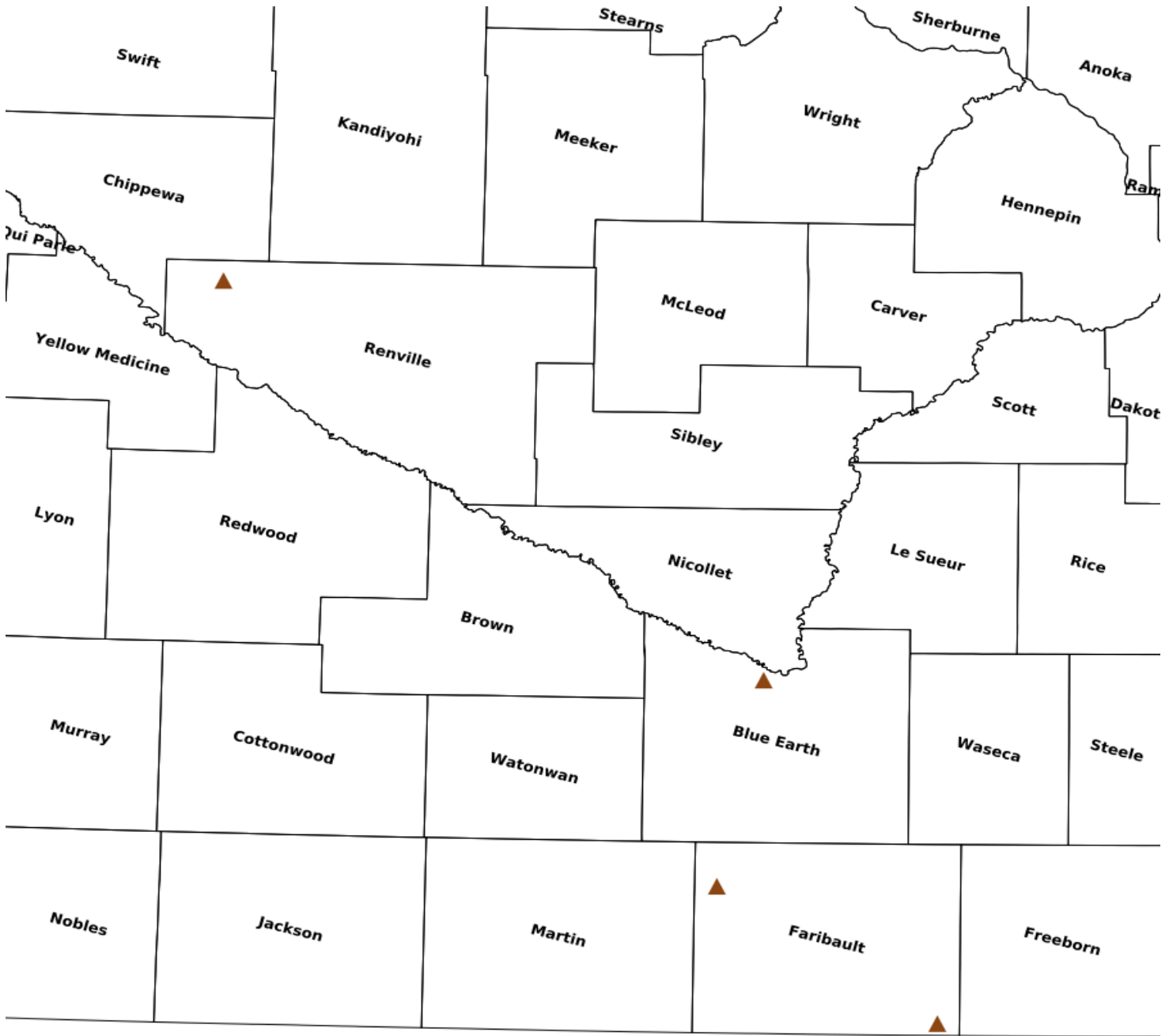
Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Picnic Rock WMA Tract 1	Blue Earth	10827220	180	\$1,265,000	No
Brush Creek WMA Tract 1	Faribault	10124227	155	\$625,400	No
Rosaasen Slough WMA Tr 2	Renville	11637218	167	\$702,000	No

Fee Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Blue Earth River WMA tr1&2	Faribault	10428233	330	\$2,000,000	No	3	\$10,000

Parcel Map



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