



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/11/2020

Project Title: Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase 9

Funds Recommended: \$4,068,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2021, Ch. XX, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd.

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Richard Biske

Title: Freshwater Conservation Program Director

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

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Location Information

County Location(s): Houston, Fillmore, Winona, Wabasha, Dodge and Olmsted.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands

- Prairie
- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

This project will protect approximately 1,098 acres using conservation easement and fee land acquisition, and restore and enhance approximately 753 acres of declining habitat for important wildlife species. Actions will occur in strategically targeted areas of biodiversity significance within the Blufflands of Southeast Minnesota, resulting in increased public access and improved wildlife habitat.

Design and Scope of Work

The Southeast Blufflands is Minnesota's most biodiverse region. Some 86 different native plant communities have been mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) in the program area, covering nearly 150,000 acres. These communities provide habitat for 183 rare state-listed plants and animals and more Species in Greatest Conservation Need than anywhere else in the state. These imperiled species are concentrated within 749 Sites of Biodiversity Significance.

Despite this biological richness only 5% of the region has been protected to date. This program is increasing access to public lands to meet the continued high demand for outdoor recreation within the region.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership, are working to change this circumstance. Through our Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program, we are working to expand and connect larger contiguous blocks of protected lands, allowing land managers to restore, enhance and maintain high-quality habitats at a scale difficult to accomplish with fragmented ownership. Protecting and managing these lands is not only important for ecological reasons, but also benefits public enjoyment of these lands and the resources they provide.

This Program has a long, proven track record of protecting, restoring and enhancing lands that meet both state and local priorities for biodiversity, land access and watershed health. To date, the Partnership has protected 7,457 acres of priority lands and 27 miles of stream, and has restored/enhanced 1,177 acres of habitat.

This 9th Phase of our Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program continues this body of work:

1. **Conservation Easements.** MLT will protect 729 acres of high-quality private land through conservation easements and develop restoration and habitat management plans for eased lands. MLT will identify potential projects within targeted priority areas through an RFP process coupled with local outreach via SWCD offices. This competitive landowner bid process will rank projects based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the best projects and securing them at the lowest cost to the state.
2. **Fee Acquisition.** TNC and TPL will coordinate with MN DNR on all potential fee title acquisitions. TNC and TPL will assist the participating DNR Divisions by conducting all or some of the following activities: initial site reviews, negotiations with the willing seller, appraisals, environmental reviews and acquisition of fee title. TNC and TPL will transfer lands to the DNR except when TNC ownership is appropriate. Fee acquisition of forest (217 acres), prairie (152 acres) and 1 mile of shoreline.
3. **Restoration and Enhancement.** TNC will use a stewardship crew and contractors to restore/enhance approximately 730 acres of bluff prairie, floodplain, riparian habitat and forest within priority complexes of

protected lands. MLT will restore and enhance 23 acres of habitat on existing easements, and identify restoration/enhancement priorities on its other existing easement lands in the Southeast. Ecological restoration enhancement management plans will be developed in coordination with the DNR staff, landowners and/or hired subcontractors.

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?

Most of the projects selected for this proposal are located in complexes of biodiversity significance, as identified by MBS. Many are also in close proximity to current state land. Building and expanding contiguous blocks of natural vegetation protects habitat continuity in a fragmented landscape.

Sedimentation and erosion are major threats to fish in the region. Protecting and enhancing upland natural communities, especially on the steep bluffs that flank most trout streams, will help prevent additional erosion. Aquatic habitat also benefits from protection of trout stream banks and floodplains. The water quality benefit that comes with the protection of forested upland areas is significant and contributes to improved trout and non-game fish and mussel habitat.

Proposed projects contain over 98 occurrences of Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) identified by the Natural Heritage Inventory, including 58 different species/communities/assemblages. This proposal will continue with high impact projects that have included a total of 211 occurrences representing 95 different species/communities/assemblages. Specific habitats include bluff prairie, oak savanna, barrens prairie, oak-hickory woodland, jack pine-oak woodland, white pine - oak/maple forest and maple basswood hardwood forest. These habitats support species including: tri-colored and northern long-eared bats, timber rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle, western foxsnake, North American racer, American ginseng, great Indian plantain, plains wild indigo and red-shouldered hawk.

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:

Southeast Minnesota benefits from a wealth of conservation planning and biological indices and analyses. Our partnership has defined our priorities based on these existing plans, like the watershed-based Landscape Stewardship Plans and DNR's Wildlife Action Network along with the Conservation Focus Areas in the Root River and Whitewater watersheds to identify priority areas to focus our efforts and resources (see proposal handout). Individual projects are assessed based on their significance to biodiversity (according to data from the MN Biological Survey), along with several other important criteria such as:

- location within a priority area
- health and extent of existing natural communities
- areas of significant biodiversity and native plant communities
- proximity to existing conservation lands

- parcel size
- importance for stream quality
- risk of conversion

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Southeast Forest

- Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

The Minnesota Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements as part of its landowner bid protocol. An estimated leverage of \$150,000 of donated value from landowners from easement acquisition is a conservative estimate.

Partners are also leveraging private funds to cover a portion of travel and direct support services cost totaling \$30,800. The Nature Conservancy is also leveraging \$73,000 Federal State Wildlife Grant funds for habitat restoration and enhancement.

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 does not substitute or supplant previous funding that was not from a Legacy fund.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2013	The Nature Conservancy	\$67,661
2014	The Nature Conservancy	\$2,173,459
2015	The Nature Conservancy	\$14,200
2016	The Trust for Public Land	\$250,000
2016	The Nature Conservancy	\$25,656
2017	The Nature Conservancy	\$63,600
2017	Trust for Public Land - Land Donation	\$55,000
2017	RIM Critical Habitat Match	\$500,000
2018	Trust for Public Land - Private	\$21,250

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

Tracts acquired in fee title will be transferred to the state for ongoing management except when TNC ownership is appropriate. Acquisition projects will be near or adjacent to existing protected lands, including state-owned lands and lands under conservation easement, allowing for the expansion of management activities that are already taking place. Habitats cleared of invasive species will be maintained with prescribed fire and other practices depending on funding. Protection and restoration projects will improve future prescribed fire and maintenance activities through economies of scale. The tracts protected and enhanced as part of this proposal also meet the prioritization for Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan. MN DNR has been successful in securing federal habitat enhancement funding.

Land protected through conservation easements will be sustained by MLT through a state-of-the-art easement stewardship standards and practices. MLT is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a successful easement stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring and defending the easements as necessary. In addition, MLT encourages landowners to undertake active ecological management of their properties, provides them with habitat management plans and works with them to secure resources (expertise and funding) to undertake these activities over time.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Every 4-6 years	US Fish and Wildlife Service	prescribed fire	-	-
Every 4-6 years	Game and Fish Fund	prescribed fire	-	-
2023 and perpetually	MLT Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-

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)?**

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

We will follow the county/township board notification processes as directed by current statutory language.

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

Yes

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

Yes

Who will manage the easement?

Minnesota Land Trust

Who will be the easement holder?

Minnesota Land Trust

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

MLT will complete 2-6 easements depending on size and cost, and the level of donative value put forward by landowners.

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?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- SNA
- AMA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal
- Public Waters
- State Forests
- Other : OHF Acquired TNC Preserve

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

Short-term use of agricultural crops is an accepted best practice for preparing a site for prairie restoration. For example, short-term use of soybeans could be used for restorations in order to control weed seedbeds prior to prairie planting. In some cases this necessitates the use of GMO treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank, however neonicotinoids will not be used.

MLT - The purpose of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easements is to protect existing high quality natural habitat and to preserve opportunities for future restoration. As such, we restrict any agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases in which there are agricultural lands associated with the larger property, we will either carve the agricultural area out of the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may include a small percentage of agricultural lands if it is not feasible to carve those areas out. In such cases, however, we will not use OHF funds to pay the landowners for that portion of the conservation easement.

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:

None

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- NGO

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA
- AMA
- SNA
- State Forest

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

TPL and TNC expect to close on 2-4 fee acquisitions through this appropriation.

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:

Driveways, access points, field roads and trails.

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

-

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

There will likely be restoration and enhancement needs greater than funding available within this appropriation for 1 or more of the lands to be acquired within this appropriation.

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

No

Explain how, when, and source of the R/E work:

Restoration expenses include program development activities in addition to restoration construction expenses. MLT restoration personnel will conduct outreach with easement landowners to evaluate, scope, design and schedule additional restoration projects. These activities will improve the project selection, cost-estimates and outcomes for future OHF funding requests.

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Purchase agreements or options on acquisition of fee land	June 30, 2024
Acquisition of fee land	June 30, 2025
Restoration/Enhancement on parcels protected with grant	June 30, 2026
Restoration/Enhancement on parcels protected without grant	June 30, 2026
MLT easement acquisition	June 30, 2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2026

Budget

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

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$602,000	\$73,000	-	\$675,000
Contracts	\$447,500	-	-	\$447,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,591,200	-	-	\$1,591,200
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$730,000	\$150,000	-, Private	\$880,000
Easement Stewardship	\$168,000	-	-	\$168,000
Travel	\$44,900	\$3,000	Private	\$47,900
Professional Services	\$223,800	-	-	\$223,800
Direct Support Services	\$127,300	\$27,800	-, Private	\$155,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$22,000	-	-	\$22,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,200	-	-	\$8,200
Supplies/Materials	\$63,100	-	-	\$63,100
DNR IDP	\$40,000	-	-	\$40,000
Grand Total	\$4,068,000	\$253,800	-	\$4,321,800

Partner: The Trust for Public Land

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Contracts	\$60,000	-	-	\$60,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,173,200	-	-	\$1,173,200
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$3,000	Private	\$3,000
Professional Services	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000
Direct Support Services	\$27,800	\$27,800	Private	\$55,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$12,000	-	-	\$12,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Grand Total	\$1,393,000	\$30,800	-	\$1,423,800

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection and Legal Staff	0.1	3.0	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$150,000	-	-	\$150,000
Contracts	\$137,500	-	-	\$137,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$730,000	\$150,000	Private	\$880,000
Easement Stewardship	\$168,000	-	-	\$168,000
Travel	\$12,900	-	-	\$12,900
Professional Services	\$138,800	-	-	\$138,800
Direct Support Services	\$40,500	-	-	\$40,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,200	-	-	\$3,200
Supplies/Materials	\$100	-	-	\$100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,381,000	\$150,000	-	\$1,531,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Restoration Staff	0.13	4.0	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Land Protection Staff	0.26	4.0	\$100,000	-	-	\$100,000

Partner: The Nature Conservancy

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$402,000	\$73,000	-	\$475,000
Contracts	\$250,000	-	-	\$250,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$418,000	-	-	\$418,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$32,000	-	-	\$32,000
Professional Services	\$40,000	-	-	\$40,000
Direct Support Services	\$59,000	-	-	\$59,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Supplies/Materials	\$63,000	-	-	\$63,000
DNR IDP	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Grand Total	\$1,294,000	\$73,000	-	\$1,367,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TNC Restoration/Enhancement Crew	1.77	3.0	\$204,000	\$73,000	Federal	\$277,000
TNC Project Management, Protection and Grant Administration	0.7	3.0	\$198,000	-	-	\$198,000

Amount of Request: \$4,068,000

Amount of Leverage: \$253,800

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 6.24%

DSS + Personnel: \$729,300

As a % of the total request: 17.93%

Easement Stewardship: \$168,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 23.01%

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

TNC is reducing funds for fee acquisition and will not be able to complete several restoration and enhancement projects. MLT will be unable to complete several easements from landowners who have applied to previous requests for proposals.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

TPL will leverage privately sourced funds to cover direct support services (DSS) costs not reimbursed and travel. MLT encourages landowners to donate value as a participant in the program. This leverage (\$150,000) is a

conservative estimate of expected landowner contribution.
TNC is also leveraging \$73,000 Federal funds.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

Phase 9 is a component of the larger Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program. Continuity of funding across multiple phases allows us flexibility when prioritizing parcels for protection or enhancement. Further, it ensures stability in our staffing model and provides the ability to plan and prioritize projects over multiple years. The flexibility provided by stable funding is critically important to achieving conservation goals given the uncertainty and variability of field season weather conditions. This proposal includes new seasonal stewardship positions to accelerate restoration and enhancement.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

TNC and TPL contract line items are dedicated to enhancement and restoration work. Typical contractors include private vendors and Conservation Corps of MN/IA.

MLT will contract for: 1) habitat management plans on the new easement acquisitions: 2) restoration plans and projects, 3) landowner outreach through SWCDs .

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

TPL and TNC expect to close on 2-4 fee acquisitions through this appropriation.

Easement Stewardship

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

MLT expects to close 2-6 easements depending on size/cost and the amount of landowner donation of easement value received.

The average cost per easement to perpetually fund the Minnesota Land Trust's long-term monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000. This figure has been determined by using a detailed stewardship funding calculator or "cost analysis" which is the industry standard according to the Land Trust Accreditation process. This cost analysis examines seventeen different categories of future annual expenditures related to the management of the easement and then calculates what the Land Trust needs in one-time funding to cover these various expenditures in perpetuity. In addition, the Land Trust seeks private contributions whenever possible to further leverage these state funds. The Minnesota Land Trust reviews and updates this cost-analysis periodically to ensure that the organization will have the capacity to fulfill its ongoing obligations. This cost-analysis is on file with the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council staff and the Land Trust shares a new version with the Council whenever updates are made.

Travel

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

Yes

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

Vehicle rental is also included.

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 Nature Conservancy's DSS is based on its Federally Negotiated Rate (FNR) as proposed and subsequently approved by the US Dept. of Interior on an annual basis. In this proposal we are requesting reimbursement of 7.5% of eligible base costs as determined by our annual FNR and based on suggestions from the Council in last year's hearings. Examples of expenses included in the FNR include in-house legal counsel; finance, human resources and administrative functions; and IT support. The FNR does not include land acquisition or capital equipment costs over \$50,000.

The Trust for Public Land's DSS request is based upon our federally approved rate, which has been approved by the DNR. This rate does not include costs that are included in other budget lines. 50% of these costs are requested from the grant and 50% is contributed as leverage.

MLT: 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 the direct support services.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?

Equipment and tools will be purchased to equip the crew carrying out restoration and enhancement, and include personal protection equipment, prescribed fire tools (e.g. drip torches and other hand tools), and other hand tools such as herbicide spray bottles.

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

January 1, 2021

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	30	23	53
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	152	217	-	369
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	729	729
Enhance	-	200	500	-	700
Total	-	352	747	752	1,851

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Easement	-
Enhance	200
Total	200

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	\$50,000	\$163,000	\$213,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$801,500	\$1,135,500	-	\$1,937,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,218,000	\$1,218,000
Enhance	-	\$200,000	\$500,000	-	\$700,000
Total	-	\$1,001,500	\$1,685,500	\$1,381,000	\$4,068,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	53	-	-	53
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	369	-	-	369
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	729	-	-	729
Enhance	-	-	700	-	-	700
Total	-	-	1,851	-	-	1,851

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	\$213,000	-	-	\$213,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$1,937,000	-	-	\$1,937,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,218,000	-	-	\$1,218,000
Enhance	-	-	\$700,000	-	-	\$700,000
Total	-	-	\$4,068,000	-	-	\$4,068,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	\$1,666	\$7,086

Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$5,273	\$5,232	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,670
Enhance	-	\$1,000	\$1,000	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	\$4,018	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$5,249	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,670	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$1,000	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1

Outcomes

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Large corridors and complexes of biologically diverse wildlife habitat typical of the unglaciated region are restored and protected ~ *We will track the acres of priority parcels protected within the Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) identified as priorities in regional planning. Success within each COA will be determined based on the percentage of area protected, restored and/or enhanced.*

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:

- Within Conservation Opportunity Area or Area of Significant Native Biodiversity (allows for large landscape management and management efficiencies, i.e. large scale Rx fire)
- Contains a Minnesota Biological Survey mapped native plant community
- Equal to or greater than 80 acres in size
- Property line began within ¼ mile of a state-owned parcel
- A Conservation Partner is willing to accept the property/meets partner objectives (SNA, WMA, Forestry)
- Willing seller

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
William Pease WMA	Fillmore	10411207	25	\$10,000	Yes
Chosen Valley WMA	Fillmore	10412206	10	\$4,000	Yes
Vesta Bluff Prairies	Fillmore	10208214	20	\$50,000	Yes
Rushford Sand Barrens	Fillmore	10408221	50	\$25,000	Yes
Rushford SF South 2	Fillmore	10408226	30	\$15,000	Yes
Schueler Bluffs	Fillmore	10408203	25	\$25,000	Yes
Choice WMA	Fillmore	10208201	40	\$32,000	Yes
Gribben Creek State Forest Unit	Fillmore	10309228	30	\$36,000	Yes
Chisholm Valley WMA	Houston	10307204	35	\$14,000	Yes
Mound Prairie Forests	Houston	10305203	30	\$12,000	Yes
Ferndale Ridge WMA	Houston	10407232	300	\$120,000	Yes
Wiscoy Valley 2	Winona	10507233	23	\$70,000	Yes
Whitewater Prairie 2	Winona	10810211	27	\$67,500	Yes
Whitewater Savanna	Winona	10810211	65	\$162,500	Yes
Whitewater Savanna 2	Winona	10810235	100	\$30,000	Yes
Whitewater WMA	Winona	10810202	60	\$180,000	Yes
Rushford Drainage District	Winona	10508233	31	\$93,000	Yes
Whitewater Burnt Oaks	Winona	10810211	65	\$162,500	Yes
Whitewater Larsen Prairie	Winona	10710208	30	\$50,200	Yes
Whitewater hwy26 Bluff	Winona	10710203	35	\$42,000	Yes
Whitewater Lupine Valley	Winona	10810201	143	\$50,000	Yes
Wiscoy Valley 1	Winona	10507217	40	\$120,000	Yes

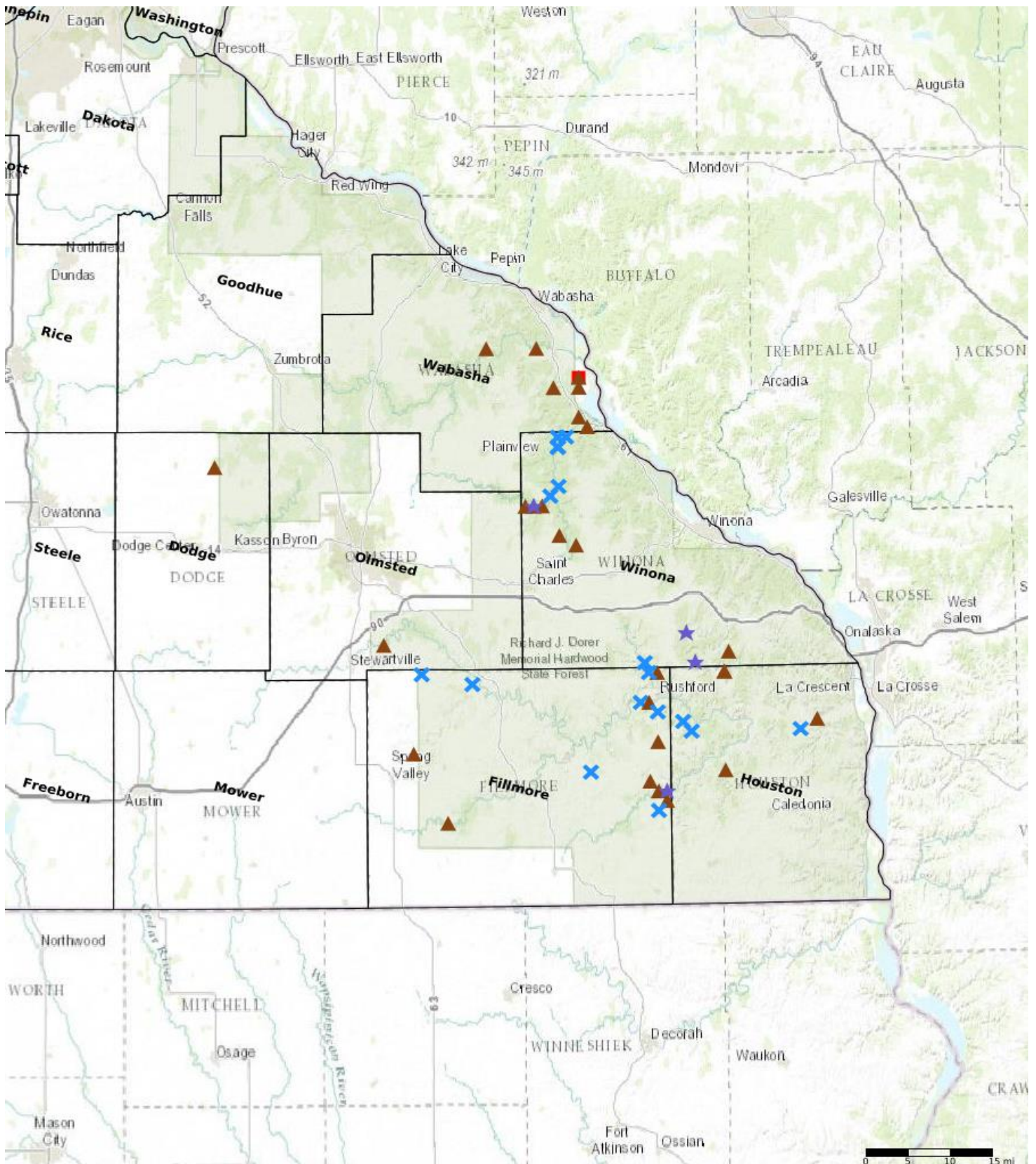
Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing
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					Protection
Middle Fork Zumbro River SNA	Dodge	10817224	175	\$787,500	No
Choice WMA 6	Fillmore	10208212	120	\$420,000	No
Deer Creek SNA II	Fillmore	10313213	159	\$506,000	No
Forestville 2	Fillmore	10212222	130	\$455,000	No
Choice WMA North 4	Fillmore	10308234	75	\$270,000	No
Rushford SB 2	Fillmore	10408222	160	\$500,000	No
Choice	Fillmore	10308211	102	\$102,000	No
Root River WMA	Houston	10405236	37	\$135,000	No
Money Creek South	Houston	10406206	100	\$100,000	No
Money Creek South	Houston	10406206	100	\$300,000	No
Wet Bark 3	Houston	10306230	325	\$1,137,500	No
Root River Forestry	Olmsted	10513220	40	\$900,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main	Wabasha	10909230	50	\$252,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main II	Wabasha	10909232	210	\$486,000	No
McCarthy Lake	Wabasha	10909206	138	\$135,000	No
Mighty Zumbro	Wabasha	11010220	155	\$750,000	No
Mighty Zumbro II	Wabasha	11011220	200	\$1,000,000	No
Weaver Dunes	Wabasha	10909206	231	\$250,000	No
Watopa Forest	Wabasha	10910210	320	\$1,320,000	No
McCarthy Lake 2	Wabasha	10909207	100	\$450,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main III	Winona	10710209	54	\$277,900	No
Whitewater WMA North I	Winona	10710207	41	\$259,000	No
Whitewater WMA North II	Winona	10710208	86	\$624,900	No
Whitewater WMA South	Winona	10709231	430	\$2,300,000	No
Whitewater WMA South II	Winona	10710226	543	\$1,884,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Rush Creek	Fillmore	10408202	240	\$825,000	Yes	1	\$0
Choice WMA 7	Fillmore	10208202	570	\$2,000,000	No	2	-
Money Creek	Winona	10506230	850	\$2,500,000	No	1	\$0



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

Parcel Map
Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration
Phase 9
(Data Generated From Parcel List)



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2021 - Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase 9

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Manager: Richard Biske

Budget

Requested Amount: \$11,353,900

Appropriated Amount: \$4,068,000

Percentage: 35.83%

Item	Total Requested		Total Appropriated		Percentage of Request	
	Requested	Leverage	Appropriated	Leverage	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	\$1,008,400	-	\$602,000	\$73,000	59.7%	-
Contracts	\$1,484,000	-	\$447,500	-	30.15%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,300,000	-	\$1,591,200	-	37.0%	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,400,000	\$480,000	\$730,000	\$150,000	30.42%	31.25%
Easement Stewardship	\$576,000	-	\$168,000	-	29.17%	-
Travel	\$63,000	\$3,000	\$44,900	\$3,000	71.27%	100.0%
Professional Services	\$901,000	-	\$223,800	-	24.84%	-
Direct Support Services	\$333,300	\$86,000	\$127,300	\$27,800	38.19%	32.33%
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$65,000	-	\$22,000	-	33.85%	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$33,200	-	\$8,200	-	24.7%	-
Supplies/Materials	\$85,000	-	\$63,100	-	74.24%	-
DNR IDP	\$105,000	-	\$40,000	-	38.1%	-
Grand Total	\$11,353,900	\$569,000	\$4,068,000	\$253,800	35.83%	44.6%

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

TNC is reducing funds for fee acquisition and will not be able to complete several restoration and enhancement projects. MLT will be unable to complete several easements from landowners who have applied to previous requests for proposals.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	120	53	44.17%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	1,040	369	35.48%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	2,400	729	30.38%
Enhance	1,200	700	58.33%

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	\$843,400	\$213,000	25.25%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$5,280,500	\$1,937,000	36.68%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,167,000	\$1,218,000	29.23%
Enhance	\$1,063,000	\$700,000	65.85%

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	120	53	44.17%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	1,040	369	35.48%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	2,400	729	30.38%
Enhance	1,200	700	58.33%

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	\$843,400	\$213,000	25.25%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$5,280,500	\$1,937,000	36.68%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,167,000	\$1,218,000	29.23%
Enhance	\$1,063,000	\$700,000	65.85%



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

A Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs within its conservation program areas an RFP (Request for Proposals) model to both identify high-quality projects and introduce a level of competition into the easement acquisition process. Below, we briefly discuss how the system works and the framework put in place to sort the varied opportunities that come before us.

How the Ranking System Works

The parcel ranking framework employed through the Minnesota Land Trust's RFP process is intended as a **decision support tool** to aid in identifying, among the slate of landowners submitting bids for conservation easements, the most ecologically significant opportunities for the price. Using this framework, the Land Trust and its partners use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those worthy of consideration.

It is important to note that this parcel ranking framework enables the Land Trust to rank projects *relative* to one another. That's important to do, but it's also important to understand how a project (or suite of projects) relates to the ideal situation (i.e., a project that is of exceptional size, condition and superb landscape context). If, for example, an RFP generated 20 proposals in a program area, the framework would effectively sift among them and identify the relatively good from those relatively bad. However, this information alone would not determine whether any of those parcels were of sufficient quality to pursue for protection (all may be of insufficient quality to warrant expenditure of funds). To solve this problem and make sure ranked projects are high priorities for conservation, we step back and evaluate them relative to the ideal - i.e., is each project among the best opportunities for conservation we can expect to find in the program area?

As part of its proposals to LSOHC, the Land Trust included easement sign-up criteria that laid out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust utilizes in ranking potential parcels relative to one another, and identifying those with which a conservation easement will be pursued. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criteria. These weightings will be refined as we move forward in applying this approach in each program area.

The Framework

We evaluate potential projects based on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost. Both are assessed independent of one another.

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

The Ecological Significance score is determined by looking at 3 subfactors, each weighted equally (as a default). Each of these constitutes 1/3 of the total ecological significance score.

Subfactors:

- **Size or Quantity** – the area of the parcel to be protected (how big is it?), length of shoreline, etc. The bigger the better.
- **Condition or Quality** – the condition of the natural communities and/or target species found on a parcel. The higher quality the better.
- **Landscape Context** – what’s around the parcel, both ecologically and from a protected status standpoint. The more ecologically intact the surrounding landscape the better; the extent to which a parcel builds off of other protected lands to form complexes or corridors, the better.

Note that we have the ability to emphasize one subfactor over another if the specific circumstances warrant it, but we begin with a default standard at the onset. At present, all of our geographies are using the default standard.

Indicators:

A suite of weighted indicators is used to score each parcel relative to each of the above subfactors. Indicators are selected based on their ability to effectively inform the scoring of parcels relative to each of the respective subfactors. Weightings for each criterion are assessed and vetted to ensure that a set of indicators for each subfactor produces meaningful results, then applied across each of the proposed parcels. Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Data sets used for this purpose must offer wall-to-wall coverage across the program area to ensure that bias for or against parcels does not creep into the equation. Where gaps in such coverages exist, we attempt to fill them in to the extent feasible (via field inventory, etc.). Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Factor 2: Cost

Cost is a second major factor used in our consideration of parcels. Although ecological significance is *the* primary factor in determining the merits of a project, our RFP programs also strive to make the greatest conservation impact with the most efficient use of State funds. As such, we look at the overall cost of each project relative to its ecological significance; we also ask landowners to consider donating all or some of their easement value to the cause and to better position their proposals. Many landowners participate in that fashion.

Cost, as a primary factor, is assessed independently of the ecological factors. Given equal ecological significance, a project of lower cost will be elevated over those of higher cost in the ranking. That said, exceptionally high quality projects are likely to be pursued even if no or modest landowner donation is put forward. Alternatively, there are projects offered as full donations that are not moved forward because their ecological significance is not acceptable. The degree to which cost factors into the ranking of parcels relative to one another is made on a case-by-case basis.

SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet		SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7	SITE 8	SITE 9	SITE 10	SITE 11	SITE 12	Notes
COUNTY														
100 Pts	ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE													
Weighting Factor	Size/Abundance of Habitat (33 points)													
	a) Size (33 pts): Acres of Habitat to be Protected by an Easement													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Quality of Natural Resources to be Protected by the Easement (33 points)													
	a) Habitat Quality (28 pts): Quality of Existing Ecological Systems (Terrestrial & Aquatic)													
	b) Imperiled Species (5 pts): Occurrence of Documented Rare Species on Parcel													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Landscape Context (34 points)													
	Current Status (30 points)													
	a) Protection Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Protected Lands (8 pts)													
	ii. Amount of Protected Lands within 3 miles of Property													
	: Protected Land within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Protected Land 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	b) Ecological Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Ecological Habitat (8 pts)													
	ii. Amount of Ecological Habitat within 3 miles of Property													
	: Ecological Habitat within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Ecological Habitat 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	Future Potential (4 points)													
	a) Conservation Plan Context (2 pts)													
	b) Amount of Existing Activity (2 pts)													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COST														
	i. Bid amount (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	ii. Estimated donative value (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	TOTAL ACQUISITION COST (\$)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out

SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

Three primary factors when taken together provide a good estimate of long-term viability for biodiversity: 1) **Size** of the occurrence (species population or example of natural community), 2) **Condition** of the occurrence, and 3) its **Landscape context**. This framework is used widely across the world by a large number of conservation organizations and agencies and here in Minnesota by the Minnesota DNR, The Nature Conservancy and others. The Minnesota Land Trust has adopted this practice as well.

In this summary document, we provide an overview of the framework used by the Land Trust in assessing and prioritizing land protection opportunities before the organization.

- 1. Habitat Size (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the easement relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. Although size can pertain to species populations, the size of such populations is often constrained by available habitat. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator in these circumstances.

Scoring: Parcels are scored by how they fall relative to twelve size classes of habitat:

0 pt	1-40 acres
3 pts	41-50 acres
6 pts	51-75 acres
9 pts	76-108 acres
12 pts	109-152 acres
15 pts	153-224 acres
18 pts	225-320 acres
21 pts	321-460 acres
24 pts	461-660 acres
27 pts	661-960 acres
30 pts	961-1380 acres
33 pts	>1380 acres

- 2. Quality of Natural Resources (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat) and imperiled species if known. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on the condition of focal ecological community targets – both terrestrial and freshwater – and presence of imperiled species on the property, as such:

- a) Habitat Quality (28 points)** – The Minnesota Biological Survey natural community element occurrence ranking framework (for terrestrial systems) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency fish and insect indices of biotic integrity are used to score habitat quality on parcels, as such:

- 0 pts Absence of natural communities; fish/insect IBI = 0-10.
- 4 pts Natural communities averaging D rank; fish/insect IBI = 10-20.
- 8 pts Natural communities averaging CD rank; fish/insect IBI = 20-40.
- 12 pts Natural communities averaging C rank; fish/insect IBI = 50-59.
- 16 pts Natural communities averaging BC rank; fish/insect IBI = 60-69.
- 20 pts Natural communities averaging B rank; fish/insect IBI = 70-79.
- 24 pts Natural communities averaging AB rank; IBI = 80-89.
- 28 pts Natural communities averaging A rank; IBI > 90.

b) Imperiled Species (5 points) – Scoring of the parcel is based on species abundance, as follows:

- 1 pt 1 occurrence
- 2 pts 2 occurrences
- 3 pts 3 occurrences
- 5 pts 4 or more occurrences

3. Landscape Context (34 points): Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based as follows:

a) Protection Context (15 points) – Is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous protected land (if any) and amount of protected land within 3 miles of the property. Here, we look at two subfactors:

i) Amount of protected land (acres) contiguous with the parcel. Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of protected land contiguous to the parcel (8 points), as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of contiguous protected lands
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby but not contiguous can also play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight protected lands within ½ mile of the parcel higher than those farther removed, and score them separately.

(a) Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of protected land

- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt 0-640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

b) Ecological Context (15 points) – As with Protection context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous ecological habitat (if any) and amount of ecological habitat within 3 miles of the property.

i) Amount of ecological habitat (acres) contiguous with the parcel, providing species with direct access to larger blocks of permanent habitat (8 points). Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of natural ecological habitat contiguous to the parcel, as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of contiguous ecological habitat
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby, whether contiguous or not play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight ecological habitat within ½ mile of the parcel higher than that farther removed, and score them separately.

Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt 0-640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

c) Future Potential (4 points) – The degree to which the area within which a parcel lies has been identified as a priority for conservation action and the degree to which action is being

implemented in that area is a direct indicator of the long-term potential for maintenance of biodiversity associated with a parcel. Lands affiliated with priority areas are more likely to be complemented with additional levels of nearby protected lands than those outside of priority areas. In areas experiencing high levels of development, this factor may carry a significant amount of weight in setting protection priorities.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on two subfactors: 1) their position relative to priority areas identified in statewide or local planning efforts, and 2) the degree to which action is being implemented within a priority area.

- 0 pts Parcel not within priority area
- 1 pt Parcel within priority area; minimal activity occurring
- 2 pts Parcel within priority area; modest activity occurring
- 3 pts Parcel within priority area; good levels of activity occurring
- 4 pts Parcel within priority area; high levels of activity occurring