



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 12/11/2020

Project Title: St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Phase 2

Funds Recommended: \$3,112,000

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

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Monica Zachay

Title: Director of Programs

Organization: St. Croix River Association

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Location Information

County Location(s): Pine and Chisago.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

The St. Croix River Association, Minnesota Land Trust, and The Trust for Public Land will work in partnership to permanently protect approximately 544 acres of critical wildlife habitat on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River watershed through fee-title acquisition and conservation easements. The goals of the program are to protect high quality wildlife habitat, improve conservation connectivity, and provide public access for outdoor recreation opportunities.

Design and Scope of Work

The St. Croix River is one of the nation's first federally designated "Wild and Scenic" rivers and is home to a diverse abundance of native flora and fauna, rivaling any other location within the greater Upper Mississippi River basin. It contains large swaths of unspoiled brushland and forest habitat, critical for the survival of game species, non-game species, and threatened populations of wildlife including populations of sharp-tailed grouse and endangered Karner blue butterflies. To the north, pineries provide an abundance of forest products that sustain rural communities, along with seasonal economic boosts from visitors who come for an array of outdoor activities – from hunting and fishing, to hiking, biking and boating.

Despite its federal protections as a "Wild and Scenic" river, the watershed beyond the Riverway boundary is quite vulnerable. With more than 75% of the watershed's brushland and forest habitat in private holdings, the threat of development, fragmentation, and conversion to agriculture is substantial.

Building upon years of woodland owner outreach and increased interest in private forest stewardship, we seek to increase permanent protection options for landowners that result in the conservation of well connected, functional forests and rivers that sustain and enhance wildlife habitat. In partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL), we seek to protect large intact forest patches that are managed for complexity; sustain riparian forests that are managed for connectivity; and restore lands that are important to the 128 listed Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that are known to occur within this landscape.

Funding allocated through Phase I of the St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration program has largely been committed to projects that will be completed within the next year. The partnership is requesting ML 2021 funding for Phase II of the program to continue the important work of permanently protecting some of Minnesota's highest quality habitat.

TPL will protect approximately 244 acres in fee focusing on lands that have been identified as high priority in statewide and regional plans as immediate opportunities for protection. TPL will convey lands to the DNR, except when LGU ownership is appropriate, for permanent ownership, management, and stewardship.

MLT will acquire approximately 300 acres of conservation easements and develop habitat management plans for eased acres. Projects within targeted priority areas will be identified through a competitive RFP process and subsequently ranked based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the best projects and securing them at the lowest cost to the state. MLT will negotiate and close all conservation easements.

The St. Croix River Association will provide overall program administration and landowner outreach and engagement.

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

The areas targeted by this proposal have been identified and prioritized through state, regional, and local natural resource plans due to their high biodiversity, connectivity, and ability to preserve habitat for species of greatest conservation need.

The project area has a mixed representation of extensive forestland, brushland, and riparian habitats that are home to approximately 128 SGCN including: Lake Sturgeon, wood turtle, gray wolf, bald eagle, osprey, sandhill crane, trumpeter swan, yellow rail, and sharp-tailed grouse. The St. Croix River watershed is also globally-recognized for its mussel diversity with over 40 known mussels, including 5 federally endangered, and 20 state-listed species, such as the winged mapleleaf and snuffbox. The project area also contains a significant amount of high quality brushland and regenerating forestland habitat critical to the breeding success of the Golden-winged Warbler.

Within this region we have an unparalleled opportunity. The St. Croix River watershed has been classified as containing the best-preserved remnant of pre-settlement natural communities in the Upper Mississippi drainage. But we must protect the rich natural and cultural heritage of the St. Croix River watershed before they too are altered by ever encroaching agricultural and development pressure.

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:

This proposal uses a science-based multiple benefits approach for prioritizing and targeting areas of greatest conservation value. We will utilize The Nature Conservancy's St. Croix Basin GIS-based Priority Protection Analysis which incorporates Minnesota Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance, Lakes of Biological Significance, habitat complexes and connectivity, along with other data sets to spatially prioritize the most important sites for protection. The intent of this model was to develop and score priorities where multiple benefits overlap – habitat, biodiversity, water quality, water quantity, and resiliency. Evaluation criteria include: 1) aquatic and terrestrial habitat protection priorities, 2) lands important to drinking water quality and groundwater recharge, and 3) resilience of lands and waters to climate change and other anticipated future changes and disturbance.

More specifically, this approach includes data on habitat quality, target species communities, and habitat complexes for terrestrial species with emphasis on expanding corridors adjacent to public lands. The most heavily weighted component of this approach uses data from the Minnesota Biological Survey focused on fish and wildlife that includes data on biodiversity, wetlands, native plant communities, Lakes of Biological Significance, wild rice catchments, coldwater refuge for trout, proximity to protected lands, and ecological connections. Added benefits for water quality are assessed using data on wellhead protected areas, groundwater contamination susceptibility, private well density, and groundwater recharge.

Using results of this Multiple Benefits approach, areas will be targeted down to the parcel level for landowner

engagement and outreach for implementing permanent protection activities. For MLT easements, a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process by which landowners will apply for consideration of a conservation easement will be used. Proposed projects will be scored along ecological grounds, and will also consider donative value from the landowner.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

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?

Metro / Urban

- Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)

Northern Forest

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

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Through its market-based RFP process, MLT expects private landowners to donate at least \$200,000 in easement value toward the program, which is shown as leverage.

One-half of TPL's DSS costs and all of TPL's travel costs are provided as privately sourced leverage for this proposal. TPL will attempt to bring various state, local and private funds to acquire additional property and leverage the OHF grant, and will attempt to leverage fee acquisition with partial donations of the appraised value of protected parcels.

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.

Funding requested by the Partnership will not supplant or substitute for any previous non-legacy funding used for the same purpose.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2011	TPL:ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors	\$423,000
2013	TPL:ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors	\$395,000

2009	MLT:ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 5	\$67,700
2010	MLT:ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 5 Supplemental	\$20,300
2011	MLT:ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 6	\$27,400

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

The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. MLT is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. MLT will assist landowners in the development of habitat management plans to help ensure that the land will be managed for its wildlife and water quality benefits. MLT (as easement holders on respective properties) will work with landowners in an ongoing basis to provide habitat restoration plans, resources and technical expertise to undertake ongoing management of these properties.

TPL will convey all fee title land to the DNR or LGUs for permanent stewardship. Once land has been conveyed, initial site development and restoration of these lands will begin. Estimated costs for initial restoration work are included in this proposal. TPL will work with DNR or LGUs to complete a restoration and management plan, and implementation of that plan will be completed in the following years. These properties will be managed and maintained by the respective government entities according to OHF standards.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026 and in perpetuity	MLT Long-Term Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-
2022	TPL - OHF and DNR	Post property	Develop restoration/management plan for property	-
2023	TPL - DNR	Develop restoration/management plan for property	Restore and steward property for habitat and public recreation	-
2024	TPL - DNR	Restore and steward property for habitat and public recreation	-	-

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:

Pursuant to state statute, County Board Notification will occur prior to 30 days of closing and project managers will be made available for questions if requested.

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?

Easements will be managed by MLT.

Who will be the easement holder?

Easements will be held by MLT.

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

MLT expects to close on 1-5 easement acquisitions through this grant. The number of easement acquisitions proposed can vary significantly due to the size and cost of targeted parcels. The maximum number of easements is capped at 5 based on the amount of stewardship funding requested.

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

TPL - For lands acquired that are conveyed as WMAs to the DNR, the DNR has indicated the following: 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 utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest. 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:

Yes, all fee-title land acquired will be open to public hunting and fishing.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- Local Unit of Government
- County

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?

The Trust for Public Land anticipates closing on two to three acquisitions.

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:

MLT - Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. Often, these established trails and roads are permitted in the terms of the easement and can be maintained for personal use if their use does not significantly impact the conservation values of the property. Creation of new roads/trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

TPL is not aware of any trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list nor are any new trails planned.

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

MLT - Existing trails and roads are identified in the project baseline report and will be monitored annually as part of the MLT's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails in line with the terms of the easement will be the responsibility of the landowner.

TPL - N/A

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

TPL - Some initial restoration will be conducted through release of IDP funds or through contracts.

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
MLT - Conservation easements completed or options	June 30, 2025

secured	
TPL - Landowner negotiations, agreements, and due diligence	June 30, 2024
TPL - Land acquired	June 30, 2024
TPL - Initial site development/restoration	Fall 2024

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2025

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	\$295,000	-	-	\$295,000
Contracts	\$115,000	-	-	\$115,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,253,500	-	-	\$1,253,500
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$1,000,000	\$200,000	-, Private Landowner	\$1,200,000
Easement Stewardship	\$144,000	-	-	\$144,000
Travel	\$10,000	\$2,000	-, Private	\$12,000
Professional Services	\$190,000	-	-	\$190,000
Direct Support Services	\$56,500	\$30,500	-, Private	\$87,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
DNR IDP	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Grand Total	\$3,112,000	\$232,500	-	\$3,344,500

Partner: TPL

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$95,000	-	-	\$95,000
Contracts	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,253,500	-	-	\$1,253,500
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$2,000	Private	\$2,000
Professional Services	\$45,000	-	-	\$45,000
Direct Support Services	\$30,500	\$30,500	Private	\$61,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Grand Total	\$1,494,000	\$32,500	-	\$1,526,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Staff	0.2	3.0	\$95,000	-	-	\$95,000

Partner: MLT

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$95,000	-	-	\$95,000
Contracts	\$70,000	-	-	\$70,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$1,000,000	\$200,000	Private Landowner	\$1,200,000
Easement Stewardship	\$144,000	-	-	\$144,000
Travel	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Professional Services	\$145,000	-	-	\$145,000
Direct Support Services	\$26,000	-	-	\$26,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,493,000	\$200,000	-	\$1,693,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Staff	0.25	4.0	\$95,000	-	-	\$95,000

Partner: SCRA

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$105,000	-	-	\$105,000
Contracts	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$125,000	-	-	\$125,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
SCRA Staff	0.4	3.0	\$105,000	-	-	\$105,000

Amount of Request: \$3,112,000

Amount of Leverage: \$232,500

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 7.47%

DSS + Personnel: \$351,500

As a % of the total request: 11.29%

Easement Stewardship: \$144,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 14.4%

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

Outputs, to a large degree, were reduced proportionately to the funding that was allocated.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

MLT - \$200,000 in the form of full or partial donations of the appraised value for landowner conservation easements.

TPL - \$32,500 of privately sourced funds for travel costs and half of direct support services costs.

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?

Funding for personnel received in ML 2019 has been spent or allocated to activities within the first two years of the project. ML 2021 funding will support similar staff positions for the second phase of the project with minimal overlap from Phase one.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

MLT – For contracts related to the writing of habitat management plans and for project management through an MOU with BWSR.

TPL - Potential site clean-up and initial restoration activities.

SCRA - Contract funding will support local education and outreach activities performed by county SWCDs.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

Two to three.

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 1-5 conservation easements depending on size/cost of the prioritized easements and the level of donative value provided by landowners. The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000. This figure is derived from MLT's detailed stewardship funding "cost analysis" which is consistent with Land Trust Accreditation standards. MLT shares periodic updates to this cost analysis with LSOHC staff.

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

Minnesota Land Trust staff regularly rent vehicles for grant-related purposes, which is a significant cost savings over use of personal vehicles.

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?

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 applied this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services requested through this grant.

TPL - Our DSS request is based upon our federal rate which has been approved by the DNR. 50% of these costs are requested from the grant, 50% is contributed as leverage. The request does not include costs that are covered in other budget lines items.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

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	-	-	122	122	244
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	300	300
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	122	422	544

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$778,000	\$778,000	\$1,556,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,556,000	\$1,556,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$778,000	\$2,334,000	\$3,112,000

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	40	-	-	-	204	244
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	150	-	-	-	150	300
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	190	-	-	-	354	544

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	\$259,500	-	-	-	\$1,296,500	\$1,556,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$778,000	-	-	-	\$778,000	\$1,556,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$1,037,500	-	-	-	\$2,074,500	\$3,112,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$6,377	\$6,377
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$5,186
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	\$6,487	-	-	-	\$6,355
Protect in Fee w/o State	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability					
Protect in Easement	\$5,186	-	-	-	\$5,186
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0.5

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *This project will be measured by the acres of wildlife corridors protected and evaluated based on the observed use by wildlife populations and evidence of SGCN.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *This project will be measured by the acres of high quality forestlands that are permanently protected from development and fragmentation. Protected land will also be evaluated by its proximity to existing public lands as well as connectivity to other protected forestlands.*

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:

Minnesota Land Trust uses a competitive, market-based approach through an RFP process to identify interested landowners and prioritize parcels for conservation easement acquisition. All proposals submitted by landowners are evaluated and ranked relative to their ecological significance based on three primary factors: 1) size of habitat on the parcel; 2) condition of habitat on the parcel; and 3) the context (both in terms of amount/quality of remaining habitat and protected areas) within which the parcel lies. We also ask the landowner to consider contributing all or a portion of fair market value to enable our funds to make a larger conservation impact (see attached sign-up criteria). SCRA works to provide outreach services and contracting with county SWCDs as a way to connect effectively with local landowners.

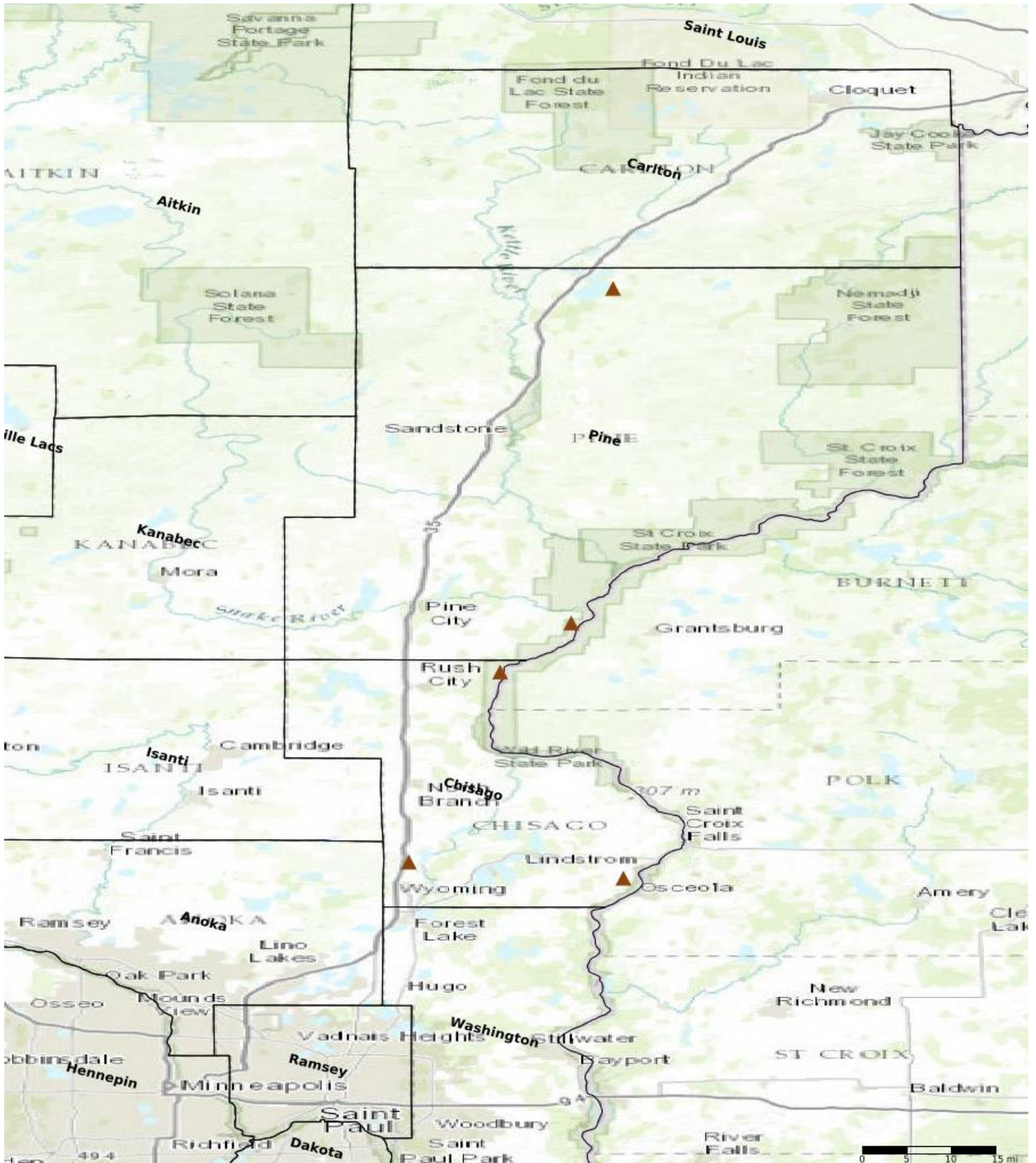
The Trust for Public Land works with its public partners to identify and prioritize projects that meet their objectives and are on their priority lists. Criteria includes whether the land provides critical habitat for game and non-game species, quality public recreational opportunities, presence of unique plants and animal species (including SGCN), goals of conservation plans, adjacency to other public land or habitat complexes, existence of local support, immediacy of threats, land owner willingness and time frame.

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Carlos Avery WMA Addition	Chisago	03321205	62	\$150,000	No
Franconia SNA Addition	Chisago	03319216	85	\$400,000	No
Chengwatana State Forest Addition II	Pine	03820212	160	\$300,000	No
Chengwatana State Forest Addition III	Pine	03720208	160	\$480,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
Sturgeon Lake	Pine	04519215	143	\$1,450,000	No	1	\$0



Parcel Map
St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and
Restoration Phase 2
 (Data Generated From Parcel List)

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



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2021 - St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Phase 2

Organization: St. Croix River Association

Manager: Monica Zachay

Budget

Requested Amount: \$8,295,000

Appropriated Amount: \$3,112,000

Percentage: 37.52%

Item	Total Requested		Total Appropriated		Percentage of Request	
	Requested	Leverage	Appropriated	Leverage	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	\$553,000	-	\$295,000	-	53.35%	-
Contracts	\$187,000	-	\$115,000	-	61.5%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,535,000	-	\$1,253,500	-	35.46%	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,000,000	\$600,000	\$1,000,000	\$200,000	33.33%	33.33%
Easement Stewardship	\$288,000	-	\$144,000	-	50.0%	-
Travel	\$16,000	\$2,000	\$10,000	\$2,000	62.5%	100.0%
Professional Services	\$455,000	-	\$190,000	-	41.76%	-
Direct Support Services	\$140,000	\$78,000	\$56,500	\$30,500	40.36%	39.1%
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$35,000	-	\$15,000	-	42.86%	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$6,000	-	\$3,000	-	50.0%	-
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	-	\$5,000	-	100.0%	-
DNR IDP	\$75,000	-	\$25,000	-	33.33%	-
Grand Total	\$8,295,000	\$680,000	\$3,112,000	\$232,500	37.52%	34.19%

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

Outputs, to a large degree, were reduced proportionately to the funding that was allocated.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	690	244	35.36%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	900	300	33.33%
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$4,221,000	\$1,556,000	36.86%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,074,000	\$1,556,000	38.19%
Enhance	-	-	-

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	690	244	35.36%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	900	300	33.33%
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$4,221,000	\$1,556,000	36.86%
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,074,000	\$1,556,000	38.19%
Enhance	-	-	-



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.

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST ST. CROIX WATERSHED 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