

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2022 / ML 2021 Request for Funding



Date: May 28, 2020

Program or Project Title: Targeted RIM Easement & Acquisition to the Parcel Level Pine & Leech Watersheds Phase II (HA09)

Funds Requested: \$3,864,000

Manager's Name: Melissa Barrick

Title: District Manager

Organization: Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District

Address: 322 Laurel St Ste 22

Address 2: 322 Laurel St Ste 22

City: Brainerd, MN 56401

Office Number: 2188286197

Email: melissa.barrick@crowwingswcd.org

Website: <https://crowwingswcd.org/>

County Locations: Cass, and Hubbard.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Habitat

Abstract:

Hubbard, Crow Wing, and Cass County Land Departments and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) will partner to acquire 550 acres (public access) and place easements on 480 acres of private high-quality forest, wetlands, and shoreline in the Northern Forest Ecological Section. This project is integrating county land management goals and parcel selection into the 75 percent protection watershed goal (Phase 1 Watershed Grant). Development trends pose a serious threat to, wild rice, Golden-winged Warbler, Northern Long-eared Bat, Blanding Turtle, and over 107 unique, rare, endangered, and threatened species that live in uplands, lowlands, and mature forest of these counties.

Design and scope of work:

This project will focus on Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) conservation easements and acquisitions adjacent to county land on targeted private forest and wetlands within the Leech Lake River and Pine River Watersheds. These watersheds contain:

- 1,250 lakes, which covers 354 square miles
- 88 lakes with High to Highest Outstanding Biological Significance (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources MN DNR)
- 92 wild rice lakes and over 29 cisco lakes
- Property values surrounding these high-quality lakes and streams are worth over 10 billion dollars
- 262,300 acres of county managed land that is open to the public for hunting and fishing

In 2010, Peter Jacobson, MN DNR, published cisco lakes research and prioritized 50 cisco lakes as a high priority to protect. The MN DNR Fisheries identified a strong correlation between lake water quality that sustains fish populations and maintaining 75 percent forest cover in a specific watershed.

2018- 2019, the Leech Lake River and Pine River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans pinpointed private land easements and acquisitions as a key component to these watersheds thriving. Private land adjacent to county forest land and waterbodies are prime targets for: forest fragmentation, first and second tier development, damaged aquatic habitat, and an increase in buildings, homes, and roads.

In 2019, watershed partners took the protection framework methodology called RAQ (Riparian, Adjacent, Quality) and applied RAQ to the RIM easement program to filter 320,000 acres down to 2,280 acres within the Leech Lake River and Pine River Watersheds. This project will build off the 2020 Lessard Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant and will meld the county land prioritization process for acquisition with the RAQ scoring to provide more opportunity for the County and SWCD to reach 75 percent watershed protection goal.

County land management plans prioritize parcels to consolidate of county ownership to enhance management, increase wildlife habitat protection, and increase public access for recreational opportunities like hunting and fishing. These parcels have been

integrated into the Leech Lake River and Pine River watershed RAQ framework. This project will dovetail County Land Department acquisition of 550 acres with Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Easements of 480 acres. This project will be successful because of the parcel scoring system used to integrate upland and aquatic habitat protection, a clear set goal for each sub watershed of 75 percent protection, methodology to track progress, well trained staff that are excellent at communication with the landowner, and lessons learned from past easement programs.

The Pine River and Leech Lake River Watersheds include some of the best lakes and fisheries within the lower 48 States. The Tourism industry of Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties generates over \$399 million in gross sales per year (Minnesota Explore 2018). Private lands within those watersheds need prioritized protection strategies to ensure that the habitat stays intact and maintain wildlife corridors, gives Minnesotans additional opportunities for fishing and hunting, and protects the local tourism economy and tax base of Leech Lake River and Pine River Watersheds.

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

The MN DNR rare species guide indicates that Leech Lake and Pine River Watersheds contain over 108 rare species from fish, invertebrates, plants, reptiles, and mammals. These species depend on the fringe wetlands, forested corridors, high quality lakes, and shoreland vegetative habitat. Recently, the Northern Long-eared Bat was added to federally threatened species list. The MN DNR and US Fish and Wildlife Service identified over 11 townships in Cass, Crow Wing, and Hubbard Counties that contain mature roost trees for the Northern Long-eared Bat. Approximately, 230 mature roost trees were identified in Minnesota and 30 percent of the trees were located in Hubbard, Cass and Crow Wing Counties.

Wild rice grows in a complex of shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes and provides some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota. Wild rice habitat is especially important to Minnesota's migrating and breeding waterfowl. More than 17 species of wildlife listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wild rice areas as habitat for breeding, migration, and/or foraging. They include: Common Loon, Trumpeter Swan, Bald Eagle, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Red-necked Grebe, Sora Rail, Virginia Rail, Yellow Rail, Black Tern, Rusty Blackbird, Sedge Wren, Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintail, and American Black Duck.

Blanding Turtles need both upland and wetlands to complete their life cycle. Their habitats, calm shallow water bodies (type 1-3 wetlands) are important amphibian and invertebrate breeding grounds, also an important food source for the Blanding Turtle. They nest in open grassy or brushy sandy upland on undeveloped land.

The MN DNR identified the Golden-winged Warbler as a SGCN whose population declined by 60 percent across the United States and Canada. These critical upland, lowland, and mature forest habitats support over 47 percent of this species global population. This bird is a Minnesota's Icon and symbol of private land stewardship.

What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

These private lands are threatened by forest fragmentation, development, damaged aquatic habitat, and an increase in buildings and roads. The Highway 371 expansion (Nisswa to Jenkins) increased travel capacity and decreased travel time by 20 minutes. Now, 3.6 million people (Twin Cities and Fargo) are two hours or less from lake country. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center from 1990-2017, on average Cass, Hubbard, and Crow Wing Counties populations increased by 140 percent (an average increase of 500 people per year). Family owned cabins are becoming lake homes with year-round residency and have increased by 479 percent (700 to 3,350 square feet WI DNR). Buffer and tall grass are altered to maintained lawn and graded to the lake. These changes have a significant impact on bird nesting, fish spawning, frogs, rare and endangered species, and forest health and water quality. These existing high-quality habitats must be protected.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This project will utilize science-based targeting RAQ scores to expand habitat corridors on private lands and develop larger public habitat complexes that will be open to the public for fishing and hunting. RAQ Tool scores individual private parcels as the following:

- Riparian parcels adjacent to priority water resources (1-3 points)
- Adjacency is whether it is next to existing state, county, or federal land (1-3 points)
- Quality is the locally determined value of the land (1-3 Points), which can include a number of criteria, such as trout/cisco lakes, wild rice, old growth forests, MN DNR phosphorus sensitivity, rare species, biodiversity, and groundwater recharge.

Staff cross referenced County Land Department acquisition priorities with the RAQ scoring and identified 16 parcels as high priority for the land departments to acquire. To date, partners have mapped and utilized RAQ scoring for 62,000 private parcels within Leech Lake River and Pine River Watersheds.

The RAQ method also includes databases, landowner outreach tables, rare and unique species, cisco and wild rice lakes, and an achievable target percent of land protected for each subwatershed. This data targets RIM Easements and acquisitions to the parcel level and ensures that public dollars are spent on the best parcels for habitat value and building of large publicly owned habitat complexes. This methodology is proven through Phase I LSOHC grant and Clean Water Fund RIM Easement Program. SWCD will work with landowners to enroll them in the RIM program with BWSR. The County Land Departments will work with landowners and Northern Waters Land Trust to complete the land acquisitions. Crow Wing SWCD has utilized this methodology and has protected over 12 miles of shoreline and 1,245 acres of habitat. Cass County Land Department has been very successful at the land consolidation approach with past LSOHC grants. This project will integrate this process for an entire comprehensive watershed approach.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

The MN DNR Fisheries research indicates that near shore and upland land protection is crucial to long term fish and aquatic habitats. This project will directly implement the National Fish Habitat Action Plan by enrolling 480 acres into permanent conservation easements and acquiring 550 acres. This project meets both Goal 1 and 2 which are:

- Protect and maintain intact and healthy aquatic systems.
- Prevent further degradation of fish habitats that have been adversely affected.

Furthermore, this project compliments the Minnesota Forest Resource Council North Central Landscape Plan. The project will address the following Ecological Resource Initiatives Goals:

2. Maintain or increase the area of forest land.
3. Retain contiguous blocks of forest land.
4. Protect and prevent the loss of sensitive and undeveloped lake and river shorelines.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Northern Forest:

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

This project will directly implement priority actions for the Northern Forest Section which include:

- Forest lands are protected from development and fragmentation
- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forest and other habitat corridors
- Lakes and wetlands support health fish populations
- Lakes and streams with protected shoreland and forest land will produce quality warm and cold-water aquatic systems.
- Protect shallow and critical wild rice habitat

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

Does this program include leverage in funds:

No

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Any state agency or organization requesting a direct appropriation from the OHF must inform the LSOHC at the time of the request for funding is made, 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 funding is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Not Listed

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

BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of RIM easements into perpetuity. BWSR partners with SWCDs to monitor and inspect all RIM easements. SWCD complete the following:

- Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years.
- On-site inspections are performed every three years.
- Compliance checks are performed in the other two years.
- SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and partners' staff document findings.
- A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

The County Land Department manage all County Administered lands under their Forest Resource Management Plans. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by the Counties and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. The Counties have a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2022	County Land Department	Manage land as part of County management plan		
2022	Easements Monitoring Funds	SWCDs inspect easements	Onsite inspections	SWCDs reports inspections to BWSR

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

This project will permanently protect the following indicator species and association habitat:

Cisco (Coregonus artedi)

In 2010, Peter Jacobson, MNDNR, published research on cisco lakes in Minnesota and prioritized 29 tier 1 and 2 lakes in the Pine River and Leech Lake River Watersheds as high priority lakes to protect. The cisco are essential food source to walleyes, small and large mouth bass, and loons. These fish are very sensitive to pollutants and thermal pollution. The MNDNR research indicated the land protection is key to ciscoes surviving the predicted climate impacts.

Golden-winged Warblers (Vermivora Chrysoptera)

Often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers (a matrix of shrubby wetlands and uplands, regenerating forests, and mature forests). While territories vary in size, an average of 4 pairs for every 10 hectares, may be translated to roughly 6 pairs for every 40 acres.

Blanding’s turtle (Emydoidea blandingii)

This species also requires upland habitat, relying on open sandy areas covered in grasses or shrubs for nesting. Due to their high mobility, Blanding’s turtles occupy large areas (12.8-38.4 hectares).

Northern Long-eared Bat (Myotis septentrionalis)

They prefer to roost in tall trees with a dynamic forest structure including old growth and some young trees. The summer home range can vary from 50-150 acres and increase to 289 acres when the bats are pregnant. The northern long-eared bat chooses a different day roosts in tall trees and snags. Individual

Activity Details

Requirements:

If funded, this proposal 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 - **Yes**

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

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing - **No**

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

All new acquisitions will follow the county land department management plan that does allow access for hunting and fishing.

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

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

RIM Easements:

This appropriation is funding a program that will have a parcel list identified at a later time. Roads or trails are typically excluded from the easement area if they serve no beneficial purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring, or enforcement. Existing trails and roads are identified during the easement and acquisition process. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are allowed to remain.

County Land Acquisition:

The roads and trails are native surface and were built for forest management purposes or recreational access. All forest roads are

considered open to motorized travel unless posted closed with County Board consent. Motorized and non-motorized use is allowed. The roads and trails policy can be found in the County Forest Resources Management Plan.
http://cms4.revize.com/revize/casscounty/document_center/land/Forest_Resources_Management_Plan.pdf
<https://www.crowwing.us/261/Forest-Management>
http://cms6.revize.com/revize/hubbardcounty/document_center/Natural%20Resource%20Management/2002%20Forest%20Resources%20Management%20Plan.pdf

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition - **Yes**

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

The County Land Department manage all County Administered lands under their Forest Resource Management Plans. These lands are not eligible for PILT payments. MN Statute 477A.11 defines lands that are eligible as being held by the state in fee or tax forfeited. The acquired lands for this project will be held in fee by the Counties and therefore are not eligible for PILT Payments. There will be no ongoing cost to the State of MN for the acquisition of these lands.

This management plan requires that operations are maintained from revenue generated from timber sales. The Counties have a long history of covering our operation costs with timber revenue. The lands acquired will be managed under this same plan. Each county will follow their county board approved management plan:

http://cms4.revize.com/revize/casscounty/document_center/land/Forest_Resources_Management_Plan.pdf
<https://www.crowwing.us/261/Forest-Management>
http://cms6.revize.com/revize/hubbardcounty/document_center/Natural%20Resource%20Management/2002%20Forest%20Resources%20Management%20Plan.pdf

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - **Yes**

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

RIM Easements:

Though uncommon, there could be a potential for new minimal use trails, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). Unauthorized trails identified during the monitoring process are in violation of the easement.

County Land Acquisition:

The roads and trails are native surface and were built for forest management purposes or recreational access. All forest roads are considered open to motorized travel unless posted closed with County Board consent. Motorized and non-motorized use is allowed.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

RIM Easements:

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the BWSR RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first five years and then every third year after that. BWSR, in-cooperation with SWCD, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the RIM Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

County Land Acquisition:

County Land Departments will follow the County Board approved forest management plan to manage the land once the land is acquired. Counties are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council under Smartwood to manage timber following best management practices. Collectively, these land departments manage over 500,000 acres of forest land. They are well suited to maintain these additional acres long term.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this proposals funding and availability? - **Yes**

Land Use:

Have you received OHF dollars in the past through LSOHC? - **Yes**

Past appropriations and spending to date:

Apprp Year	Approp Amount Received	Approp Amount Spent to Date	Leverage as Reported in AP/th>	Leverage Realized to Date	Total Acres Affected in AP	Total Acres Affected to Date	Program Complete and Final Report Approved?
2019	1246000	884806	75000				No

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Contract with Northern Waters Land Trust for County Land Acquisitions	2021
Outreach to landowners for easements and acquisitions with mailing	2021
Rank Score Applications/Inter-agency Team Meetings	January -March 2022
SWCDs work with landowners and BWSR to complete RIM Easement	2021-2024
Northern Land and Water Trust work with landowners to begin acquisition process	2021-2024
County Board and Townships approve acquisitions	2022-2024
Crow Wing SWCD will coordinate projects between counties, SWCDs, Northern Waters Land Trust, and BWSR.	2021-2024
Crow Wing SWCD complete required reporting for LSOHC	Semiannual basis

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$3,864,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000
Contracts	\$717,000	\$0		\$717,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,500,000	\$0		\$1,500,000
Easement Acquisition	\$1,341,000	\$0		\$1,341,000
Easement Stewardship	\$52,000	\$0		\$52,000
Travel	\$8,000	\$0		\$8,000
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$33,000	\$0		\$33,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,000	\$0		\$4,000
Supplies/Materials	\$9,000	\$0		\$9,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$3,864,000	\$0		\$3,864,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Administration/Coordination	0.19	4.00	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Outreach	0.12	4.00	\$50,000	\$0		\$50,000
Program Mgmt	0.10	4.00	\$48,000	\$0		\$48,000
Easement Processing	0.10	3.00	\$22,000	\$0		\$22,000
Total	0.51	15.00	\$200,000	\$0		\$200,000

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	SWCD	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000
Contracts	SWCD	\$700,000	\$0		\$700,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	SWCD	\$1,500,000	\$0		\$1,500,000
Easement Acquisition	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	SWCD	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
Professional Services	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	SWCD	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	SWCD	\$8,000	\$0		\$8,000
DNR IDP	SWCD	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$2,363,000	\$0		\$2,363,000

Personnel - SWCD

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Administration/Coordination	0.19	4.00	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Outreach	0.12	4.00	\$50,000	\$0		\$50,000
Total	0.31	8.00	\$130,000	\$0		\$130,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	BWSR	\$70,000	\$0		\$70,000
Contracts	BWSR	\$17,000	\$0		\$17,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	BWSR	\$1,341,000	\$0		\$1,341,000
Easement Stewardship	BWSR	\$52,000	\$0		\$52,000
Travel	BWSR	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Professional Services	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	BWSR	\$13,000	\$0		\$13,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	BWSR	\$4,000	\$0		\$4,000
Supplies/Materials	BWSR	\$1,000	\$0		\$1,000
DNR IDP	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$1,501,000	\$0		\$1,501,000

Personnel - BWSR

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Mgmt	0.10	4.00	\$48,000	\$0		\$48,000
Easement Processing	0.10	3.00	\$22,000	\$0		\$22,000
Total	0.20	7.00	\$70,000	\$0		\$70,000

Amount of Request: \$3,864,000
 Amount of Leverage: \$0
 Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.00%
 DSS + Personnel: \$233,000
 As a % of the total request: 6.03%
 Easement Stewardship: \$52,000
 As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 3.88%

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program:

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

What is included in the contracts line?

SWCD Contract line:
 Hubbard and Cass SWCD for RIM Easement Outreach (\$50,000)
 Northern Waters Land Trust for county land acquisitions (\$650,000) Personnel, closing costs, appraisals, title work, and professional services needed to complete the acquisitions.

BWSR contract line: SWCD MJPA, \$2000 for staff time to complete each easement.

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental? - No

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

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs for mileage and food.

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

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

To date, we do not have any leverage funds. We will continue to seek other source such as Federal US Forest Service Funds and Clean Water Funds to match this project. The SWCD has leverage \$2 million dollars of Clean Water Fund RIM Easement for Source Water Protection.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the "economy of scale" and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

A reduction in funding would reduce number of acres protected, number of completed easements and acquired land, and the long term easement monitoring cost which is directly related to number easements. Program management costs would be the exception, due to program development and oversight remaining somewhat consistent regardless of appropriation.

What is the cost per easement for stewardship and explain how that amount is calculated?

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

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past? - No

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

Up to 16 parcels have been prioritized for fee title acquisition.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	110	0	220	220	550
Protect in Easement	96	0	192	192	480
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	206	0	412	412	1,030

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$462,600	\$0	\$925,200	\$925,200	\$2,313,000
Protect in Easement	\$310,200	\$0	\$620,400	\$620,400	\$1,551,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$772,800	\$0	\$1,545,600	\$1,545,600	\$3,864,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	550	550
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	480	480
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	1,030	1,030

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,313,000	\$2,313,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,551,000	\$1,551,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,864,000	\$3,864,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$4,205	\$0	\$4,205	\$4,205
Protect in Easement	\$3,231	\$0	\$3,231	\$3,231
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,205
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,231
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Automatic system calculation / not entered by managers

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

8

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *The outcomes will be measured by:*
 - Number of acres protected for easements and acquisitions*
 - Miles of Shoreline protected*
 - percent of land protected increased in a specific subwatershed correlating to the comprehensive watershed management plans for Leech Lake River and Pine River.*
- <https://www.crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/17315/Pine-River-One-Watershed-One-Plan-Final-Pan?bidId=> pages 144-146
- http://cms4.revize.com/revize/casscounty/document_center/esd/waterplan/LLRCWMPFinal_2019-03-11.pdf
pages 126-127

Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

RIM Easements:

The Pine RIM Easement Source Water Protection sheet is attached as an example of the scoring sheet that will be used to rank RIM Easements. Once the grant is awarded we will develop a scoring sheet for both the Leech and Pine River Watersheds. All parcels are mapped and ranked according to the RAQ Methodology.

County Acquisitions:

All parcels are mapped and ranked according to the RAQ Methodology and integrate the County Land Departments priorities. All parcels were selected by the County Land Department as high priority to enhance county land management goals. Cass and Hubbard Counties are added to the parcel list. Crow Wing County had a top 10 list that is attached.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
W	13928207	34	\$119,000	No	Full	Full
Wheeler	14027202	19	\$42,500	No	Full	Full
Whitnah	13928207	38	\$63,500	No	Full	Full
Whitnah	13928207	39	\$65,000	No	Full	Full
Whitnah	13928207	54	\$145,000	No	Full	Full
Whitnah	13929213	34	\$292,000	No	Full	Full

Hubbard

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Drack	14333203	40	\$75,000	No	Full	Full
Drack	14333204	40	\$45,000	No	Full	Full
Drack	14333204	40	\$70,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

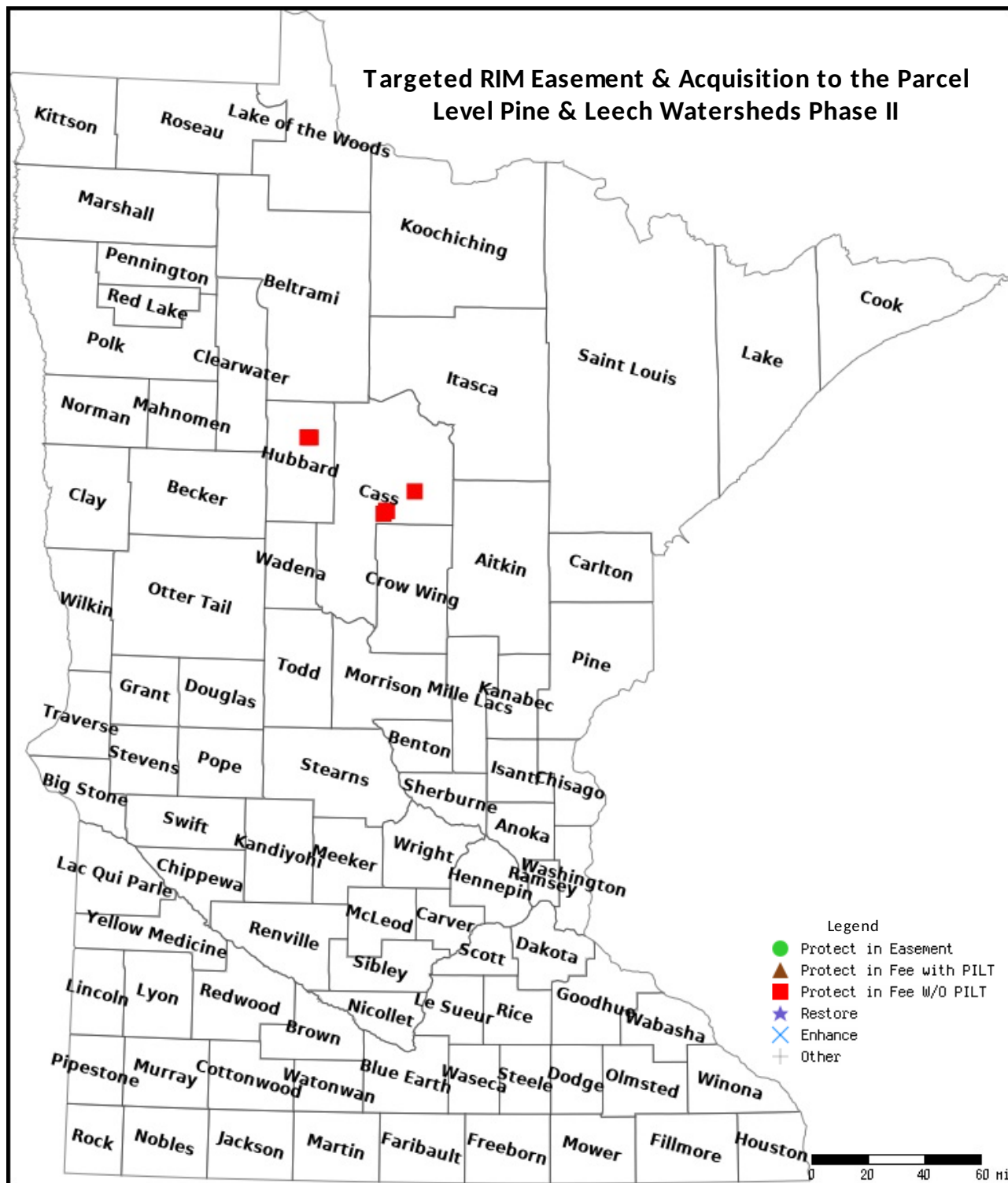
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Targeted RIM Easement & Acquisition to the Parcel Level Pine & Leech Watersheds Phase II



Data Generated From Parcel List

Aquatic & Terrestrial Habitat

Goal:

- Complete 15 BWSR RIM Easements on private Lands protect over 480 acres
- Increase county land habitat complexes by acquiring 550 acres & additional opportunity for hunting & fishing



Woodlands are giant water filters
Forests and well vegetated lands serve as a giant natural sponge, filtering and retaining storm water. The root system and vegetative base of woodlands protect both groundwater and surface water.



Land use affects water quality
The "Disturbance" of land has an effect on its ability to slow down and filter storm water runoff. As woodlands are developed or converted to crop or pasture lands the soil loses its ability to retain and filter water.



25%

The tipping point for water quality
Studies show that when more than 25% of the forest within a watershed is converted to other land uses, the water quality, begins to decline. Much of the decline is due to greater amounts of phosphorus entering the water.



75%

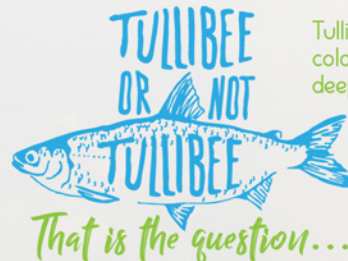
The protection goal is 75%
Because of water quality decline at 25% land disturbance, the protection goals for a watershed are then 75%. If this land percentage can be maintained, a certain quality of water can usually be reached.

Measure Success:

Protect 75% of the forested land within the minor watershed from land conversion or development.



We need to protect priority lakes and increase permanent protection funding for the iconic symbols of Minnesota's natural heritage... our lakes!



Tullibee are only found in clean, cold, well oxygenated & often deep waters.

Because of their habitat requirements they are fantastic "measuring sticks" for water quality.



36% of Minnesota's forests are private, they are 100% essential for clean water!

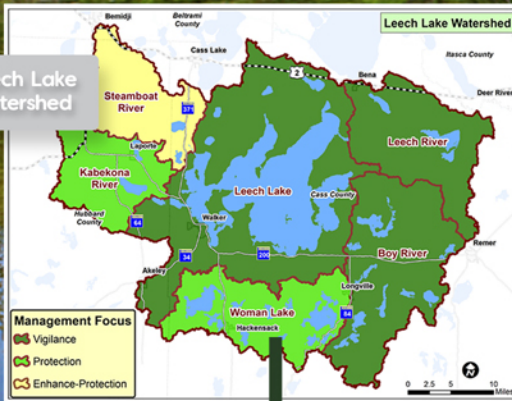
Integrated County Land Management Watershed Approach

Prioritization by Watershed:

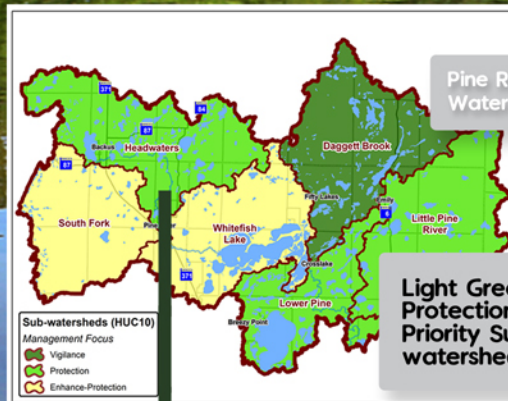
- Cisco Lakes, Wild Rice Lakes, Lakes of High/Outstanding Biodiversity
- "Protection" Watersheds (< 75% Protected: source One Watershed One Plan, DNR Landscape Stewardship Plan)



Leech Lake Watershed

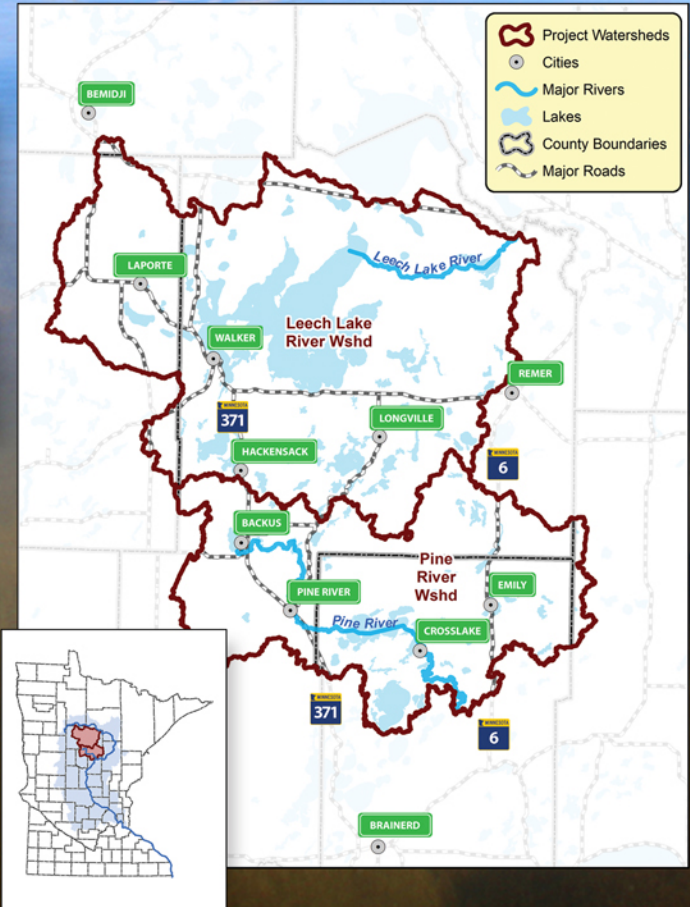
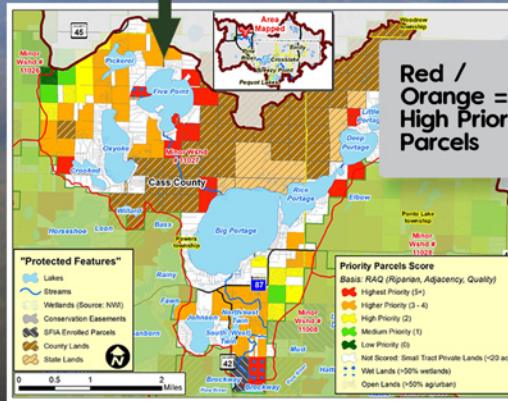
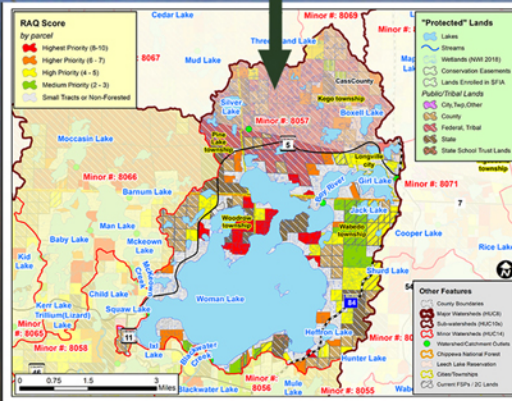


Pine River Watershed



Light Green = Protection Priority Sub-watershed

Red / Orange = High Priority Parcels



RAQ Scoring Method Targets to the Private Parcel:

- R = Riparian to Lake or Stream
- A = Adjacent to Public Lands (for larger habitat blocks)
- Q = Quality (High or Outstanding Terrestrial Biodiversity/DNR Wildlife Action Plan, Trout, Native, Muskie, Wild Rice, Old Growth Forests, + other locally important features)

Top 10 Acquisition Priorities

1. Emily section 12 – Bill Arns – 160 acres
2. Little Pine section 22 – 40 acres
3. Little Pine section 32 – 80 acres
4. Ross Lake section 5 – 160 acres
5. Ross Lake section 24 – 120 acres on the east side
6. Ross Lake section 9 – 80 acres
7. Timothy section 12 – 160 acres
8. Timothy section 19 & 20 – 280 acres
9. Timothy section 29 & 30 – 200 acres (NOT the 40 acre Tumbledown property)
10. Fairfield section 25 & 35 – 40 acres plus a small 2 acre piece

Healthy Waters Protection - Pine River Watershed Ranking

<u>Score</u>	<u>Max Score</u>	<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Guidelines:</u>	<u>Our Guidelines</u>
30		# Feet of Shoreline _____ Feet	5 points for minimal river frontage on Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers (<500ft) 10 points for at least 500 - 999 feet of shoreland on a Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers 15 points for 1,000 - 2,000 feet of shoreland on a Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers 20 points for 2,000 - 3,000 feet of shoreline on a Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers 30 points for more than 3,000 feet of shoreland on a Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers	
15		% of Tract Developable	1-15 points base on the proportion of the tract that is developable (10%=1.5pts)	
10		Wetland fringe width	1-10 points based on the distance between upland & the bank/water (0'=10pts, 300'=0pts, -1pt/30' wet)	
20		Urgency	Property opportunity is likely to be lost if we do not act quickly	
20		Professional Judgement	0-20 Points based on Landowner actively managing their land & Riparian/Streamshore Needs	
15		Drinking Water Score	5 Points for Second Quartile Drinking Water Benefits 10 Points for Third Quartile Drinking Water Benefits 15 Points for Fourth Quartile Drinking Water Benefits	TNC Arc GIS Map
15		Adjoining Applications	15 points for land adjoining another application	
15		Adjoining Public Land	15 points for land adjoining public land on the Little Pine, Upper Pine, or Lower Pine Rivers adjoining land permanently protected by other easement program	
5		Habitat Value	1-5 points based on the habitat value of the property, uniqueness, and lack of existing development and shoreline alterations	Wild Rice, Cisco, TNC Maps
10		% of Parcel/Tract	1-10 points based on the proportion of the parcel enrolled (10% = 1 pt)	
10		% Forest of the parcels	1-10 points based on the proportion of parcel that is forest (10% = 1 pt)	
15		Minor Watershed Risk Classification County Waterplan	1-15 Points for Classification Enhancement and Protection. Less points for Villigance. Additional points for moving that needle.	
20		Bargain Sale/Leverage	1-20 Points based on percent discount or other funds leveraged	
200		TOTAL GROSS SCORE	*Other factors may raise or lower the priority of a parcel	
100		Final Score (Total / 2)		

Cass County Commissioners

Our mission is to deliver quality public services to the citizens in an effective, professional and efficient manner.

PO Box 3000, 303 Minnesota Avenue, Walker, MN 56484-3000
Phone: 218-547-7204 Facsimile: 218-547-7455 TDD: 218-547-1424
E-Mail: josh.stevenson@co.cass.mn.us Web site: www.co.cass.mn.us



May 19, 2020

Crow Wing SWCD
322 Laurel St. Suite 22
Brainerd, MN 56401

Subject: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant Application

Dear Sir / Madam:

The Cass County Board of Commissioners supports the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds conservation easements and acquisition application. This is a partnership between Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and County Land Departments. **This project will complete eight conservation easements on private lands and protect over 500 acres of high-quality forest upland habitat.** We will also partner with Cass and Crow Wing Land Departments to assist will land management asset goal's which is to consolidate county land base and increase public access.

Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and SWCDs identified high quality lakes, forest, habitat, groundwater, and wetlands that need permeant protection (One Watershed One Plan and Landscape Stewardship Plan). The land departments also have identified parcels to meet asset land management goals within these watersheds. We will utilize plan datasets and prioritized list to select high scoring parcels for conservation easements and acquisition with the County Land Departments. This grant application will:

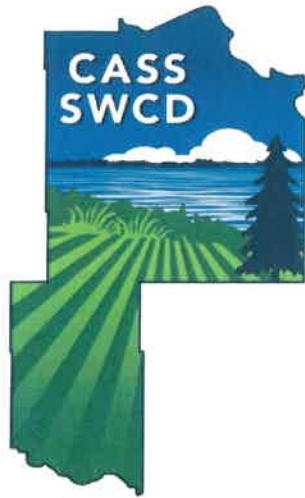
- Protect water by protecting adjacent land.
- Measure success by protecting 75% of the forest land within the minor watershed from land conversion or development.
- Maintain high quality water for 1.2 million drinking water users (St. Cloud-St. Paul).
- Conservation easement on private land stay on tax roll and with opportunity to grow the county tax base.
- Help County Land Departments to meet land management asset goals.
- Voluntary program where landowners choose.
- Utilize Board of Water Soil Resources Reinvest in Minnesota program. BWSR will hold the easements and work with SWCDs to implement the easement.

This grant will directly implement the Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Water Plans, the Pine River and Leech Lake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. If successful, the grant award is in July 1, 2021. Anticipated start of the program is summer or fall 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neal Gaalswyk".

Neal Gaalswyk
Cass County Board Chairman



CASS SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

218-547-739
303 Minnesota Ave. W.
PO Box 3000
Walker, MN 56484

May 07, 2020

Crow Wing SWCD
322 Laurel St. Suite 22
Brainerd, MN 56401

Subject: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant Application

Dear Melissa:

The Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District supports the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds conservation easements and acquisition application. This is a partnership between Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and County Land Departments. **This project will complete eight conservation easements on private lands and protect over 500 acres of high-quality forest upland habitat.** We will also partner with Cass and Crow Wing Land Departments to assist will land management asset goal's which is to consolidate county land base and increase public access.

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Please feel free to contact our District staff should you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David L. Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

David Peterson,
Chairman
Cass SWCD



LAND DEPARTMENT

218 Washburn Ave E
PO Box 25
Backus, MN 56435

Phone: 218-947-7501
Fax: 218-947-3230
kirk.titus@co.cass.mn.us
www.co.cass.mn.us

Land Commissioner
Kirk Titus 218-947-7501

Forest Resource Managers
Pat Bundy 218-947-7502
Erik Lindquist 218-947-7505
Amy Rand 218-947-7508
Kim Frame 218-947-7507
Kevin Dahlman 218-947-7503

April 27, 2020

Melissa Barrick
Manager
Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District
322 Laurel Street, Suite 22
Brainerd MN 56401

Dear Melissa,

The Cass County Land Department is responsible for the sustainable natural resource management on 255,000 acres of tax-forfeited Lands. The department operates in three distinct program areas: Forest Management, Recreation Management and Land Asset Management.

The goal of the forest management program is a healthy diverse resilient forest that provides multiple benefits like forest products, habitat for wildlife, diverse recreational opportunities, and clean water. These lands have been certified to the Forest Stewardship Council Standard since 2001. This certification assures the public and consumers of production from the forest that the lands are being managed in an environmentally, economically, and socially sound manner.

The recreation management program includes the sponsorship of cross country ski trails, snowmobile trails and ATV trails as well as other activities such as hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and bird watching.

The land asset management program's goal is to consolidate the land base and increase public access. Natural resource management on large blocks of land reduces forest fragmentation and protects wildlife corridors.

Although the Land Department was not directly involved in the development of the Leech Lake River and Pine River watershed management plans, I understand the watershed protection objectives of those plans directly align with public and private forest management within the County.

Protecting habitat and increasing public access to hunting and fishing opportunities is the primary purpose of the Lessard Sam Outdoor Heritage Council. Those funds are an ideal fit that would help the County while providing the benefits that the LSOHC is looking for.

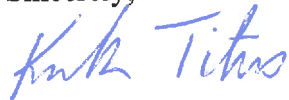
While the County has applied directly for Outdoor Heritage Fund grants in the past, recently it has also developed new partnerships with the Northern Waters Land Trust, The Conservation Fund and the Minnesota Deer Hunters on acquisition projects and grants.

The Crow Wing SWCD has been very successful in obtaining grant funds for private forest easements from LSOHC to help with watershed protection identified in the Leech Lake River and Pine River watershed plans, The Land Department is interested in adding an acquisition component to the next application. A few targeted parcels within the watershed have been identified, if you are willing to include them in an application and manage the grant should it be successful. The cost and location information can be provided to help develop the application.

Please consider how this partnership could help meet multiple objectives. If you are applying for additional easement funds, let me know and I can provide information aimed at acquiring a couple of the most important parcels.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kirk Titus
Land Commissioner



**HUBBARD COUNTY
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

May 11, 2020

Crow Wing SWCD
322 Laurel St. Suite 22
Brainerd, MN 56401

Subject: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant Application

Dear Sir / Madam:

The Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District supports the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds conservation easements and acquisition application. This is a partnership between Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and County Land Departments. **This project will complete eight conservation easements on private lands and protect over 500 acres of high-quality forest upland habitat.** We will also partner with Hubbard, Cass and Crow Wing Land Departments to assist land management asset goal's which is to consolidate county land base and increase public access.

Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and SWCDs identified high quality lakes, forest, habitat, groundwater, and wetlands that need permeant protection (One Watershed One Plan and Landscape Stewardship Plan). The land departments also have identified parcels to meet asset land management goals within these watersheds. We will utilize plan datasets and prioritized list to select high scoring parcels for conservation easements and acquisition with the County Land Departments. This grant application will:

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This grant will directly implement the Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Water Plans, the Pine River and Leech Lake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. If successful, the grant award is in July 1, 2021. Anticipated start of the program is summer or fall 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Crystal Mathisrud', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Crystal Mathisrud, District Manager
Hubbard County SWCD
603 Central Ave N
Park Rapids, MN 56470

603 Central Avenue N Suite 100  Park Rapids, MN 56470 | 218-732-0121

hubbardswcd.org

Hubbard SWCD is an equal opportunity employer and provider



The Nature Conservancy
322 Laurel St., Suite #33
Brainerd, MN 56401

May 28, 2020

Melissa Barrick, District Mgr.
Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District
322 Laurel Street
Brainerd, MN 56401

RE: Letter of Support: Targeted RIM Easements and Acquisition in the Pine and Leech Lake Watersheds

Dear Ms Barrick:

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy, we offer our support for the *Targeted RIM Easements and Acquisition in the Pine and Leech Lake Watersheds* proposal to protect significant parcels that action the One Watershed One Plan goals and objectives of the Pine and Leech Lake River watersheds in the Mississippi Headwaters. Crow Wing SWCD has had a long and successful history developing landowner outreach to deliver RIM easements. As the lead local government entity for the two-watershed plan implementation work, local county shared vision in the plans and local support is in place.

Crow Wing SWCD leadership is working with a coalition of partners and local governments associated with the One Watershed One Plan teams in the Mississippi Headwaters to develop a strong constituency for conservation that values the interdependence of healthy human communities and healthy natural communities. This Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal will implement locally developed habitat for water goals, county land asset goals that provide public access to the land and will conserve water quality and wildlife habitat in the Mississippi Headwaters.

The Nature Conservancy is in full support of this project as it implements goals found within the respective One Watershed One Plan documents, local county water plans, county forest plans, Watershed Restoration and Protection Plans and the state Wildlife Action Plan.

Thank you for considering this request from the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District.

Sincerely,

Todd Holman
Mississippi Headwaters Program Director



Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District
322 Laurel St. Suite 22 ▪ Brainerd, MN 56401

May 20, 2020

Crow Wing SWCD
322 Laurel St. Suite 22
Brainerd, MN 56401

Subject: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Grant Application

Dear Sir / Madam:

The Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District supports the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds conservation easements and acquisition application. This is a partnership between Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and County Land Departments. **This project will complete eight conservation easements on private lands and protect over 500 acres of high-quality forest upland habitat.** We will also partner with Cass and Crow Wing Land Departments to assist will land management asset goal's which is to consolidate county land base and increase public access.

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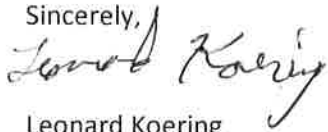
Phone: 218-828-6197

website: www.crowwingswcd.org

facebook: CWSWCD

This grant will directly implement the Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Water Plans, the Pine River and Leech Lake River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans. If successful, the grant award is in July 1, 2021. Anticipated start of the program is summer or fall 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leonard Koering". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Leonard Koering

SWCD Board