



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Big Woods Protection at Stieg Woods Laws of Minnesota 2022 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 01/15/2025

Project Title: Big Woods Protection at Stieg Woods

Funds Recommended: \$1,020,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2022, Ch. 77, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(d)

Appropriation Language: \$1,020,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the city of Rogers to acquire land in fee and restore and enhance forest habitat for wildlife in Hennepin County. A list of proposed acquisitions, restorations, and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Michael Bauer

Title: Parks and Recreation Director

Organization: City of Rogers

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Location Information

County Location(s): Hennepin.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee
- Enhance
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Wetlands

Narrative**Abstract**

The City of Rogers aims to purchase 20.8 acres of land that includes 19.9 acres (+0.9-acre buffer makes a regular parcel) of high quality, ecologically significant Big Woods Maple-Basswood forest in southern Rogers. The forest is a portion of a 59.71-acre Centennial Farm owned by Denny and Jan Stieg, whose family has resided on the property for more than 100 years. As development encroaches and the CSAH 117 extension is planned to bisect the property in the future, the family wishes to ensure that this patch of remnant Big Woods Maple-Basswood forest is preserved in perpetuity.

Design and Scope of Work

While much of the surrounding Big Woods landscape in this area was converted to agriculture and is now subject to increasing urbanization and development, 19.9 acres of old-growth forest at Stieg Woods was left in an untouched state. The spread of Dutch Elm Disease prompted the Stiegs to work with a local forester to manage the stand's elms in the 1980s, but the forest, dominated by sugar maples, with pockets of bitternut hickory, basswood, ironwood, red and bur oaks, has otherwise been preserved. A 2006 tree survey measured 2,149 trees in the stand.

In the spring, the woods glows green with sunlight drifting through new leaves, and the forest floor is blanketed by spring ephemerals and fiddleheads interrupting the expanse of maple seedlings waiting for a gap in the overstory to open up. Wood nettle, wild ginger, ramps, large-flowered bellwort, rue anemone, trillium, bloodroot, wild geranium, and Virginia waterleaf are all present. In autumn, Stieg Woods glows gold. The stand remains high quality, with very little buckthorn and no garlic mustard, despite its presence on nearby properties. Preserving this patch of Big Woods through acquisition, managing invasive species, restoring a habitat connection to Rush Creek, and maintaining the land's integrity through careful stewardship is this request's objective.

Minnesota Land Trust, which works with the City of Rogers to care for similar habitat at nearby Henry's Woods, will help to manage the land after acquisition. Their members will make an annual assessment of the forest's condition and connect with City staff to coordinate a plan of action. Management will consist primarily of work by City staff, but may also include educational volunteer events like buckthorn busts and garlic mustard pulls.

The remaining land on the parcel (26.91 acres cultivated vegetation/12-acres of wetland- not part of this ask), will be purchased by the City for restoration, potential development, and the proposed CSAH-117 extension. Along with CSAH-117, Rush Creek Regional Trail (RCRT) will be constructed by Three Rivers Park District south of the road, near Stieg Woods, and a natural surface trail connection will be constructed from Stieg Woods to RCRT at that time. This program requests funds for wetland delineation on the strip of agricultural land (to be purchased by the City) between RCRT and Stieg Woods, and its subsequent restoration to suitable habitat type(s) in order enhance this valuable connection between Rush Creek's wetlands and Stieg Woods.

The City of Rogers intends that Stieg Woods be available for public exploration, educational events, field trips, and special hunting events. Buffalo/Hanover, ISD 728 (Rogers/Elk River), and Osseo/Maple Grove School Districts are all within range, and access to a Big Woods environment would allow them to explore topics related to Minnesota's

natural heritage, ecology, plant ID, and history. Programming could include educational bow hunts catered toward youth and/or persons with special needs, maple syruping demonstrations, foraging for wild edibles, and self-guided explorations of historical and natural resource topics through interpretive signage.

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 native plant community of the stand of Maple-Basswood forest at Stieg Woods is classified as MHs39c: Sugar Maple Forest- Big Woods. It has an S-rank of S2, which means it is “imperiled.” It has a G-ranking of G3, or Vulnerable, which means it is at moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few populations (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.

According to the DNR, 121 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are known or predicted to occur within the Big Woods. These SGCN include 55 species that are federal or state endangered, threatened, or of special concern.

Rare vascular plant species have been observed within other Maple-Basswood forests in the vicinity of Stieg Woods. It is also notable that Henry’s Woods, which is less than 3 miles from Stieg Woods, is mapped as High Value on the MCBS, and contains a similar forest type to Stieg Woods.

Stieg Woods is located at the intersection of four Townships, with neighboring Dayton and Maple Grove Townships having between 11-50 SGCN records; the lack of recorded occurrences on the Stieg Woods property and in Rogers Township does not necessarily indicate that SGCN are not present.

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:

Stieg Woods is a nearly 20-acre patch of high-quality forest in a matrix of agricultural fields and wetlands that is increasingly being overtaken by residential development. It is also part of a natural resource corridor that connects two highly significant tracts of protected habitat: Crow-Hassan Park Reserve to the west, and Elm Creek Park Reserve to the east. For animals migrating between these large blocks of habitat, this corridor is an essential thoroughfare, and Stieg Woods provides a stepping stone for forest-reliant fauna. This patch of Big Woods may not be large enough to support migrating individuals for a long period of time, but it can serve as a resting place, shelter, and food source; and its presence shortens the functional distance that animals, especially birds, have to travel between larger blocks of habitat.

Stieg Woods’ proximity to Rush Creek’s wetlands, and the proposed restoration of the strip of agricultural land that currently divides the woods and the creek, may be helpful for animals that rely on a mosaic of habitat types throughout their life cycle. According to the NRCS, “wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) rely on a mosaic of interspersed grassland and forest to meet both their daily requirements and their life-cycle requirements. The less distance a turkey must travel to use both these habitats the more likely it is to survive and thrive. It is common for turkeys to be found in or near the edges that separate these two habitat types.”

Sources:

- Ricklefs, R.E. 2008. The economy of nature. Sixth edition. W. H. Freeman and Company, New York, New York, USA.
- Minnesota Forest Resources Council Report LT-1203f: Relationships between forest spatial patterns and plant and animal species in northern Minnesota. 2003.

- Conservation Corridor Planning at the Landscape Level—Managing for Wildlife Habitat. 1999. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture ~ *Acquisition of the proposed stand of old growth, Big Woods maple-basswood forest will preserve 20-acres of habitat rather than risking it falling to development. Stieg woods falls within a priority natural resource corridor that connects Elm Creek Park Reserve to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, and serves as a migratory stepping stone for species relying on forest habitat. With preservation of this stand, we expect to see continued use by species like the nearby nesting eagles, and a continued presence of spring ephemerals and other flora and fauna typical of the maple-basswood ecosystem.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

The Stieg Family has agreed to donate two acres of the woods to support its preservation. The City will be contributing Staff time and costs related to the acquisition of the property, including costs for the survey, a check appraisal, and legal fees. In order to ensure the preservation of the entire woods, the City and Stieg Family will be exploring additional contributions and donations to the project to mitigate the proposed reduced allocation of grant funding.

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.

No previous funding has been sought for the acquisition of this site.

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

Minnesota Land Trust, which works on behalf of the City of Rogers to care for similar habitat at nearby Henry's Woods, will help to manage the land after acquisition. Their members will make an annual assessment of the

forest's condition and connect with City of Rogers staff to coordinate a plan of action. Management will consist primarily of work by City of Rogers staff, but may also include coordinating educational volunteer events like buckthorn busts and garlic mustard pulls, as have been conducted at Henry's Woods.

Provide an assessment of how your program celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:

The land proposed for acquisition is adjacent to the proposed Rush Creek Regional Trail, and the City of Rogers will provide a natural surface trail connection from the Regional Trail to Stieg Woods upon RCRT's completion. Spanning from Mississippi River Gateway Park in Brooklyn Park, through Champlin, Dayton, Maple Grove, and eventually through Rogers to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, Rush Creek Regional Trail will provide easy access to Stieg Woods for a large and diverse population of regional trail users. In 2015, Rush Creek Regional Trail attracted an estimated 284,400 visitors, and its expansion to Crow-Hassan Park Reserve will only grow this number. Three Rivers Park District, which manages Rush Creek Regional Trail, has a goal of attracting regional trail users which mirror the demographics of the region, which is estimated to be 40% people of color by 2040.

Stieg Woods provides a nice rest point or attraction along the trail between Elm Creek and Crow-Hassan Park Reserves, where visitors could explore and learn about Big Woods habitat. Interpretive signage will be made available along with natural surface trails. Topics covered will include the Stieg family's homesteading history, but could also include exploration of traditional Dakota practices on the land, like maple syruping, bow hunting, and foraging. The site's location in what was formerly Hassan Township (now Rogers), was named for the Dakota word for sugar maple tree, "chanhasen." The site is well-suited to programming that includes maple syruping demonstrations or foraging (for wood nettle, fiddleheads, mushrooms, or as part of invasive management as in the case of garlic mustard), which is a popular activity and desired food source for some immigrant populations. It should be noted that Three Rivers Park District prohibits foraging on their lands, so access to land where foraging is allowed, like at Stieg Woods, would benefit those groups looking for easily accessible, trail adjacent places to forage wild foods.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- County/Municipal

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?

No

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:

Given the size of the property, the City of Rogers is proposing to use the woods for bow-hunting events (deer and turkey), such as for youth or those with disabilities.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- Local Unit of Government

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- City Owned : Rogers

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

One property will be acquired

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

No

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

Yes

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

Once vehicular and bicycle access to the woods is available, the City intends to provide a limited amount of natural surface trails for pedestrian access.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The City will monitor and maintain the trails as part of their overall trail system.

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

Yes

A small amount of restoration will occur as part of the project. This includes removal of a small amount of buckthorn along the perimeter of the woods and restoration of a small strip of agricultural land adjacent to the Stieg Woods to connect the wetlands of Rush Creek to Stieg Woods.

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
Spring restoration activities	June 30, 2025
Fall restoration activities	November 15, 2024
Natural Resource Assessment	August 31, 2024
Acquisition	July 31, 2022
Prepare for acquisition (survey, check appraisal, purchase agreement)	June 12, 2024

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2026

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

(a) Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. Money appropriated to acquire land in fee may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.

(b) Money appropriated in this section is available as follows:

(1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2026;

(2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this act is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2030;

(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2027;

(4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and

(5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

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

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	-	-	-
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,002,500	\$112,500	Property Owner and City	\$1,115,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$12,600	\$14,400	City	\$27,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$4,900	-	-	\$4,900
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	\$3,000	City	\$3,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,020,000	\$129,900	-	\$1,149,900

Amount of Request: \$1,020,000

Amount of Leverage: \$129,900

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 12.74%

DSS + Personnel: -

As a % of the total request: 0.0%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

In order to ensure the preservation of the entire woods, the City and Stieg Family will be exploring additional contributions and donations to the project to mitigate the proposed reduced allocation of grant funding.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leveraged funds include a donation of the woods from the property owner and City funding.

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Given the quality of the site, the project could be scaled through the elimination of the restoration components of the project.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

The budget does not include funding for personnel or DSS expenses.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

There is one property to be acquired.

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	-	-	-	5	5
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	21	-	21
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	21	5	26

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$28,000	\$28,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$992,000	-	\$992,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$992,000	\$28,000	\$1,020,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	5	-	-	-	-	5
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	21	-	-	-	-	21
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	26	-	-	-	-	26

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$28,000	-	-	-	-	\$28,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$992,000	-	-	-	-	\$992,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$1,020,000	-	-	-	-	\$1,020,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$5,600
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	\$47,238	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$5,600	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$47,238	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

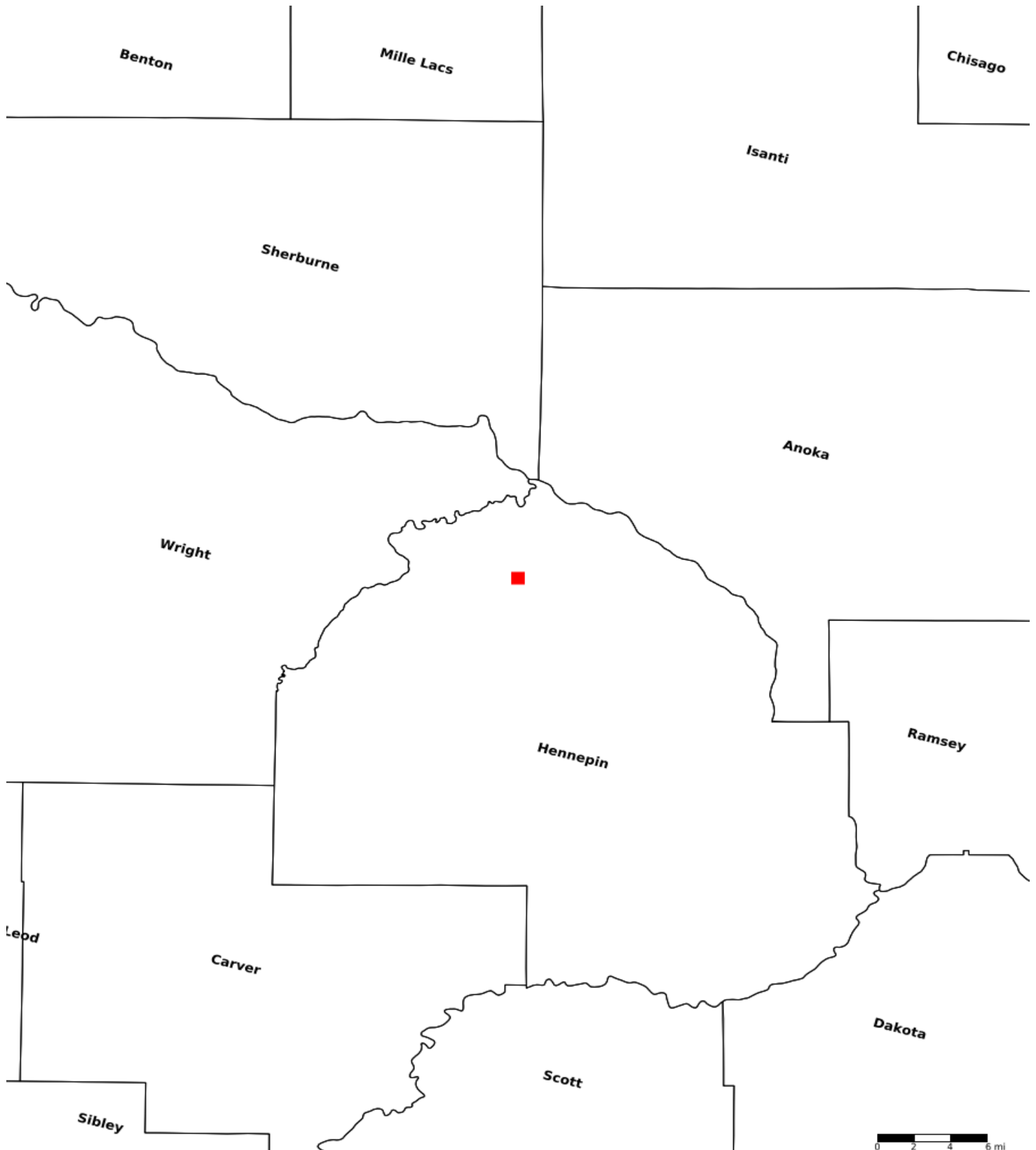
No

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

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Stieg Woods	Hennepin	12023236	50	\$1,002,488	No

Parcel Map



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