



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership
Laws of Minnesota 2022 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 01/05/2022

Project Title: Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership

Funds Recommended: \$4,182,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2022, Ch. XX, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd.

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: June Mathiowetz

Title: Senior Planner

Organization: Washington County

Address: Washington County Government Center 14949 62nd Street NE

City: Stillwater, MN 55082

Email: June.Mathiowetz@co.washington.mn.us

Office Number: 651-430-6016

Mobile Number:

Fax Number:

Website:

Location Information

County Location(s): Washington.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Protect in Easement
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest

- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

Washington County possesses some of the best remaining wildlife habitat in the Metro Urbanizing Area. For a decade, Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust have collaborated in protecting these resources, blending funding from the County's Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) and State's Outdoor Heritage Fund. In an effort to increase the pace of conservation ahead of increasing development pressure and meet heightened landowner demand, the Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership seeks to build on these past successes, and protect 340 acres and enhance 150 acres within the LWLP's "Top Ten" priority conservation areas.

Design and Scope of Work

Washington County's prairies, savannas, forests, and wetlands, streams and rivers provide some of the best remaining wildlife habitat in the Metro Urbanizing Area. Located along the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers, Washington County serves as a significant migratory corridor for birds. These two rivers and their tributaries support a diverse assemblage of freshwater mussels and small stream fishes, and provide the cool, clear water required for trout. According to the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, as many as 149 SGCN are known or predicted to occur within Washington County; fifty species listed Endangered, Threatened or as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Minnesota or the U.S. government have been documented in the County. Three of the DNR's highest priority trout streams in the Twin Cities – Valley Creek, Old Mill Stream, and Brown's Creek – are located in Washington County.

Yet, these resources are under threat. Located between the Twin Cities and the St. Croix River, Washington County is especially vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation due to increasing development demands. These pressures will continue to grow, with a population increase of 25% projected by 2040. Only 7% of Washington County is currently protected.

Through a 2006 voter referendum, Washington County created its Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP), approving \$20 million in funding to acquire and restore high priority lands for purposes of wetland, shoreline, and woodland conservation and water quality improvement. To date, the County has completed 33 LWLP land protection projects, many of these funded jointly by the Outdoor Heritage Fund through partnerships with the Minnesota Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and others. The program continues to have broad support of its residents and local units of government.

This model of matching County Legacy and State Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars to protect priority lands has been wildly successful and has generated significant landowner interest in recent years. In the past two years, the County and its partners have completed eight land acquisition projects, with ten others in motion, including the program's largest acquisition and easement purchase of Wilder Forest. This increased demand has outstripped the availability of resources and strapped existing capacity, resulting in the need to pursue direct funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund, dedicated specifically to Washington County.

The Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership is requesting funding to meet this growing conservation demand. The Partnership protects and restores critical wildlife habitats by focusing on Washington County's "Top Ten" priority conservation areas as identified by its LWLP. The Partnership harnesses each individual partner's strengths and expertise for success. Washington County will administer the program and

orchestrate the restoration and enhancement on protected lands, working with Valley Branch Watershed District, Washington Conservation District, and others. The County and the Land Trust will work in close partnership to secure conservation easements on private lands. The Land Trust will engage local partners in conducting landowner outreach within priority conservation areas.

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?

Washington County's "Top Ten" priority conservation areas contain the highest levels of biodiversity, unique plant communities, rare and imperiled plant and animal species, and proximity to ground and surface waters. Fifty-two Species in Greatest Conservation Need – including five federally listed endangered species – are known or expected to occur within the "Top Ten" areas. They also support an array of state-listed species: 18 endangered species, 24 threatened species, and 37 species of concern. SGCN include golden-winged warbler, prothonotary warbler, Blanding's turtle, fernleaf false foxglove, brown trout, and American brook lamprey. Every "Top Ten" area has Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS)-identified high quality native plant communities, high biological significance, special habitats, or other natural resources; all are located within Minnesota's Wildlife Action Network (WAN).

The proposal seeks to protect habitat within these key habitat complexes and enhance areas that will add and connect habitat corridors.

The Washington County LWLP "Top Ten" priority conservation areas are:

- German Lake: High quality lake protected by intact wetlands and uplands.
- Big Marine Lake North: Connects Forest Lake to the St. Croix River.
- Rice Lake Wetlands/Hardwood Swamps: Hardwood Creek corridor connecting wildlife management areas.
- Keystone Woods: Uplands surrounding high quality and unique wetland communities.
- Carnelian Creek Corridor: Intact habitat and large public and educational land.
- Silver-Twin Lakes Corridor: Trout stream corridor extending to the St. Croix River.
- Brown's Creek Central: Trout stream corridor supporting numerous plant and animal species.
- Valley Creek Corridor: Over 1,400 acres of existing protected land within a high-quality trout stream corridor.
- Mississippi Bend: High quality floodplain forests in a migratory bird flyway, near protected public lands.
- St. Croix Blufflands: Unfragmented forest on bluffs and ravines on a federally designated Wild and Scenic River.

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:

Washington County's "Top Ten" priority conservation areas were identified using five data modules that analyzed geographic information and offered a weighted scoring of land based on the extent to which it contains ecological patches, connectivity between patches, uplands adjacent to important surface waters, high water infiltration potential, and restoration and enhancement potential. The data underpinning these analyses include the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System, DNR's Regionally Significant Ecological Areas, MBS, and surface water, soils, and topographic datasets. Following the GIS analysis, boundaries of protected habitat complexes were overlaid on highly ranked land to identify the "Top Ten" areas.

Because this proposal seeks to implement the county's conservation plan, which is based on up-to-date geographic and ecological data, the proposal will result in the protection of high-quality habitat adjacent to existing protected lands and the enhancement of that habitat – resulting in increasingly connected and larger corridors and

complexes. Furthermore, each potential protection and enhancement project receives ground-truthing and further in-depth analysis upon selection and throughout the project, with an in-depth analysis of its location and relation to MBS-identified areas of native plant communities and biodiversity significance, the Wildlife Action Network, Regionally Significant Ecological Areas, and Natural Heritage Information, among other contextual and natural resource information.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Other : Washington County Land and Water Legacy Plan

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)

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Through its market-based RFP process, the Land Trust expects private landowners to donate at least \$245,000 in easement value toward the program, which is shown as leverage. In addition, Washington County, through its Land and Water Legacy Program, has committed \$720,000 toward the acquisition of permanent conservation easements as leverage to this grant. Together, these will provide 39% leverage to the funds requested for easement acquisition from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

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 procured by Washington County and the Land Trust through the Outdoor Heritage Fund via this proposal will not supplant or substitute any previous funding from a non-Legacy fund used for the same purpose.

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 and Washington County have worked together for over 20 years to co-hold conservation easements on private land. This program seeks to continue this partnership. MLT is a nationally accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program and leads stewardship activities that include 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 and the County 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 and the County will work with

landowners in the long-term to provide habitat enhancement funding, technical expertise, project plans, and other resources to maintain the conservation values of the protected properties.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027	Washington County Land & Water Legacy Program	Begin monitoring R/E projects against performance standards	Make adaptive course corrections as needed to meet performance	-
2027	Washington County Land & Water Legacy Program	Accompaniment of monitoring conservation easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-
2027	MLT Stewardship & Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of conservation easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-

How will the program directly involve, engage, and benefit BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and diverse communities:

Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust share a core public value of a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both entities have engaged in processes to assess how we can better address these issues. To date, we have demonstrated this commitment when possible given our unique role in working with private landowners, including numerous projects to protect the camps and nature centers that serve a diversity of youth. Washington County and the Land Trust successfully protected land that are used for environmental education programming for diverse Twin Cities students, including those at the Belwin Conservancy, Sunfish Lake Park, and Dodge Nature Center's Shepard Farm. In addition, our ongoing collaboration toward the protection of the Wilder Forest project will also serve these purposes.

This proposal continues this work by not only protecting and enhancing private land that offers the more universal public benefits of conserved lands such as wildlife habitat, clean air and water, and climate resiliency and mitigation, but can, over the long-term, add to the land base required to build strong relationships between BIPOC and diverse communities and Minnesota's natural spaces. The Land Trust is exploring a new "Ambassador Lands Program" that would connect willing conservation landowners with diverse community groups that need access to land for programming, such as youth mentored hunts, cultural or ceremonial use, conservation employment training, and more. We welcome more conversations with the LSOHC and conservation community about how these values can be better manifest in all our shared work going forward.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

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 Minnesota Land Trust and Washington County per an MOU between the two organizations.

Who will be the easement holder?

Easements will be co-held by Washington County and Minnesota Land Trust.

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

We anticipate closing on 6-10 conservation easements depending on size and cost.

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

Yes

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

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- County/Municipal
- WMA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- Public Waters

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

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

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

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:

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.

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

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

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?

No

Lands protected via easement will be assessed as to their need for R/E work by the Land Trust's Restoration Program and Washington County. If R/E needs are identified, they will be built into future funding proposals.

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

No

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

Lands protected via easement will be assessed as to their need for R/E work by the Land Trust's Restoration Program and Washington County. If R/E needs are identified, they will be built into future funding proposals.

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Washington County - Enhancement completed	June 30, 2026
MLT & Washington County - Conservation easements procured or options exercised	June 30, 2026

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2027

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	\$520,000	-	-	\$520,000
Contracts	\$596,000	-	-	\$596,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,450,000	\$965,000	Washington County, Landowners	\$3,415,000
Easement Stewardship	\$264,000	-	-	\$264,000
Travel	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Professional Services	\$291,000	-	-	\$291,000
Direct Support Services	\$46,000	-	-	\$46,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	-	-	\$2,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,182,000	\$965,000	-	\$5,147,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$170,000	-	-	\$170,000
Contracts	\$84,000	-	-	\$84,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,450,000	\$245,000	Landowners	\$2,695,000
Easement Stewardship	\$264,000	-	-	\$264,000
Travel	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Professional Services	\$291,000	-	-	\$291,000
Direct Support Services	\$46,000	-	-	\$46,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	\$2,000	-	-	\$2,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$3,320,000	\$245,000	-	\$3,565,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT - Land Protection Staff	0.44	4.0	\$170,000	-	-	\$170,000

Partner: Washington County**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$350,000	-	-	\$350,000
Contracts	\$512,000	-	-	\$512,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	\$720,000	Washington County	\$720,000
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$862,000	\$720,000	-	\$1,582,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Washington County - Senior Planner	0.75	4.0	\$350,000	-	-	\$350,000

Amount of Request: \$4,182,000

Amount of Leverage: \$965,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 23.08%

DSS + Personnel: \$566,000

As a % of the total request: 13.53%

Easement Stewardship: \$264,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 10.78%

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

The program has been scaled proportional to awarded funding, for the most part. Some costs are fixed (Washington County must hire a person to carry out the successful completion of the grant); MLT's personnel were reduced proportionately. Acres protected and restored have been scaled relative to revised budgets.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The Land Trust encourages landowners to donate easement value to the program; this amount (\$245,000) is a conservative estimate we expect to see from landowners. Washington County is committing \$720,000 through its Land and Water Legacy Program toward conservation easements; these funds are subject to County Board approval.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Restoration and enhancement accounts for \$512,000 of the contracts line amount. Additional funds in the contract line are for the writing of habitat management plans via qualified vendors and for landowner outreach purposes to facilitate communication of the protection program.

Easement Stewardship

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

This budget is based on closing up to 10 conservation easements. The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000, although in extraordinary circumstances additional funds may be warranted. 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

Land Trust staff regularly rents 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.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

GPS devices, safety equipment.

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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	340	340
Enhance	-	-	-	150	150
Total	-	-	-	490	490

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$3,670,000	\$3,670,000
Enhance	-	-	-	\$512,000	\$512,000
Total	-	-	-	\$4,182,000	\$4,182,000

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	340	-	-	-	-	340
Enhance	150	-	-	-	-	150
Total	490	-	-	-	-	490

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$3,670,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,670,000
Enhance	\$512,000	-	-	-	-	\$512,000
Total	\$4,182,000	-	-	-	-	\$4,182,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$10,794
Enhance	-	-	-	\$3,413

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	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$10,794	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$3,413	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *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.*

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?

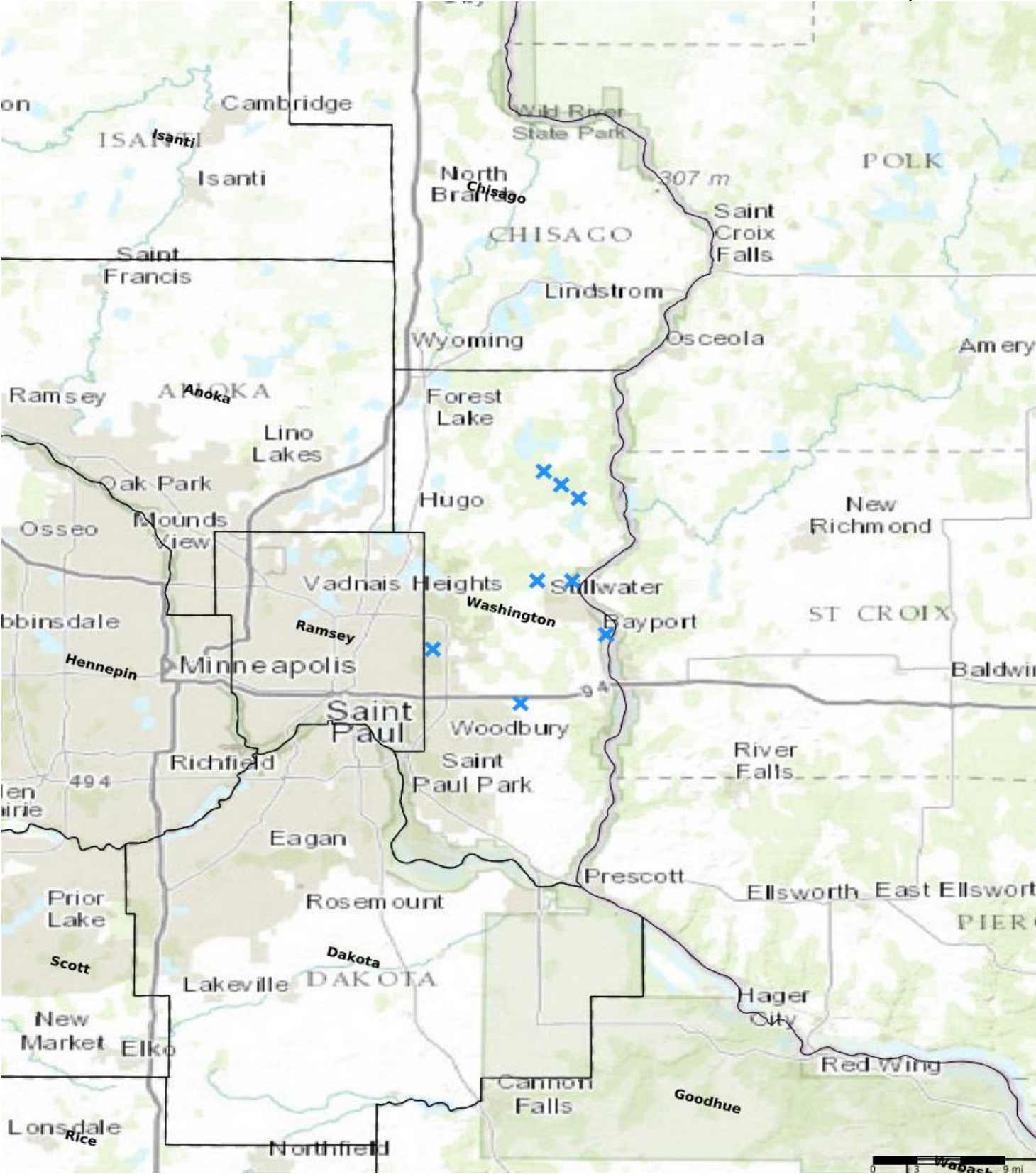
[Yes](#)

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).

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Aiple River	Washington	03020221	16	\$53,000	Yes
Bayport River	Washington	02920211	11	\$37,000	Yes
Long Lake	Washington	03120209	38	\$127,000	Yes
Dale Woods	Washington	02821201	64	\$213,000	Yes
Oakdale Priory	Washington	02921218	5	\$17,000	Yes
Palmer	Washington	03020219	16	\$53,000	Yes
Wilder CCA	Washington	03120215	233	\$400,000	Yes
Wilder Square Lake	Washington	03120223	55	\$100,000	Yes



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

Parcel Map
Washington County Habitat Protection and
Restoration Partnership
(Data Generated From Parcel List)



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2022 - Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership

Organization: Washington County

Manager: June Mathiowetz

Budget

Requested Amount: \$6,126,000

Appropriated Amount: \$4,182,000

Percentage: 68.27%

Item	Total Requested		Total Appropriated		Percentage of Request	
	Requested	Leverage	Appropriated	Leverage	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	\$578,000	-	\$520,000	-	89.97%	-
Contracts	\$648,000	-	\$596,000	-	91.98%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$4,000,000	\$1,600,000	\$2,450,000	\$965,000	61.25%	60.31%
Easement Stewardship	\$384,000	-	\$264,000	-	68.75%	-
Travel	\$10,000	-	\$10,000	-	100.0%	-
Professional Services	\$439,000	-	\$291,000	-	66.29%	-
Direct Support Services	\$62,000	-	\$46,000	-	74.19%	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$5,000	-	\$3,000	-	60.0%	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	\$2,000	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$6,126,000	\$1,600,000	\$4,182,000	\$965,000	68.27%	60.31%

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

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

Acre scaling will be approximately proportional. R/E project selection will be based on priorities; scaling may not be proportional. Activities will be curtailed, but less than proportional, as some activities are fixed and necessary for program success.

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled, but moderately less than proportional. Some costs are fixed (landowner

recruitment; grant management) and must occur regardless of grant amount. Projects can fail midstream after investment of time. Donation of easement value (high in this program) can inflate the number of projects pursued/completed.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

Acre scaling will be approximately proportional. R/E project selection will be based on priorities; scaling may not be proportional. Activities will be curtailed, but less than proportional, as some activities are fixed and necessary for program success

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled, but moderately less than proportional. Some costs are fixed (landowner recruitment; grant management) and must occur regardless of grant amount. Projects can fail midstream after investment of time. Donation of easement value (high in this program) can inflate the number of projects pursued/completed.

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	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	560	340	60.71%
Enhance	150	150	100.0%

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	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$5,626,000	\$3,670,000	65.23%
Enhance	\$500,000	\$512,000	102.4%

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	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	560	340	60.71%
Enhance	150	150	100.0%

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	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$5,626,000	\$3,670,000	65.23%
Enhance	\$500,000	\$512,000	102.4%



Washington County Habitat Protection and Restoration Partnership Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

Washington County and the Minnesota Land Trust will employ 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 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, Washington County and the Land Trust use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those projects 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 includes easement sign-up criteria that lay out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust uses to rank potential parcels relative to one another and identify those we will seek to protect with a conservation easement. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criterion.

The Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program evaluates parcels using five main criteria

based on the LWLP plan and its indicators. During the first phase of this grant partnership, Washington County, the Land Trust, and other conservation partners including the Washington Conservation District will refine the following ranking system as we apply this approach in Washington County.

To be eligible for this program, land must be within one of the “Top Ten” conservation priority areas.

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.

Subfactors:

- **Habitat Size or Quantity** – the area of the parcel to be protected (how big is it?), length of shoreline, etc. The bigger the better.
- **Habitat 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 other protected lands to form complexes or corridors, the better.

Note that we may emphasize one subfactor over another if the specific circumstances warrant it. For the Metro Big Rivers Program, landscape context is weighted more heavily than the other subfactors as this is a primary limiting factor related to biodiversity health relative in the program area.

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.

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.

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

- 1. Habitat Size or Quantity (34 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the a given conservation easement, relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator not only ecosystem health but has a direct correlation with species viability.

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

Points	Acres
0	1-9
5	10-14
10	15-39
15	40-49
20	50-59
25	60-79
30	80-99
34	100 or more

- 2. Habitat Condition or Quality (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat), imperiled species if known, and climate resilience. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property. In addition, climate resilience information on a property can provide information whether the area is estimated to be resilient in the face of climate change. This is especially important for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, which due to development has a less resilient landscape than other areas of the state.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on the condition of focal ecological community targets, presence of imperiled species on the property, and climate resilience:

- a) Habitat Quality (25 points)** – The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) natural community element occurrence (EO) ranking framework and the [MBS Biodiversity Significance Ranks](#) are used to score habitat quality on parcels:

Points	Site Evaluation Score	Description
0	0	The only native community present on parcel has a D ranking; all of site is ranked “below threshold” for biodiversity significance
6	1-3	Less than 50% of the parcel is C-ranked native plant communities, and the rest is ranked lower than C
14	4-5	About half of the parcel is composed of C-ranked native plant communities, the rest is D-ranked or lower; part of the parcel is identified as Moderate Biodiversity Significance, the rest of the parcel is lower than “Moderate”
18	6-10	About half of the parcel is composed of C-ranked native plant communities, the rest is D-ranked or lower; all of the parcel is identified as Moderate Biodiversity Significance or higher
22	11-15	About half of the parcel consists of C-ranked communities and the rest is ranked higher than C; Part of parcel is identified as an MBS site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance; parcel or part of parcel is identified as an MBS site of High Biodiversity Significance; the parcel includes one or more “lakes of biodiversity significance” as identified by MBS
25	16-20	More than half of the parcel consists of a natural community with an A, B, AB, or BC element occurrence ranking; all of the parcel is identified as MBS site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance

b) Imperiled Species (3 points) – The [Natural Heritage Information System](#) data is used to identify rare plants, animals, native plant communities, and other rare features noted on the parcel. Scoring of the parcel is based on species abundance:

Points	Occurrences
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3 or more

c) Climate resilience (points) – [The Nature Conservancy’s Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation project](#) identified the areas estimated to be the most climate resilient for characteristic environments of North America. Parcel scoring is based on whether the parcel has above average climate resiliency scores:

Points	Climate Resilience
0	Entire parcel below average or average
3	Half of parcel above average
5	Entire parcel

- 3. Landscape Context (33 points):** Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

Scoring: Parcels are scored as follows:

- a) Protected Lands Context (18 points)** – Calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous protected land (if any) and amount of protected land within 3 miles of the property. Here, we look at three measurements:

- i) Acres of protected land contiguous with the parcel (8 points):

Points	Acres
0	0
3	1-9
5	10-39
6	40-79
8	80 or more

- ii) Acres of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (10 points). Blocks of habitat nearby but not contiguous can also play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight protected lands within ½ mile of the parcel higher than those farther removed and score them separately.

- (a) Acres of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (6 points):

Points	Acres
0	0
1	1-9
2	10-39
3	40-79
4	80-99
5	100-119
6	119 or more

- (b) Acres of protected land from ½ mile to 3 miles of the parcel (4 points):

Points	Acres
0	0
1	1-99
2	100-299
3	300-499
4	500 or more

b) Ecological Context (15 points) – As with protected lands context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors: the amount of natural habitat contiguous to the parcel and the ratio of natural land cover to non-natural land cover within a three-mile radius of the parcel.

i) Acres of natural habitat contiguous with the parcel, providing species with direct access to larger blocks of permanent habitat (8 points). Scoring of the parcel is based on the number of acres of natural land cover contiguous with the parcel:

(a) Acres of land adjacent to parcel

Points	Acres Adjacent
0	0
3	1-9
5	10-39
6	40-79
8	80 or more

(b) Acres of protected land within ½ mile of parcel (6 points):

Points	Acres within ½ mile
0	0
1	1-9
2	10-39
3	40-79
4	80-99
5	100-119
6	120 or more

(c) Acres of land from ½ mile away from the parcel to 3 miles away from parcel (4 points)

Points	Acres ½ - 3 miles
0	0
1	1-19
2	20-59
3	60-119
4	120 or more

ii) Ratio of natural habitat to non-natural/developed land within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (10 points). Blocks of habitat nearby, whether contiguous or not play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight ecological habitat within ½ mile of the parcel higher than that farther removed and score them separately.

(a) Acres contiguous natural habitat (8 points)

Points	Acres Natural Land Cover
0	0-9
1	10-39
2	40-99
4	100-199
6	200-399
8	400 or more

(b) Percent of area covered by natural land cover within ½ mile of parcel (5 points):

Points	Natural Land Cover
0	0-19%
2	20-39%
3	40-59%
4	60-79%
5	80-100%

(c) Percent of area covered by natural land cover from ½ mile to 3 miles of the parcel (2 points):

Points	Natural Land Cover
0	0-19%
1	20-59%
2	60-100%

**Washington County Habitat Protection Restoration Partnership
Conservation Easement Ranking Sheet**

	Top Ten Area	TEMPLATE	SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5
ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE		102	0	0	0	0	0
SIZE/QUANTITY (25 PTS)	Points						
Size: Acres of existing habitat to be protected by an easement	34	400	34	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL:	34	34	0	0	0	0	0
CONDITION/QUALITY (25 PTS)	Points						
Habitat Quality: Quality of existing ecological systems (SNA Site Eval Score 1-20)	25	25	25	0	0	0	0
Imperiled Species: Presence of documented rare features (count 1-3)	3	3					
Climate: Climate resilience score (above average = 2; half/half = 1)	5	5					
SUBTOTAL:	33	33	0	0	0	0	0
LANDSCAPE CONTEXT (33 PTS)	Points						
Protected Lands Context (18 pts)							
Acres contiguous protected land	8	500	10	0	0	0	0
Acres protected land within 1/2 mile	6	500	6	0	0	0	0
Acres protected land within 1/2-3 miles	4	500	4	0	0	0	0
Ecological Context (15 pts)							
Acres contiguous natural habitat	8	500	8	0	0	0	0
Percent natural land cover within 1/2 mile	5	500	5	0	0	0	0
Percent natural land cover within 1/2-3 miles	2	500	2	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL:	33	35	0	0	0	0	0
COST							
Bid amount (\$/per acre)							
Donative value (\$/acre)							
TOTAL ACQUISITION COST:		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -