



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

ML 2022 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/03/2021

Proposal Title: Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase 10

Funds Requested: \$11,680,400

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Robert McGillivray

Title: Land Protection Director

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

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Location Information

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

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

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

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Prairie
- Wetlands
- Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

This project will protect approximately 3,405 acres using conservation easement and fee title acquisition, and restore and enhance approximately 1,437 acres of declining habitat for important wildlife species. Actions will occur in strategically targeted areas of biodiversity significance within the Blufflands of Southeast Minnesota, resulting in increased public access and improved wildlife habitat.

Design and Scope of Work

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

Despite this biological richness only 5% of the region has been protected to date. The Trust for Public Land (TPL), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Minnesota Land Trust (MLT), in partnership, are working to change this. Through our Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program, we are working to expand and connect larger contiguous blocks of protected lands, allowing land managers to restore, enhance and maintain high-quality habitats at a scale difficult to accomplish with fragmented ownership. Protecting and managing these lands is not only important for ecological reasons, but also benefits public enjoyment of these lands and the resources they provide. This program is increasing access to public lands to meet the continued high demand for outdoor recreation within the region.

This Program has a long, proven track record of protecting, restoring and enhancing lands that meet both state and local priorities for biodiversity, land access and watershed health. To date, the Partnership has protected 8,137 acres of priority lands and 30 miles of stream, and has restored/enhanced 1,893 acres of habitat.

The 10th Phase of our Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program continues this:

1. Conservation Easements. MLT will protect 2,400 acres of high-quality private land through conservation easements and develop restoration and habitat management plans for eased lands. MLT will identify potential projects within targeted priority areas through an RFP process coupled with local outreach via SWCD offices. This competitive landowner bid process will rank projects based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the best projects and securing them at the lowest cost to the state.
2. Fee Acquisition. TNC and TPL will coordinate with MN DNR on potential fee title acquisitions that will be conveyed to DNR. TNC and TPL will assist the participating DNR Divisions by conducting all or some of the following activities: initial site reviews, negotiations with the willing seller, appraisals, environmental reviews and acquisition of fee title. TNC and TPL will transfer lands to the DNR except when TNC ownership is appropriate. Fee acquisition of 1,005 acres of forest/prairie/habitat, and 4 miles of coldwater trout stream is planned.
3. Restoration and Enhancement. TNC will use a stewardship crew and contractors to restore/enhance approximately 400 acres of bluff prairie, floodplain, riparian and forest habitat within priority complexes of protected lands. MLT will restore and enhance 122 acres of habitat on existing easements and identify restoration/enhancement priorities on its other existing easement lands in the Southeast. Ecological restoration enhancement management plans will be developed in coordination with the DNR staff, landowners and/or hired subcontractors.

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

Projects selected for this proposal target complexes of biodiversity significance, as identified by MBS. Many are also in close proximity to current state land. Building and expanding contiguous blocks of natural vegetation protects habitat continuity in a fragmented landscape. It also prioritizes areas identified in The Nature Conservancy's recently released Resilient and Connected Network, which maps complexes and corridors of habitat that provide species with the best chance to move and adapt to future conditions. By protecting diverse habitat in resilient landscapes, we help species thrive long into the future.

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

To date, this program has impacted 228 populations of rare, declining and SGCN species, and the natural habitats on which they depend. Specific habitats include bluff prairie, oak savanna, barrens prairie, oak-hickory woodland, jack pine-oak woodland, white pine - oak/maple forest and maple basswood hardwood forest. These habitats support species including: tri-colored and northern long-eared bats, timber rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle, Blanchard's cricket frog, North American racer, American ginseng, great Indian plantain, plains wild indigo, western prairie fringed orchid and red-shouldered hawk. By targeting biodiverse complexes of resilient habitat, this proposal builds upon and expands that impact.

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

Rochester's continued growth and demand for rural residential housing and cropland is accelerating habitat fragmentation. This program targets large protection and restoration projects that are increasingly rare to the region due to subdivision. When larger landholdings come available, it's crucial to move fast to protect them before they're split up. Protecting large parcels while expanding existing protected areas improves the efficiency and effectiveness of ecological management and ensures the long-term viability of ecosystems.

Invasive species threaten many of the high-quality habitat complexes in the region and require active management to maintain native plant communities. Likewise, the lack of fire on bluff prairies and oak savannas within larger fire dependent habitat threatens the long-term viability of priority habitat complexes. Delaying management often makes future efforts more difficult and expensive.

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:

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

- location within a priority area

- health and extent of existing natural communities
- areas of significant biodiversity and native plant communities
- proximity to existing conservation lands
- parcel size
- importance for stream quality
- risk of conversion

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes

Which two other plans are addressed in this proposal?

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

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

OHF 25 Year Framework

1. Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties. 4,684 acres opened to public hunting, fishing and recreation to date, improving access and management. 3,453 acres protected through conservation easements.
2. Protect, enhance and restore habitat for wildlife in rivers, cold water streams and associated upland habitat. 30 miles of trout streams protected, 12.5 opened to fishing.
3. Restoration and enhancement from bluff to stream on 1,891 acres.
4. Protect and restore bluff prairies. 540 acres protected/enhanced.
5. Restore forest habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades. Over 685 acres of forest restored or enhanced.

Wildlife Action Plan

Stabilize and increase SGCN populations on: oak savanna, native prairie, cliffs and bluffs and stream habitats. 540 acres of bluff prairies

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Southeast Forest

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

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:

To date, 13 square miles of critical habitat have been protected through this program, allowing increased management within habitat complexes. Over 7 square miles have been opened for public hunting and fishing and approximately 6 square miles of permanent conservation easements within priority habitat complexes has been achieved. This program has protected habitat for 95 different Species in Greatest Conservation Need, including 8 classified by the State of Minnesota as endangered and 21 considered threatened. The importance of habitat protection in Southeast Minnesota was highlighted recently by new research from TNC scientists. They identified the Blufflands as a resilient landscape that gives native species the greatest opportunity to adapt to a changing climate. Investing in the protection, restoration, and enhancement of resilient landscapes like the Blufflands will have a bigger impact on future wildlife, as these areas are expected to remain viable habitat for more of our native species as climate change shifts their historic ranges. If funded, we anticipate this phase will continue to build upon this significant, permanent, and resilient conservation legacy.

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- Clean Water Fund
- Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

The Minnesota Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements as part of its landowner bid protocol. An estimated \$480,000 of donated easement value is expected from landowners as leverage.

Partners are also leveraging private funds to cover a portion of travel and direct support services cost totaling \$67,500.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

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

Non-OHF Appropriations

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

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

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

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

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

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

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

Natural populations, including healthy populations with good habitat, vary among locations, and also rise and fall within lakes and rivers. Most fish surveys conducted by DNR produce an index of abundance (catch per unit effort) rather than a population estimate. This project is estimated to benefit 2,500 pounds of brook trout and 3,250 pounds of brown trout. Species such as rusty patch bumblebee, monarch butterfly, timber rattlesnake, bull snake, Blanding's turtle, Louisiana water thrush, wild turkey, and whitetail deer will also benefit from this program, along with species unique to Southeast Minnesota.

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

The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, and Minnesota Land Trust all hold a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as a core value. Examples of that commitment include, but are not limited to, working with diverse communities to put a park, trail, or natural area within a 10-minute walk of every Twin Cities resident; programs to protect camps and nature centers that serve a diversity of Minnesota Youth; partnerships with indigenous communities to protect culturally important resources like wild rice; and to undertake shared learning around cultural practices like prescribed fire. Like many in the conservation community, and our country as a whole, the past year has moved us to deeper self-reflection on how we fulfil that commitment, and in what ways we fall short.

Protecting, restoring, and enhancing diverse and resilient habitat benefits all Minnesotans. It keeps our air and water clean, mitigates the impacts of climate change, conserves the biological diversity that is every Minnesotan's natural heritage, and provides the public with opportunities for recreation and spiritual fulfillment. In Southeast

Minnesota, where the majority of land is privately owned, public lands provide opportunities for hunting and fishing to people without access to private lands, including members of indigenous communities who were displaced from the land and immigrant communities who have had fewer opportunities to acquire it. Moving forward, we look forward to continuing this important work in a way that more directly, and authentically, engages diverse communities and partners in an equitable and just manner.

As each organization in this partnership grows in its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, we will continue to strive to use these values as a lens in project, partner, and contractor selection. We recognize this as an area where we could do more.

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)?**

No

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

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

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

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

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

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

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

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

N.A.

Will the eased land be open for public use?

No

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

Yes

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

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

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

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

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

No

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

No

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

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

Other OHF Appropriation Awards

Have you received OHF dollars in the past through LSOHC?

Yes

Approp Year	Approp Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Leverage Reported in AP	Leverage Realized to Date	Acres Affected in AP	Acres Affected to Date	Complete/Final Report Approved?
2020	\$2,704,000	\$900	\$152,100	-	374	-	No
2019	\$5,741,000	\$3,360,558	\$375,900	\$265,242	2,185	1,301	No
2018	\$2,142,000	\$1,972,802	\$136,000	\$59,995	876	691	No
2017	\$2,375,000	\$2,243,584	\$247,900	\$901,351	830	938	No
2016	\$5,000,000	\$4,992,393	\$355,500	\$785,073	2,300	1,935	No
2015	\$2,910,000	\$2,694,124	\$19,800	\$14,200	536	1,139	No
2014	\$5,770,000	\$5,765,700	\$2,159,300	\$2,294,950	2,120	2,360	Yes
2013	\$2,750,000	\$1,644,600	\$152,000	\$19,440	653	1,115	Yes
2009	\$500,000	\$471,900	-	\$100,000	300	548	Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Acquisition of fee land	June 30, 2026
Restoration/Enhancement on parcels protected with grant	June 30, 2030
Restoration/Enhancement on parcels protected without grant	June 30, 2027
MLT easement acquisition	June 30, 2026

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$931,100	-	-	\$931,100
Contracts	\$1,528,000	-	-	\$1,528,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,750,000	-	-	\$4,750,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,400,000	\$480,000	-, Landowners	\$2,880,000
Easement Stewardship	\$576,000	-	-	\$576,000
Travel	\$58,500	\$3,000	-, Private	\$61,500
Professional Services	\$881,000	-	-	\$881,000
Direct Support Services	\$304,400	\$64,500	-, Private	\$368,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$60,000	-	-	\$60,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$16,400	-	-	\$16,400
Supplies/Materials	\$85,000	-	-	\$85,000
DNR IDP	\$90,000	-	-	\$90,000
Grand Total	\$11,680,400	\$547,500	-	\$12,227,900

Partner: The Trust for Public Land

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$150,000	-	-	\$150,000
Contracts	\$100,000	-	-	\$100,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$2,500,000	-	-	\$2,500,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$3,000	Private	\$3,000
Professional Services	\$110,000	-	-	\$110,000
Direct Support Services	\$64,500	\$64,500	Private	\$129,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$60,000	-	-	\$60,000
Grand Total	\$3,014,500	\$67,500	-	\$3,082,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection and Legal Staff	0.29	3.0	150000	-	-	\$150,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$456,000	-	-	\$456,000
Contracts	\$428,000	-	-	\$428,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,400,000	\$480,000	Landowners	\$2,880,000
Easement Stewardship	\$576,000	-	-	\$576,000
Travel	\$27,000	-	-	\$27,000
Professional Services	\$671,000	-	-	\$671,000
Direct Support Services	\$124,000	-	-	\$124,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,000	-	-	\$8,000
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,695,000	\$480,000	-	\$5,175,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Restoration Staff	0.5	4.0	190000	-	-	\$190,000
Land Protection Staff	0.7	4.0	266000	-	-	\$266,000

Partner: The Nature Conservancy**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$325,100	-	-	\$325,100
Contracts	\$1,000,000	-	-	\$1,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$2,250,000	-	-	\$2,250,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$31,500	-	-	\$31,500
Professional Services	\$100,000	-	-	\$100,000
Direct Support Services	\$115,900	-	-	\$115,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$8,400	-	-	\$8,400
Supplies/Materials	\$80,000	-	-	\$80,000
DNR IDP	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Grand Total	\$3,970,900	-	-	\$3,970,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TNC Project Management, Protection, Restoration/Enhancement Crew and Grant Admin	1.85	3.0	325100	-	-	\$325,100

Amount of Request: \$11,680,400

Amount of Leverage: \$547,500

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 4.69%

DSS + Personnel: \$1,235,500

As a % of the total request: 10.58%

Easement Stewardship: \$576,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 24.0%

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

TPL will leverage privately sourced funds to cover direct support services (DSS) costs not reimbursed.

TPL has leveraged private funds for travel.

The Land Trust encourages landowners to donate value as a participant in the program. This leverage (\$480,000) is a conservative estimate of expected landowner contribution.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

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

A reduction in funding would reduce outputs (acres/activities) proportionately.

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

Program management costs (personnel and DSS expenses) will be reduced as well. However, not exactly proportionately as program development and oversight costs remain consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

A reduction in funding would reduce outputs (acres/activities) proportionately.

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

Program management costs (personnel and DSS expenses) will be reduced as well. However, not exactly proportionately as program development and oversight costs remain consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

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

Phase 10 is a component of the larger Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Program. Continuity of funding across multiple phases allows us flexibility when prioritizing parcels for protection or enhancement. Further, it ensures stability in our staffing model and provides the ability to plan and prioritize projects over multiple years. The flexibility provided by stable funding is critically important to achieving conservation goals given the uncertainty and variability of field season weather conditions.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

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

MLT will use the contract budget item for three distinct purposes: to complete habitat management plans on the new easement acquisitions; for restoration plans and projects.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

3-5

Easement Stewardship

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

MLT's budget is based on the estimated closing of 20-24 conservation easements. The average cost per easement

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

Travel

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

Yes

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

Vehicle rental is also included.

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

Yes

Direct Support Services

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

TNC: DSS is based on The Nature Conservancy's Federal Negotiated Rate (FNR) as proposed and approved by the US Dept. of Interior on an annual basis. In this proposal we are requesting reimbursement of 7.5% of eligible base costs as determined by our annual FNR and based on suggestions from the Council in prior years' hearings. The amount requested for reimbursement represents less than one-third of the total reimbursable costs allowed under the FNR. Examples of expenses included in the FNR include services from in-house legal counsel; finance, human resources; and information technology support, all of which contribute directly to the implementation of the project. The FNR is not applied to capital equipment over \$50,000 or land acquisition.

MLT: In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of the direct support services.

TPL: The Trust for Public Land's DSS request is based upon our federally approved rate, which has been approved by the DNR. 50% of these costs are requested from the grant and 50% is contributed as leverage.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

Equipment and tools to be purchased will be those necessary for restoration and management activities, such as Personal Protective Equipment, backpack sprayers for herbicide application, bladder bags, and assorted hand tools for prescribed fire.

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	-	40	50	-	90
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	345	475	185	1,005
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	0	-	-	0
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	2,400	2,400
Enhance	-	162	270	-	432
Total	-	547	795	2,585	3,927

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

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Easement	-
Enhance	25
Total	25

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$273,100	\$150,000	-	\$423,100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$735,900	\$2,807,200	\$2,157,300	\$5,700,400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$4,167,000	\$4,167,000
Enhance	-	\$501,900	\$888,000	-	\$1,389,900
Total	-	\$1,510,900	\$3,845,200	\$6,324,300	\$11,680,400

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	90	0	0	90
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,005	0	0	1,005
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	2,400	0	0	2,400
Enhance	0	0	432	0	0	432
Total	0	0	3,927	0	0	3,927

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	\$423,100	-	-	\$423,100
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$5,700,400	-	-	\$5,700,400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$4,167,000	-	-	\$4,167,000
Enhance	-	-	\$1,389,900	-	-	\$1,389,900
Total	-	-	\$11,680,400	-	-	\$11,680,400

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$6,827	\$3,000	-

Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$2,133	\$5,909	\$11,661
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$1,736
Enhance	-	\$3,098	\$3,288	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	\$4,701	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	\$5,672	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,736	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$3,217	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

4

Outcomes

Programs in southeast forest region:

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

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

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

The fee-acquisition parcel list selection weighs the following criteria:

- Parcel is within Conservation Opportunity Area or Area of Significant Native Biodiversity (allows for large landscape management and management efficiencies, i.e. large scale Rx fire)
- Parcel contains an Minnesota Biological Survey mapped native plant community
- Parcel was equal to or greater than 80 acres in size
- Parcel property line began within ¼ mile of a state-owned parcel
- A Conservation Partner is willing to accept the property/meets partner objectives (SNA, WMA, Forestry)
- Immediacy of threat
- Landowner willingness and timeframe

Please see Parcel Prioritization attachment for more detailed explanation.

MLT 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). We contract with local SWCD offices to provide outreach services as a way to connect effectively with local landowners.

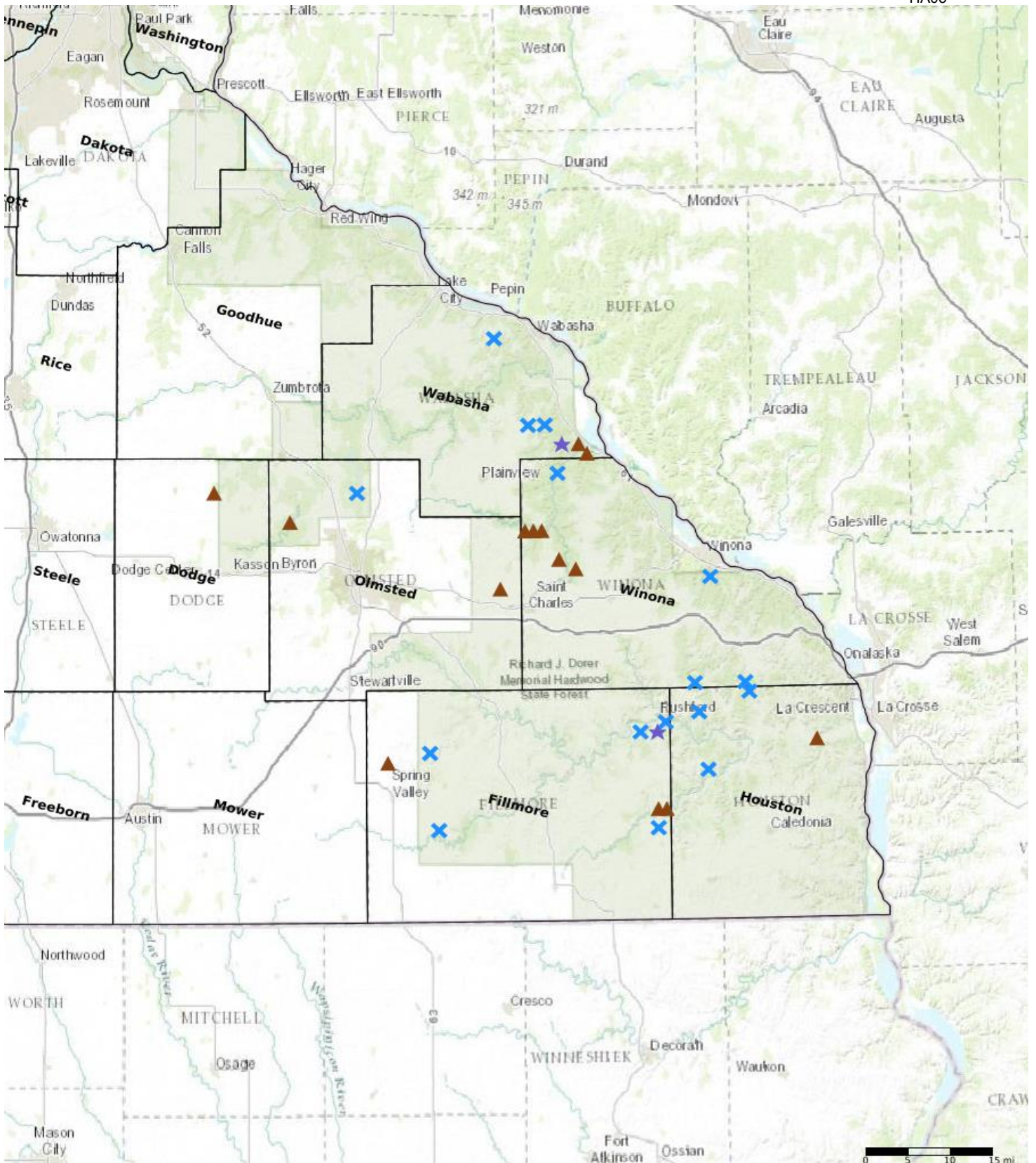
Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
7 Springs	Fillmore	10212216	40	\$40,000	Yes
Rushford Sand Barrens	Fillmore	10408228	40	\$50,000	Yes
Rushford SF Brush	Fillmore	10408224	10	\$10,000	Yes
Rushford SF Planting	Fillmore	10408226	10	\$10,000	Yes
Vesta Bluff South	Fillmore	10208214	55	\$120,000	Yes
Root River H	Houston	10406203	40	\$80,000	Yes
Wetbark Grazing	Houston	10307214	50	\$60,000	Yes
Vinegar Ridge Bluffs	Houston	10407215	13	\$30,000	Yes
Bear Creek E	Houston	10312205	15	\$30,000	Yes
Evergreen Acres	Olmsted	10814223	40	\$80,000	Yes
Indian Creek G	Wabasha	10910226	40	\$80,000	Yes
Snake Creek Corridor	Wabasha	10910216	50	\$50,000	Yes
McCarthy Lake	Wabasha	10910218	30	\$60,000	Yes
Trout Brook H	Wabasha	11111233	10	\$20,000	Yes
Looney Creek F	Winona	10506233	25	\$50,000	Yes
Seibanaler Ridge	Winona	10810211	26	\$60,000	Yes
Burns Valley G	Winona	10607202	12	\$24,000	Yes
Wisocoy Valley M	Winona	10507233	30	\$60,000	Yes

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
------	--------	------	-------	----------	---------------------

Middle Fork Zumbro River SNA	Dodge	10817224	175	\$787,500	No
Choice WMA North 5	Fillmore	10208202	410	\$1,700,000	No
Choice WMA NE	Fillmore	10208201	140	\$560,000	No
Bear Creek	Fillmore	10313209	600	\$1,800,000	No
Root River WMA	Houston	10405236	37	\$135,000	No
Crow Springs AMA/WMA	Olmsted	10611210	80	\$320,000	No
South Br Middle Fork Zumbro	Olmsted	10715204	240	\$1,500,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main II	Wabasha	10909232	210	\$486,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main	Wabasha	10909230	50	\$252,000	No
Whitewater WMA North I	Winona	10710207	41	\$259,000	No
Whitewater WMA North II	Winona	10710208	86	\$624,900	No
Whitewater WMA South	Winona	10709231	430	\$2,300,000	No
Whitewater WMA South II	Winona	10710226	543	\$1,884,000	No
Whitewater WMA Main III	Winona	10710209	54	\$277,900	No



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

Parcel Map
Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration
Phase 10
(Data Generated From Parcel List)



Southeast Minnesota Protection & Restoration Phase 10

The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, and Minnesota Land Trust request \$11,680,400 for the Southeast Minnesota Protection & Restoration Program.

The Blufflands Region of Southeast Minnesota contains some of the highest quality, most diverse and least protected wildlife habitat in Minnesota. This program will invest in targeted land protection through fee simple and conservation easement acquisitions and the restoration of important habitat types. It will protect 3% of the remaining High or Outstanding Biodiversity areas in the region as recognized by the Minnesota Biological Survey.

This program builds on existing protected lands to improve large landscape management for Species in Greatest Conservation Need through land acquisition and restoration. These actions will focus on areas of High or Outstanding Biodiversity Significance. They will return communities to healthy conditions and improve their stability, making ongoing management easier and more effective in the future.

Partners

The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land will complete all fee simple land acquisitions in collaboration with the Minnesota DNR. The Nature Conservancy will also coordinate habitat

Proposal Facts

Project Partners: The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust

Request \$11,680,400

Leverage \$547,500

Acres protected 3,405

Conservation easements 2,400

Fee-title 1,005

Acres restored 522

For more information:

Robert McGillivray

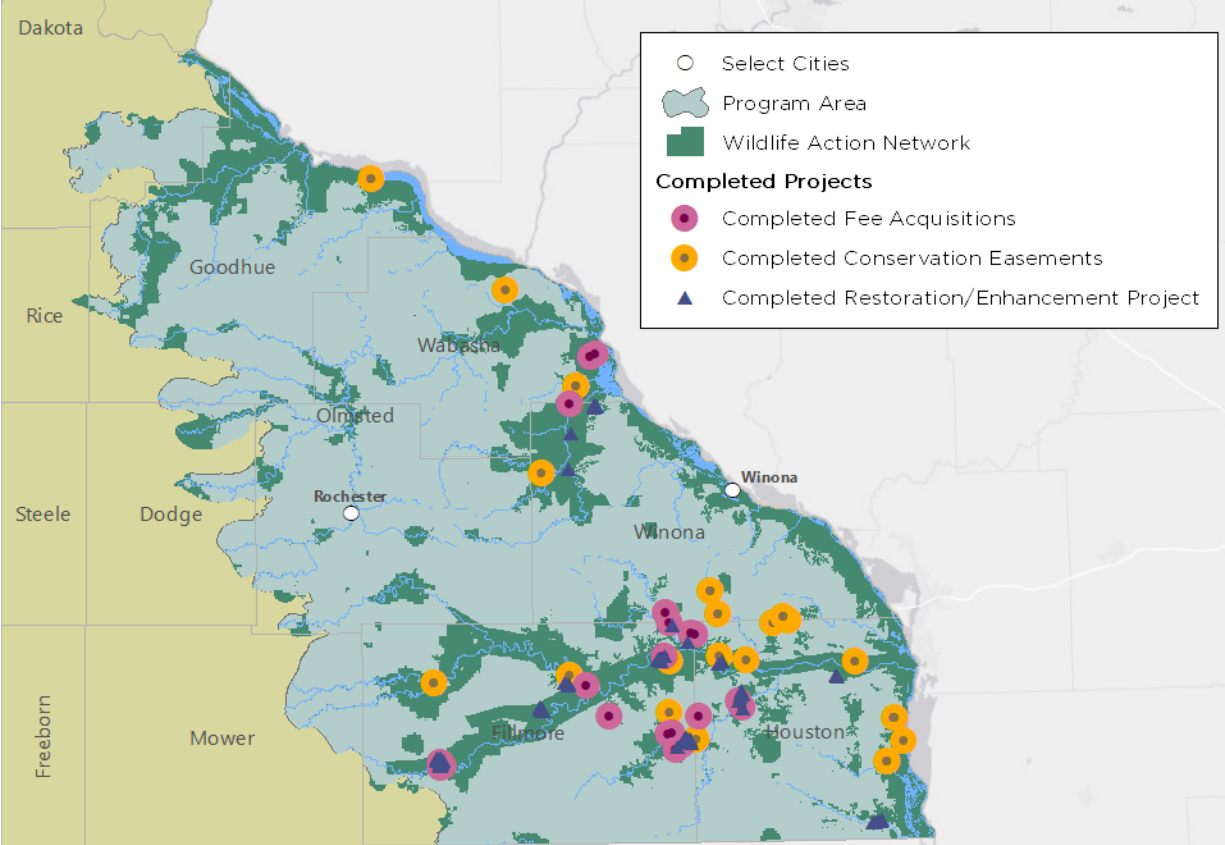
Land Protection Director
The Trust for Public Land
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restoration and enhancement with DNR.

The Minnesota Land Trust will complete permanent conservation easements and restoration/enhancement projects in partnership with private landowners.



Hansi Johnson



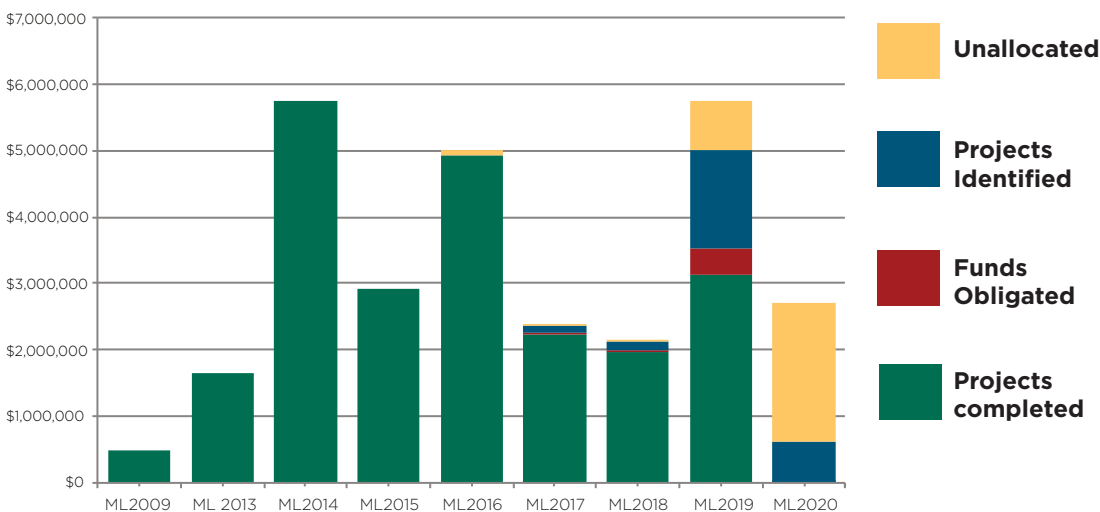
Program Facts

Spent \$20,976,892

There are 5 complete phases of the Southeast Minnesota Protection & Restoration Program. Phases 5, 6, 7, & 8 are currently active with phase 9 slated to come online this year.

	% of goal
Leverage \$4,440,525	113%
Landowner Donations of \$1,251,000	
Federal Funds \$73,000	
Private & other sources \$3,116,525	
Protected 8,137 acres	84%
Conservation easements 3,453 acres	100%
Fee-title 4,684 acres	79%
Restored 1,891 acres	233%

Expenditures by Grant



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A Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

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

How the Ranking System Works

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

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

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

The Framework

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

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

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

Subfactors:

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

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

Indicators:

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

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

Factor 2: Cost

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

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

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

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out

SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring: Parcels are scored based as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

- 1 pt 0-80 acres of protected land

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration

Parcels are reviewed by both a Division of MN DNR and Conservancy to ensure that they meet the priorities of both partners.

Criteria for identification of key conservation parcels.

State-owned properties represent significant blocks of ownership in Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) in Southeast Minnesota as identified by Landscape Stewardship Plans and present opportunities for targeted stewardship. Where landscape stewardship plans and identified Conservation Opportunity Areas do not exist, core areas are identified by the Areas of Significant Native Biodiversity Significance. State-owned lands containing mapped native plant communities were selected as a starting point. Additional management acreage and contiguous land cover were increased by selecting adjoining parcels of private land that met certain criteria. This initial private parcel selection was made using the following criteria, with each parcel satisfying all points (Figure 1):

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

Some land parcels were selected for stewardship activities, while others were chosen for potential acquisition or conservation easement purchase.

Where multiple units of conservation lands exist within a COA , habitat corridors may need to be established to support the larger landscape and identified core areas. Parcels within an identified corridor should meet the following criteria:

- Between 2 conservation land units
- Within ½ mile of existing conservation land unit
- Contain more than 50% habitat

Figure 1. Example of parcels identified for stewardship activities in Pine Creek/Rushford Conservation Opportunity Area. The selected private parcels meet criteria and are considered for acquisition, easement, or management.

