



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

ML 2022 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/21/2021

Proposal Title: Wild Rice Shoreland Protection - Phase VIII

Funds Requested: \$2,000,000

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Dan Steward

Title: Watershed/Private Forest Management Program Coordinator

Organization: BWSR

Address: 1601 Minnesota Drive

City: Brainerd, MN 56401

Email: dan.steward@state.mn.us

Office Number: 218-828-2598

Mobile Number: 218-820-1679

Fax Number:

Website: BWSR.state.mn.us

Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest

Narrative

Abstract

Phase 8 of the Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program will utilize permanent conservation easements to protect 1,150 acres and 6.5 miles of wild rice shoreland habitat. Development trends pose a serious threat to wild rice habitat. Sites are selected through a ranking process that considers development risk, surrounding land use, habitat value, and other criteria. BWSR will utilize the RIM easement process in partnership with local soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) within the Northern Forest and Forest Prairie Transition to accomplish protection. Previous phases of this project have protected 5,332 acres and exceeded goals by 22%.

Design and Scope of Work

Historically, wild rice occurred throughout Minnesota and extended into northern Iowa. Wild rice has since been extirpated from most of its southern range due to human impacts including changes to water quality and chemistry, sedimentation, drainage, flow alteration, boat traffic and competition from introduced aquatic invasive species. Today, the heart of the state's wild rice acreage falls within this project work area comprised of 14 counties -- Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Otter Tail, St. Louis, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena.

Recent well-documented population and development trends pose a serious threat to remaining wild rice habitat. This population and development boom has reduced the availability of developable shoreline on recreational lakes, resulting in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays containing wild rice being increasingly targeted for shoreline development. Many wild rice shoreland complexes are still intact with good water quality, but are subject to development pressure that, if allowed, will degrade the resource.

Voluntary, incentive-based conservation protection options for shoreland landowners are few. Unlike the prairie portion of the state where state funded easement options exist for conservation-minded landowners, private land protection options are limited for wild rice shoreland in the forest due to funding constraints. Further, many easement programs are targeted for restoration and not protection. In the northern forest, lower land values allow conservation dollars to stretch further while also leveraging existing public lands. Most wild rice lakes are public waters and offer some form of public access. This proposal will continue to fill a need for shoreland protection on key water bodies supporting wild rice in the Northern Forest and Forest Prairie Transition Sections.

Utilizing permanent conservation easements the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) and fourteen local SWCDs will continue to offer permanent shoreland protection on shallow lakes, rivers and shallow bays producing wild rice. BWSR's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program will acquire 1,150 acres through permanent conservation easements.

Through local SWCD offices, BWSR will purchase RIM easements using rates set by the BWSR Board. Tracts will be selected based on the degree to which they help permanently protect the land around a given wild rice water body. RIM easements will be acquired through a sign-up process similar to BWSR's other easement programs.

SWCD generated landowner applications will be reviewed and parcels ranked by the project committee with guidance provided by the "Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Criteria Sheet" (attached).

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?

Wild rice shoreland encompasses a complex of shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes that support rice and provide some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota. Wild rice habitat is especially important to Minnesota's migrating and breeding waterfowl. More than 17 species of wildlife listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wild rice areas as habitat for breeding, migration, and/or foraging.

Targeted SGCN are as follows: Common Loon, Trumpeter Swan, Bald Eagle, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Red-necked Grebe, Sora Rail, Virginia Rail, Yellow Rail, Black Tern, Rusty Blackbird, Sedge Wren, Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintail, and American Black Duck.

Wild rice is some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota as noted in the MNDNR's Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota report to the legislature (2008). Important game species supported by wild rice include the Ring-necked Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Scaup, and Bufflehead.

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

Recent well-documented population and development trends pose a serious threat to wild rice habitat. This population and development boom has reduced the availability of developable shoreline on recreational lakes, resulting in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays containing wild rice being increasingly targeted for shoreline development. Many of these wild rice shoreland complexes currently remain intact with good water quality, but are subject to development pressure that, if allowed, will degrade the resource.

Easement acquisition is critical at this time to head off development and habitat fragmentation along these sensitive lakes. Beyond public ownership, current shoreline protection on wild rice shoreland is limited to county shoreland ordinances, and limited conservation efforts by non-governmental organizations. Shoreland ordinances do not prevent wild rice habitat fragmentation and degradation. Further, even the most stringent ordinances still allow for some subdivision and development, which is detrimental to wild rice shoreland complexes.

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:

To target sites, aerial photos of wild rice lakes are reviewed during a preliminary screening to find those that are the most intact, provide the most wild rice, with the most waterfowl use, and can be protected for the least cost. Lakes are sorted into Low, Medium and High categories. Once the lakes have been ranked the SWCD then contacts landowners on the high and some of the medium priority lakes.

Easement selection occurs with a goal of maximum wild rice habitat complex protection along all shoreland of a lake. Easement parcels are further targeted and prioritized by adjacency to current protected lands/public lands and a low level of current lake development. The following additional factors are considered to ensure site selection reflects current science-based measures for wild rice habitat protection: DNR wild rice lake designation, feet of shoreline protected, development potential of site, acquisition urgency, depth from shore, watershed

considerations, easement size relative to the parcel, and an analysis of stakeholder support. Sites that contain a wild rice lake outlet are also prioritized for potential DNR management of water levels to ensure protection.

SWCD generated landowner applications will be reviewed and parcels ranked by the project committee with guidance provided by the "Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Criteria Sheet" attached to this proposal. Shoreland protection for wild rice lakes and rivers enjoys widespread support from tribal interests, SWCDs, and other habitat conservation partners.

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

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams

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:

The 25 Year Framework states that healthy wild rice wetlands and shallow lakes that provide important habitat for a wide range of game and nongame wildlife are front and center in the LSOHC's vision. Protection of priority wild rice lakes from development impacts will support the current index of biotic integrity and other aquatic habitat indicators on critical wild rice lakes.

This Program seeks to permanently protect these existing natural wild rice lakes, supporting the declaration that natural wild rice in Minnesota provides public value by its contributions to fish and wildlife habitat, ecological diversity, environmental quality, and recreational opportunities.

The Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program will protect 1,150 acres of habitat surrounding targeted wild rice lakes ensuring a healthy and plentiful supply of habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, including Species in Greatest Need.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Northern Forest

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

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

The Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program will permanently protect wild rice wetlands, shorelands and adjacent critical habitat facing development pressure, helping to keep Minnesota's wild rice legacy intact. This proposal is reflective of the Northern Forest and Forest Prairie Transition priorities to protect shoreland and restore or

enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes. Securing easements on these sites will ensure detrimental land use does not occur in the future that would otherwise negatively affect wild rice populations and the wildlife that depend on this resource.

Wild rice is officially the “State Grain” of Minnesota (MN Statute - 1.148). Minnesota remains the epicenter of this plant’s natural range supporting more habitat than any other state in the U.S. No other native Minnesota plant approaches the level of cultural, ecological, and economic values embodied by this species. Natural wild rice has been hand harvested as a source of food in the Great Lakes region for thousands of years, and these lakes provide important habitat for a wide range of game and nongame wildlife. The Forest Prairie Transition priority to protect wild rice wetlands and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife demonstrates the importance of shoreland and surrounding uplands to the health of wild rice resources.

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

No

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 funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring into perpetuity. The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

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

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

| Year | Source of Funds | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 |
|--------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2026-Ongoing | Stewardship Account | Compliance Checks first 5 years then every 3rd year. | Corrective actions of any violations | Enforcement action by MN Attorney General Office |
| 2026-Ongoing | Landowner Responsibility | Maintain compliance with easement terms | - | - |

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

DNR staff, in consultation with a variety of experts in NGOs and other agencies, have compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities to be used by any applicant to answer the question above.

Ovenbirds

Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) are found in upland forests statewide; typically in relatively mature forest but can also be found in younger forests. While territories vary in size and may overlap, an average of 10 pairs for every 10 hectares may be translated to roughly 16 pairs for every 40 acres.

Golden-winged Warblers

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

Mallards

The biological model used in the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture and the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (UMRGLRJV) to estimate habitat needs to support mallard population growth uses a simple but accepted rate of 1 mallard pair per hectare (1 mallard pair per 2.47 acres) of wetland habitat (noting that upland habitat for nesting is also obviously needed).

Trumpeter Swans

Though reported territories can range in size from 1.5 - >100 hectares, a reasonable expectation is that 1 trumpeter swan pair would be supported by each 150 acres of wetlands.

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

Wild rice is a culturally important resource for Native Americans in Minnesota. This proposal specifically works to protect wild rice resources.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this proposal 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

Land Use

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

No

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:

Existing trails and roads are identified during the acquisition process and are often excluded from the easement area if they serve no purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring or enforcement. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are allowed to remain.

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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

Yes

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

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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

Yes

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? |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2021 | \$1,251,000 | - | - | - | 660 | - | No |
| 2019 | \$937,000 | \$829,000 | - | - | 580 | 501 | No |
| 2015 | \$1,600,000 | \$1,515,100 | - | - | 913 | 1,127 | Yes |
| 2014 | \$1,060,000 | \$1,041,800 | - | - | 680 | 698 | Yes |
| 2013 | \$1,630,000 | \$1,355,100 | - | - | 1,015 | 1,173 | Yes |
| 2011 | \$1,891,000 | \$1,652,600 | \$20,000 | \$11,800 | 700 | 1,210 | Yes |
| 2017 | \$750,000 | \$559,700 | - | - | 500 | 623 | No |

Timeline

| Activity Name | Estimated Completion Date |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| RIM easements secured on 1150 acres | June 30, 2025 |
| Final Report Submitted | November 1, 2025 |

Budget

Totals

| Item | Funding Request | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Personnel | \$195,000 | - | - | \$195,000 |
| Contracts | \$38,000 | - | - | \$38,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | \$1,615,000 | - | - | \$1,615,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | \$123,500 | - | - | \$123,500 |
| Travel | \$3,500 | - | - | \$3,500 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | \$18,500 | - | - | \$18,500 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | \$5,000 | - | - | \$5,000 |
| Supplies/Materials | \$1,500 | - | - | \$1,500 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| Grand Total | \$2,000,000 | - | - | \$2,000,000 |

Personnel

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Antic. Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Easement Processing | 0.4 | 4.0 | \$109,000 | - | - | \$109,000 |
| Program Management | 0.2 | 4.0 | \$86,000 | - | - | \$86,000 |

Amount of Request: \$2,000,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$213,500

As a % of the total request: 10.67%

Easement Stewardship: \$123,500

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 7.65%

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 30% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionately. Program management costs are the exception due to program management and oversight costs remaining constant regardless of the appropriation amount. However, this is a very small portion of the total appropriation amount.

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

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

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

A 50% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionately. Program management costs are the exception due to program management and oversight costs remaining constant regardless of the appropriation amount. However, this is a very small portion of the total appropriation amount.

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

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

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?

This is Phase 8 of an ongoing program these funds will pay for staff time spent on new easements associated with this phase.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

The amount listed in the contract line will be used to reimburse SWCDs for work associated with easement acquisition and boundary posting.

Easement Stewardship

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

BWSR stewardship costs are \$6,500/easement. This is based upon Land Trust Alliance standards that have been modified to fit RIM programs needs.

Travel

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

No

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

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

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?

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

Other Equipment/Tools

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

None anticipated at this time but we keep a small amount in this budget line for contingencies.

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 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Easement | 0 | 0 | 1,100 | 0 | 1,100 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 1,100 | 0 | 1,100 |

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 | - | - | \$2,000,000 | - | \$2,000,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | - | - | \$2,000,000 | - | \$2,000,000 |

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Acres |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| Restore | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Protect in Easement | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 1,000 | 1,100 |
| Enhance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 1,000 | 1,100 |

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 | - | \$200,000 | - | - | \$1,800,000 | \$2,000,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | - | \$200,000 | - | - | \$1,800,000 | \$2,000,000 |

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 | - | - | \$1,818 | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - |

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State | - | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------|---|---|---------|
| PILT Liability | | | | | |
| Protect in Easement | - | \$2,000 | - | - | \$1,800 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

6.5

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species. A summary of the total number of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species. A summary of the total number of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

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

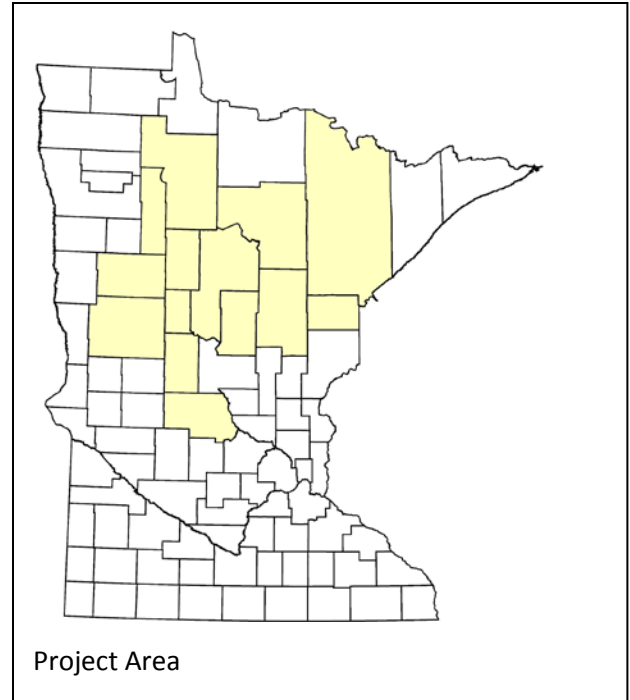
The Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program utilizes a two tiered screening process to find the wild rice parcels with the highest quality habitat. First, DNR Wildlife staff rank wild rice lakes on a county by county basis. At this preliminary screening aerial photos are used to sort wild rice lakes to prioritize the lakes that are most intact, provide the most wild rice, with the most waterfowl use, and can be protected for the least cost. Lakes are sorted into Low, Medium and High categories. Lakes are dropped or added to the lake list as better information becomes available. Once the lakes have been ranked, the SWCD then contacts landowners on the high and some of the medium priority lakes.

Once the SWCD has an interested landowner, the parcel is presented to the project committee for comments and recommendations. The committee reviews proposals and sorts them for parcels that provide the greatest public benefit possible. Areas with high quality wild rice habitat, where a limited public investment can leverage a larger area of public land are sought after. The result is an increase in resiliency to the habitat base. The parcels that rank the highest tend to be adjacent to public lands, in a river corridor, or both.

Wild Rice Shoreland Protection – Phase VIII

Phase 8 Request

- \$2,000,000 request
- Secures approximately 1,150 acres, 6.5 miles of shoreland habitat
- As less developable land remains on recreational lakes, shallow lakes are targeted for shoreline development
- Habitat-focused RIM Easements that prevent development and preserve natural habitat.
- Permanently protects resources while private ownership continues
- 14 SWCDs participating
- Outcomes – Benefits to Minnesotans:
 - Protects wildlife habitat that supports healthy populations
 - Improves hunting and fishing by protecting wildlife complexes
 - Safeguards important wild rice resources



Outcomes from Prior Phases

Combining Phases I-VI (ML11, ML13, ML14, ML15, ML17 and ML19), BWSR, DNR, and SWCDs together will complete approximately 75 easement projects on over 30 lakes and rivers. Four parcels have had DNR fee title acquisition completed and all have public access.

Results include:

- Over 5,000 acres (4,388 acres recorded to date) of permanent easements.
- Protection of over 25 miles of high priority wild rice shoreland.
- Public access on over 400 acres.
- Forestlands protected from development and fragmentation, keeping habitat corridors intact.



About Wild Rice

Minnesota is the epicenter of the nation's natural wild rice. Protected, undeveloped shoreland is important to preserving sensitive wild rice lakes for current and future generations of wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. Although once found throughout most of the state, today, the heart of the state's wild rice acreage falls within fourteen counties: Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Otter Tail, St Louis, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena.

Wild rice shoreland encompasses a complex of shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes that support rice and provide some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota, especially migrating and breeding waterfowl. It also provides unique recreation opportunities including hunting waterfowl and harvesting for food. Wild rice is the state grain of Minnesota and part of the state's rich natural and cultural heritage. The grain remains spiritually important to Native Americans.



For more information, contact:

Dan Steward

Watershed/Private Forest Management
Program Coordinator (218) 203-4474

Phase 8 RIM Ranking Sheet

Shallow Lake Shoreland Protection Easements: Wild Rice Lakes

Ranking Process

This score sheet has been used for phases two through seven, and will also be used for phase eight.

Max Score Criteria Guidelines:

30 # Feet of Shoreline 5 points for minimal shoreland on wild rice lake (<500ft)

10 points for at least 500 - 999 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake

15 points for 1,000 - 2,000 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake

20 points for 2,000 - 3,000 feet of shoreline on a wild rice lake

30 points for more than 3,000 feet of shoreland on a wild rice lake

15 % of Tract Developable 1-15 points base on the proportion of the tract that is developable (10%=1.5pts)

10 Wetland fringe width 1-10 points based on the distance between upland & the bank/water (0'=10pts, 300'=0pts, -1pt/30' wet)

20 Urgency Property opportunity is likely to be lost if we do not act quickly

20 Depth from shore 5 points for easments > 300 feet deep along wild rice lake shore

10 points for easments > 500 feet deep along wild rice lake shore

20 points for easments > 900 feet deep along wild rice lake shore

15 Adjoining Applications 15 points for land adjoining another application

15 Adjoining Public Land 15 points for land adjoining public land on the wild rice lake, or adjoining land permanently protected by other easement program

10 Habitat Value 1-10 points based on the habitat value of the property, uniqueness, and



lack of existing development and shoreline alterations

10 % of Parcel/Tract 1-10 points based on the proportion of the parcel enrolled (10% = 1 pt)

10 % of Lake Undeveloped 1-10 points based on the proportion of lake currently undeveloped (10% = 1 pt)

15 Lake Outlet 15 points for tracts containing land on the outlet of a wild rice lake & access granted for water level mngmt

15 Watershed 15 points for tracts with majority acres draining into the wild rice lake

15 Stakeholder Support Up to 15 points for level of landowner support for shoreland protection and wild rice management (e.g. lake mgt plan that prioritizes wild rice protection in lake)

200 TOTAL GROSS SCORE *Other factors may raise or lower the priority of a parcel

100 Final Score (Total / 2)

Identified Wild Rice Lakes

Project Area

The map below portrays all identified wild rice lakes in the project area. Lakes are further prioritized on a scale of high to low in consultation with DNR staff. Marketing and easement acquisition is targeted on high and some medium priority lakes. A project committee reviews easement applications and selects those that provide the greatest public benefit.

