



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Roving Crew Phase 2

Laws of Minnesota 2023 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/08/2023

Project Title: DNR Roving Crew Phase 2

Funds Recommended: \$8,732,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(v)

Appropriation Language: \$8,732,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat on permanently protected lands throughout Minnesota using the roving crew program of the Department of Natural Resources. A list of restoration and enhancement projects must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Greg Hoch

Title: Prairie Habitat Supervisor

Organization: DNR

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Location Information

County Location(s): Aitkin, Stearns, Washington, Cass, Carlton, Freeborn, Cook, Redwood, Lincoln, Fillmore, Marshall, Pipestone, Morrison, Cottonwood, Lyon, Kandiyohi, Benton, Goodhue, Chippewa, Polk, Mille Lacs, Pennington, Lake of the Woods, Faribault and Roseau.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie
- Forest
- Habitat

Narrative**Abstract**

Grasslands and wetlands in western Minnesota continues to be the most threatened habitat in the state. At the same time, the DNR continues to work to make the state's forests more productive for wildlife, timber, and other compatible uses. This request will realign and streamline previous funding requests by placing all DNR Roving Crews under a single proposal and appropriation.

This proposal will enhance wildlife habitat on permanently protected lands, most of which are open to public hunting. These include DNR WMAs, SNAs, AMAs, NPB easements, State and National Forests, as well as WPAs and NWRs

Design and Scope of Work

Roving Crews are fully equipped to conduct a range of habitat projects. The staff on these crews are solely dedicated to habitat enhancement and restoration. They do not work on infrastructure or non-habitat projects. In the prairies and western prairie pothole wetlands, they focus on prescribed burns, tree removal, grassland restorations, removal of old fencing, installing fenceposts for conservation grazing. In wetlands the focus is on wild rice collection and seeding, water control structure repair, wetland restorations with earth moving equipment, invasive species control, cattail spraying, and sediment removal. Forest projects include prescribed burns in fire-dependent forests and brushlands; seed harvesting and planting, seedling planting, protection, and/or release of species such as oak and winter cover such as conifer; mowing and shearing of brushlands; maintenance of wildlife openings; and control of invasive species.

While forest harvest is a valuable tool for many types of forest habitat enhancement, there are some habitat enhancements that harvests don't do or enhancements that can be done post-harvest to quickly improve habitat quality for wildlife. This can be especially true for practices such as shearing brushlands, where there isn't a strong economic incentive but numerous species of wildlife require these habitats for all or some stages of life. Prescribed fire can be used more to stimulate oak/acorn production for wildlife and improve pine forests as well as set back invasives.

Making these habitat productive and diverse benefits wildlife as well as benefits native pollinators and commercial beekeepers. Enhancing all of these habitats maximizes the ecosystem services these habitats provide such as nitrate filtration, floodwater capture, and groundwater recharge, all in addition to the wildlife benefits.

In the farmland region, we continue to lose ground on wetlands and grasslands. Therefore, it's critical that the remaining public and protected habitats are in as high a quality as possible to both produce resident wildlife, such as pheasants, and be attractive to migratory wildlife, waterfowl that breed to our north.

This proposal will fund the three existing 8 person grassland/wetland Roving Crews located east of Crookston (DNR Region 1), Lac Qui Parle (Region 4), and Rosemount (Region 3). This will also fund the newly established (ML19/FY20 appropriation) 6 person crew south of Fergus Falls and 4 person northeast forest crew (ML20/FY21 appropriation). This will be a total of 34 crew staff.

We estimate that on a good to average year the crews will enhance over 28,000 acres of habitat annually, or 56,000 acres over two years, across the state.

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

Because these crews are working in grasslands, wetlands, forests, as well as brushland and savanna, they will be able to benefit wildlife that depend on a wide range of habitat types. In the forests, habitats that are critical for many species are brushlands and early successional forests. These often require mechanical treatment. Similarly, many of our pine and oak forests are dependent on prescribed fire. While some of this work can be done with forest harvest, much of it cannot. In other areas, seeds or seedlings can be planted to enhance forest succession and benefit wildlife. The Roving Crews will work synergistically with timber harvests to benefit and enhance wildlife habitat at both local and regional levels.

With few exceptions, grassland habitats for game species, nongame species, SGCN, and T&E species are similar. All these species need habitat composed of a diversity of native grasses and forbs.

While the work proposed here will benefit many wildlife species, it will also go beyond these objectives to provide numerous ecosystem services such as water filtration, floodwater retention and reduced flood damage, and create pollinator habitat to help sustain segments of the agricultural economy. All of these habitats are very good at carbon storage and removing carbon from the air, helping to both slow climate change and help our landscapes adapt to the effects of climate change.

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

The grassland and wetland projects in this proposal will be guided primarily by the Prairie Conservation Plan, and Pheasant and Duck Action Plans. First and foremost, these Plans outline focal areas (Core Areas and Habitat Complexes) where we can build on an existing base of conservation lands and improve the habitat there. The Prairie Plan identifies specific corridors and complexes that connect larger core areas. The latest science is telling us that it isn't the size of an individual habitat parcel that matters as much as the amount of habitat in the larger surrounding landscape. These Plans, and the work proposed here, build on these concepts of landscape level habitat planning. We will not restrict ourselves to these focal areas. There are critical habitats outside these areas. However, we will use these Plans to focus our efforts in areas where they can have the greatest wildlife benefits.

The DNR has a number of plans for forests in different parts of the states including the DNR's Conservation Agenda, Deer Plan, Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and Section Forest

Resource Management Plans. These plans coordinate the management of types and ages of forests across the landscape, as well as the local management of each unit and regional management of the larger landscape to assure there are multiple forest habitat types that benefit all forest wildlife species.

The DNR will set up a cross-Divisional team to coordinate and develop the best strategies to use these funds across WMAs, SNAs, AMAs, and State Forest lands to make sure that the projects are the most effective use of these funds for wildlife.

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

- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

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

Metro / Urban

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

Northern Forest

- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

Prairie

- Restore or enhance habitat on public lands

Southeast Forest

- Restore forest-based wildlife habitat that has experienced substantial decline in area in recent decades

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 ~ *Migratory game and non-game birds will be some of the primary beneficiaries of this work. We hope to continue to strengthen partnerships with the University of Minnesota to incorporate graduate students into research and monitoring work.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *Monitoring will take place with the base level monitoring conducted by DNR staff and staff from other agencies/NGOs.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ *Monitoring will take place with the base level monitoring conducted by DNR staff and staff from other agencies/NGOs. This includes surveys such as moose, sharp-tailed and ruffed grouse, and woodcock, which are all dependent on open areas.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Restored and enhanced upland habitats ~ *The multi-agency/NGO Grassland Monitoring Team (GMT) has developed standardized protocols for sampling grassland vegetation and a number of the sites on this request will be sampled over the 5 year period. They recently published the first results of this project.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

These funds will be used as match for the DNR's Pittman-Robertson reimbursements.

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.

These funds are for additional enhance/restoration work beyond what the DNR is already conducting. These funds are not supplanting or substituting any funds.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2021	Heritage Enhancement	\$4,120,000
2021	Dedicated Account	\$10,641,000
2021	Game and Fish Fund	\$20,166,000

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

We select projects with these funds that strategically enhance priority habitats. We will continue management of these sites with agency staff. The OHF provides Minnesota’s conservation community with a large amount of non-Federal dollars as match that other Midwestern states don’t have. In recent years, the conservation partners have been coordinating to maximize our efforts with funding sources such as the North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) as well as the American Bird Conservancy’s RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program) for young forests, to name just a couple.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2025 and beyond	OHF, DNR funds, partner funds	conduct enhancements	monitor vegetation and wildlife responses	-

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

The Minnesota DNR has adopted advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a key priority in its 2020-22 strategic plan. The plan focuses on increasing the cultural competence of our staff, creating a workforce that is reflective of Minnesota, continuing to strengthen tribal consultation and building partnerships with diverse communities.

DNR's OHF projects aim to serve all Minnesotans. At the same time, we are bringing more focus in all our work to BIPOC and diverse communities. OHF achieves high quality habitat that provides ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF also supports public access and recreational opportunities on these lands. Project scoring and implementation benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- WPA
- SNA
- AMA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal
- Refuge Lands
- Public Waters
- State Forests
- Other : Con-con, national forests

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

Corn or soybeans plantings for a year or two may be used to prepare soil for restoration.

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Enhance and restore habitats across Minnesota	FY24-25 - completion June 2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2025

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

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

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

- (1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2027;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this act is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2031;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2028;
- (4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and
- (5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

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

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$5,714,600	-	-	\$5,714,600
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$1,660,000	-	-	\$1,660,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$558,300	-	-	\$558,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$240,000	-	-	\$240,000
Supplies/Materials	\$559,100	-	-	\$559,100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$8,732,000	-	-	\$8,732,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Roving Crew Supervisors and Staff	34.0	2.0	\$5,644,000	-	-	\$5,644,000
Roving Crew Admin	0.25	2.0	\$70,600	-	-	\$70,600

Amount of Request: \$8,732,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$6,272,900

As a % of the total request: 71.84%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

NA

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 a redesign of how the DNR has requested Roving Crew proposals in the past. We have asked for Roving Crew funds on different grassland, wetland, and forest enhancement proposals in the past. This proposal is the second phase combining requests for all Crews into one proposal for a simpler, more streamlined request.

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

All activities related to travel for the Roving Crews we place in the travel line. This includes basic mileage and lodging as well as equipment/vehicle rentals and leases, etc.

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?

We used the DNR's standard Direct and Necessary calculator designed for OHF and ENRTF proposals.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

Chainsaws, drip torches, and related.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

These funds would be matched to Pittman-Roberson funds on an annual cycle through the DNR.

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	4,000	-	-	4,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	9,000	39,500	3,500	-	52,000
Total	9,000	43,500	3,500	-	56,000

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$634,900	-	-	\$634,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,074,300	\$5,468,000	\$554,800	-	\$8,097,100
Total	\$2,074,300	\$6,102,900	\$554,800	-	\$8,732,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	4,000	-	4,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	1,000	18,000	1,000	29,500	2,500	52,000
Total	1,000	18,000	1,000	33,500	2,500	56,000

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$634,900	-	\$634,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$158,700	\$3,016,000	\$158,800	\$4,367,700	\$395,900	\$8,097,100
Total	\$158,700	\$3,016,000	\$158,800	\$5,002,600	\$395,900	\$8,732,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$158	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$230	\$138	\$158	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$158	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$158	\$167	\$158	\$148	\$158

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

Parcels are identified by Area Wildlife Managers and approved by Regional Managers. Priorities are set by the Plans identified earlier in this proposal. The parcels listed below are representative of the types of projects Roving Crews would work on.

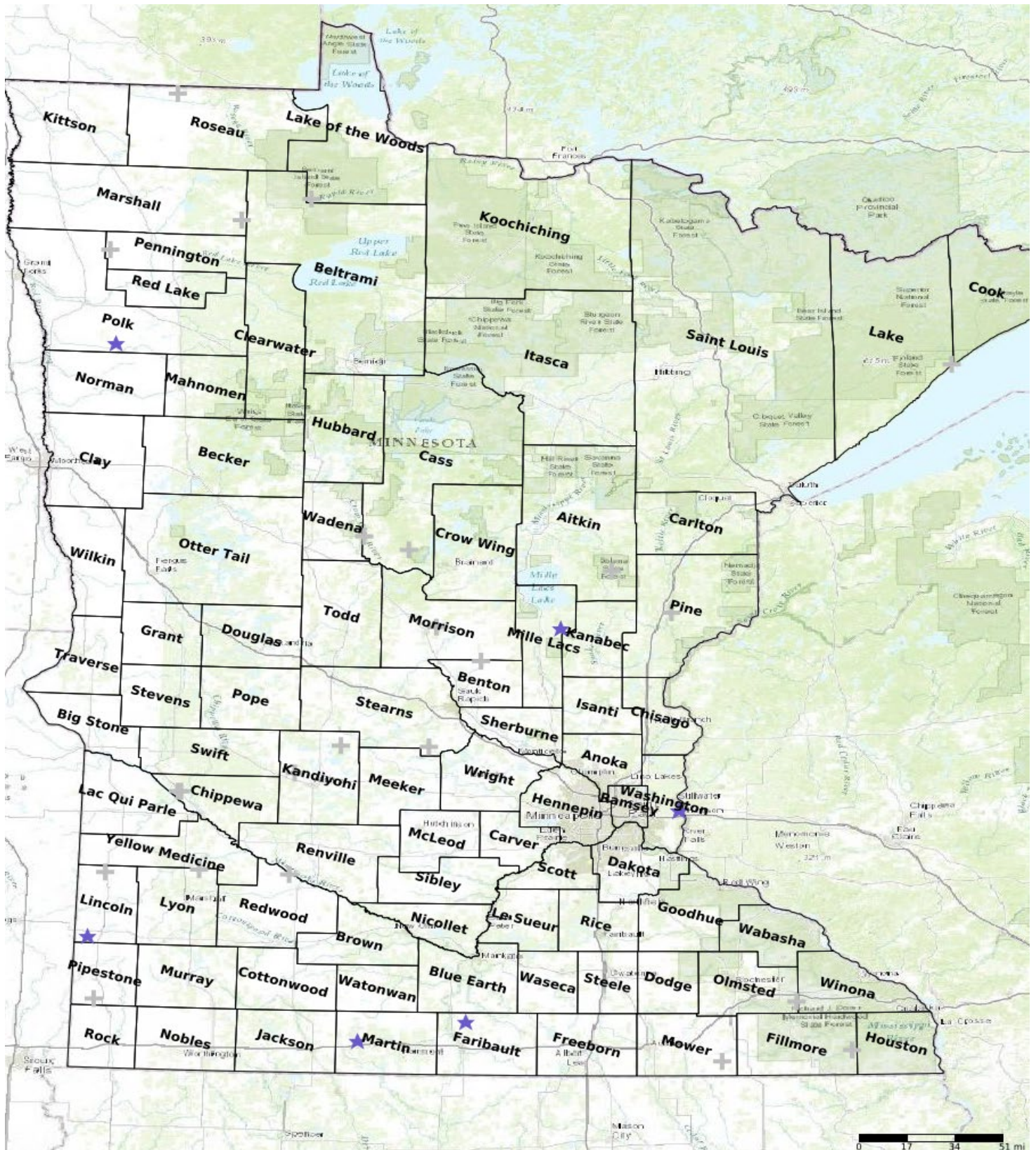
Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Four Corners WMA	Cottonwood	10332231	33	\$23,000	Yes
Rice Lake WMA	Faribault	10427221	27	\$27,000	Yes
Chain-O-Sloughs WMA	Lincoln	10946222	95	\$75,600	Yes
Mille Lacs WMA	Mille Lacs	04125229	100	\$115,000	Yes
Liberty WMA	Polk	14745216	75	\$30,000	Yes
Bayport WMA	Washington	02920222	75	\$270,125	Yes
Bayport WMA	Washington	02920222	16	\$45,600	Yes

Other Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Aitkin WMA: Main Unit	Aitkin	04423202	300	\$118,500	Yes
Graham WMA: Main Unit	Benton	03830201	24	\$19,500	Yes
Blackhoof River WMA	Carlton	04220226	550	\$750	Yes
Farnham Lake WMA	Cass	13532218	100	\$50,000	Yes
Birchdale WMA	Cass	13430208	200	\$92,000	Yes
Lac qui Parle WMA: Controlled Hunting Zone	Chippewa	11842201	5	\$12,000	Yes
Lac qui Parle WMA: Controlled Hunting Zone	Chippewa	11841206	276	\$150,000	Yes
Caribou Falls WMA: West Unit	Cook	05806236	103	\$16,860	Yes
Choice WMA	Fillmore	10208214	70	\$56,000	Yes
Boyd Sartell WMA: Main Unit	Freeborn	10114205	1,500	\$250,000	Yes
Izaak Walton League WMA	Goodhue	10511212	80	\$120,000	Yes
Gopher Ridge WMA	Kandiyohi	12233231	15	\$80,000	Yes
RIM Memorial WMA	Kandiyohi	12036226	11	\$45,000	Yes
Red Lake WMA: Main Unit	Lake of the Woods	15735229	400	\$60,000	Yes
Prairie Dell WMA	Lincoln	11345216	38	\$15,000	Yes
Gabriel Anderson WMA	Lyon	11340206	10	\$7,500	Yes
Eckvoll WMA	Marshall	15539211	500	\$125,000	Yes
Ereaux WMA	Morrison	04131230	86	\$68,800	Yes
Pembina WMA: Pennington County Unit	Pennington	15345217	20	\$50,000	Yes
Eden WMA	Pipestone	10546224	135	\$96,000	Yes
Cedar Rock WMA: South East Unit	Redwood	11336210	87	\$90,000	Yes
Roseau River WMA	Roseau	16342209	904	\$45,555	Yes
Alice Hamm WMA	Stearns	12229233	425	\$72,100	Yes

Parcel Map



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