



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Big Rivers Phase 13  
ML 2023 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/23/2022

**Proposal Title:** Metro Big Rivers Phase 13

**Funds Requested:** \$20,303,900

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Deborah Loon

**Title:** Executive Director

**Organization:** MN Valley Trust (Metro Big Rivers)

**Address:** 3815 East American Boulevard

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Carver, Ramsey, Dakota, Isanti, Anoka, Washington, Sibley, Chisago, Scott and Hennepin.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Metro / Urban

**Activity types:**

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

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Wetlands
- Prairie
- Forest
- Habitat

## Narrative

### Abstract

Metro Big Rivers Phase 13 will protect 1,250 acres in fee title and 516 acres in permanent conservation easement, restore 29 acres and enhance 542 acres of priority habitat in the big rivers corridors in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area (2,337 acres total). Partners will leverage OHF grants at least 32% with partner funds, private donations, local government contributions, and landowner donations of easement value. Significant volunteer engagement will be invested in habitat enhancement activities. MBR projects benefit wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation (SGCN) and provide increased public access and nature connections for metro residents.

### Design and Scope of Work

Metro Big Rivers Phase 13 will protect, restore and enhance prioritized wildlife habitat in the MUA, with an emphasis on the Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers and tributaries. Metro Big Rivers' work benefits wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation (SGCN), improves water quality and in-stream food (insect) availability, increases public access for wildlife-based recreation (hunting and fishing) and connects all metro residents with nature near them.

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) will restore/enhance 363 acres at 5 sites. Projects include removing invasive woody and herbaceous plants, planting, seeding, mowing, spot-spraying, and prescribed burning.

- Hastings Sand Coulee SNA: Enhance 192 acres prairie and 63 acres oak forest, and restore 8 acres prairie
- Applewood Preserve: Enhance 20 acres forest and 5 acres prairie
- Carver Preserve: Restore 10 acres prairie and enhance 15 acres woodland
- Vermillion River AMA (2 sites): Enhance 50 acres riparian forest

Great River Greening (GRG) will restore/enhance 208 acres across 7 sites. Projects include restoration and stabilization of 2 miles of stream bank and 1.5 miles lakeshore, as well as removing invasive woody and herbaceous species, mowing, spot spraying, seeding and planting.

- Lake Ann Park: Enhance 100 acres forest
- South Fork of 9 Mile Creek: Restore and stabilize 2 miles of streambank
- Loeb Lake Shoreline: Restore 1.5 miles of lakeshore
- Frost Lake Park: Enhance 7 acres woodland
- Houle Wetland: Enhance 10 acres tamarack/ash complex
- Crystal Spring SNA: Enhance 40 acres forest
- Wood-Rill SNA: Enhance 40 acres big woods

Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect through perpetual conservation easement 516 acres of priority habitat, including riparian lands, forests, wetlands and grasslands. Projects will be selected through a competitive process that ranks proposals based on ecological significance and cost (criteria attached).

Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee acquisition 580 acres of river frontage, floodplain forest, wetland and upland habitat to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Prospective lands have been prioritized by the USFWS and will be restored/enhanced, then open for wildlife-based recreation, including hunting and fishing.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will protect through fee acquisition 670 acres of priority wildlife habitat. Prospective sites are prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource plans. Lands will be managed by

public partners and open for wildlife-based recreation, including hunting and fishing. A priority project would create a significant new WMA in the metro area - Keystone Woods, Washington County. This 2,600+ acre property has high biodiversity, numerous lakes and excellent habitat for wildlife, waterfowl and fish. Protecting it will create a habitat conservation corridor to the St. Croix River and provide quality close-to-home hunting and fishing opportunities for metro area residents. Of the 2,600 acres, TPL will acquire 1,840 acres with OHF through the Metro Big Rivers and St. Croix programs (670 acres with this grant). Washington County will acquire 760 acres with other funds, thus leveraging over \$10 million of non-OHF funds.

### **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?**

Metro Big Rivers projects protect and improve habitats needed by wildlife species in greatest conservation need (SGCN) and other targeted species, and where they need them. Many of Minnesota's forest and grassland SGCNs are migratory. Improving habitat along the central flyway (the three big rivers) provides great benefits to all wildlife species, especially during critical migration periods.

Friends of the Mississippi River will conduct habitat enhancement at five sites located on or near the Mississippi River, within the Audubon-designated Important Bird Area. This corridor provides critical habitat for neotropical migrant birds and numerous species of greatest conservation need. FMR has been tracking breeding bird species at these sites, recording 11 SGCNs. The sites are also vital for many other species, especially native pollinators, and provide connectivity to other natural areas.

Great River Greening will also conduct significant habitat work on public conservation lands to improve habitat values for wildlife and SGCN, including birds using the Mississippi River migratory corridor and pollinators. Work will restore and enhance riverine, lakeshore, forest, woodlands, prairie, and wetland habitat at 7 conservation sites.

Minnesota Land Trust will target its protection and restoration/enhancement action to priority privately owned lands to permanently protect high-quality upland and shoreland habitats from fragmentation, development, and other impacts that undermine the viability of SGCN and T&E species. Restoration and enhancement of habitat is proposed for lands already protected through easement.

Minnesota Valley Trust will acquire lands identified through the USFWS Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This plan prioritizes lands for high biodiversity, connectivity, and ability to preserve habitat for SGCN.

The Trust for Public Land will acquire lands in fee identified and prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource plans due to their high biodiversity significance, connectivity to existing public lands, and ability to preserve habitat for SGCN. Acquisitions and subsequent habitat work increase breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, neo-tropical migrants, and non-migratory resident species, protect the diversity of native ecosystems, and improve connectivity and resilience.

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

The three major rivers, which converge in the Metro Urbanizing Area (MUA), are of significant importance to a myriad of migrating species and SGCN. Four intersecting issues create urgency for Metro Big Rivers Partnerships' work in the MUA -- 1) continued decline of many wildlife species, most notably birds and pollinators, 2) declining

habitat these species need to rebound and thrive, 3) rising land values and development and 4) metro residents' need for nature nearby.

Protecting and enhancing habitat in the MUA is especially critical now, as land values and developments are both rising, placing renewed demand on lands throughout the area. Metro Big Rivers projects defend against rising land values (especially along lakes and rivers), add needed and significant wildlife habitat, improve connectivity and habitat values (especially for wildlife and SGCN) and increase much-needed public access to wildlife-based outdoor opportunities throughout the MUA, including hunting, fishing and wildlife observation.

**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:**

Protection partners prioritize work through science-based processes led by the public entities that own or will own interest in the properties (e.g., MN DNR, USFWS). Plans followed include MBS, RESA, Metropolitan Conservation Corridors, Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan, and the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Actions are targeted toward building conservation corridors and priority habitat complexes.

In addition, the easement partner's competitive RFP process includes a second analysis of all proposed projects submitted by landowners for protection. This assessment evaluates the ecological significance of the proposed parcel, which includes the following three factors:

- Quantity – the size of habitat and/or length of shoreline associated with a parcel, and abundance of Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species
- Quality – the condition of the associated habitat and populations of SGCN and T&E species
- Landscape Context – the extent and condition of natural habitat surrounding the parcel, and the degree to which adjacent property has been protected.

Restoration and enhancement partners use science-based criteria to prioritize activities. This includes consideration of the highest quality natural areas (as determined by MBS), as well as prioritization of work within important ecological corridors identified by a coalition of conservation partners and based on rare species and sensitive landscape features. This prioritization ensures that projects reduce fragmentation and link natural areas within already-established corridors. All of the restoration and enhancement sites are located along or near the three big rivers and important tributaries - some of the most important ecological corridors for migrating and sedentary plant and animal life.

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

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

## Which two other plans are addressed in this 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:

Metro Big Rivers Partnership (MBR) effectively targets action toward protecting, restoring and enhancing the long-term viability of the MUA's essential natural terrestrial and aquatic habitats and their associated wildlife, along and in close proximity to the Minnesota, Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers and their tributaries.

MBR advances the LSOHC 25 Year Strategic Framework for the MUA by creating a network of natural lands that provide healthy core areas of diverse natural communities, corridors for wildlife, and complexes of perpetually-protected and restored lands. MBR addresses all 11 of the LSOHC priority statewide criteria and all 4 of its priority criteria for the MUA.

MBR also advances the indicators of Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan by ensuring the long-term health and viability of Minnesota's wildlife, maintaining and enhancing the resilience of habitats on which SGCN depend, within the Wildlife Action Network and associated Conservation Focus Areas of the MUA.

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

### Metro / Urban

- Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)

## 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:

Metro Big Rivers focuses on habitat within the three big river corridors and their tributaries within the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area (MUA). We are building, expanding, connecting and restoring complexes and corridors of protected habitat that include wetlands, prairies, forests and aquatic habitat. Opportunities are prioritized for the potential to contribute to building a permanent conservation legacy that includes outcomes for wildlife and the public. They supplement and expand on other conservation activities the partners are conducting in the MUA.

MBR works in partnership with local, state and federal agency partners and with willing, conservation-minded landowners. High-quality lands are protected through fee title or easement acquisition. Lands that are already under public protection but in a degraded state are targeted for restoration and enhancement, as are lands protected through MBR fee and easement acquisitions. Where possible, protected and restored lands are made available to the public for outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing, thereby addressing the need to provide such opportunities close to home to a growing and diversifying urban population.

MBR Phase 13 includes a diversity of projects that will significantly expand and improve the conservation legacy in

the MUA. MBR 13 projects will protect, restore and enhance prairie, oak savanna, forest, wetland, grassland and shoreline habitat, all within the MUA.

### What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

### Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

### Explain the leverage:

Metro Big Rivers 13 will leverage the OHF appropriation with an estimated \$6,627,900 in other funds (32%). The partnership has secured commitments of supplemental funding from the partners, private sources, local government units, watershed districts / management organizations and park districts.

MLT encourages private landowners to fully or partially donate the appraised value of their conservation easement. This donated value is included in the leveraged funds in the proposal. MLT has a long track record gaining landowner participation in this fashion. MLT expects significant landowner contribution to continue in MBR Phase 13; a conservative estimate of leverage is \$753,000.

Crews of volunteers will add significant in-kind value to the restoration / enhancement projects. This value is not included in the leverage funds but is important to note. Volunteers effectively replace or enhance paid crews and contracts on many projects, saving funds. Use of volunteers also effectively educates and engages the community in conservation work, which is critical for the future of conservation.

### 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 request is not supplanting or substituting for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

### Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2009	Other State	741,058
2012	Other State	684,449
2012	Local & Federal	413,561
2012	Private & Other	2,063,388
2013	Other State	2,130,284
2013	Local & Federal	1,320,606
2013	Private	1,253,038
2014	Other State	1,873,857
2014	Local	516,119
2014	Private	1,931,527
2015	Other State	2,224,751
2009	Local & Federal	230,310
2015	Local	1,295,000
2015	Private	1,449,198
2016	Other State	912,867
2016	Local & Federal	1,822,000
2016	Private	2,700,091
2017	Other State	630,060

2017	Local	739,800
2017	Private & Other	1,278,433
2018	Other State	656,503
2018	Local	253,321
2009	Private	940,884
2018	Private	2,025,433
2019	Other State	749,195
2019	Local	481,672
2019	Private & Other	715,515
2010	Other State	2,010,658
2010	Local & Federal	485,122
2010	Private	3,516,521
2011	Other State	1,429,358
2011	Local & Federal	543,900
2011	Private	1,578,572
2020	Other State	760,722
2020	Local	798,497
2020	Private	1,438,836
2021	Other State	481,022
2021	Local	496,297
2021	Private	1,127,043

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

All public partners have committed to maintaining the restoration / enhancement habitat improvements.

All MBR restore/enhance (FMR, GRG, MLT) partners will raise public and private sources and work cooperatively with partners to ensure the project benefits are maintained.

Lands protected through easement by MLT will be sustained following best standards and practices. MLT is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, records management, addressing inquiries, tracking ownership changes, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. MLT provides habitat management plans to landowners and helps them access resources and technical expertise to undertake restoration, enhancement and ongoing management.

Lands acquired in fee title by MVT for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge will be sustained and maintained over the long-term by the USFWS. Habitat restoration / enhancement will be completed by MVT prior to transfer to the USFWS.

Lands acquired in fee title by TPL will be conveyed to the DNR or local units of government for permanent stewardship. Initial site development and restoration costs are included in this proposal. TPL will work with the steward to develop habitat plans.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Ongoing	FMR, GRG, MLT, Local Partners, Private Landowners	Monitoring and assessment of restoration and enhancement projects	Target actions, engage local partners and landowners	Take restorative action to correct any damage
Ongoing	MLT Stewardship & Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of completed easements	Enforcement actions as necessary	-
Post-Acquisition, Ongoing	MVT, TPL, Public Partners	Post acquired property	Develop & implement habitat restoration and enhancement plans	Transfer property to public partner, steward

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

DNR staff, in consultation with experts in NGOs and other agencies, compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities to be used to answer the question above. The metrics are derived from existing data sources and/or scientific literature but are necessarily gross averages; they are not accurate at a site-specific scale. They are not intended to be used to score or rank requests but represent the best information we have for immediate support to the Council's objective. We select a few, not fully inclusive indicators here.

Forests.

Indicator: White-tailed deer.

White-tailed deer use a wide variety of forested habitats throughout Minnesota. Deer densities in the Metropolitan Area will be higher than the six-year average (2010-2015) density of 0.02 deer (pre-fawning) per acre of forest habitat in the LSOHC Northern Forest section.

Grasslands/Prairie.

Indicator: Bobolink and Grasshopper Sparrow.

The breeding territory size of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows is 1.7 and 2.1 acres respectively in high quality habitat in Wisconsin. If all habitat is occupied, 100 acres could hold approximately 60 and 48 pairs of bobolinks and grasshopper sparrows respectively.

Wetlands.

Indicator: Mallards.

A Joint Venture biological model used to estimate habitat needs uses an accepted rate of 1 mallard pair per 2.47 acres of wetland habitat (noting that upland nesting habitat is also needed).

Trout Streams.

Indicator: Brook Trout.

Available DNR data and published reports suggest an abundance of 100 lbs/acre of brook trout for southeast Minnesota.

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

As organizations with long histories in the MUA, we are joined by our shared objective of providing all metro residents with high-quality natural spaces nearby. Metro Big Rivers partners work in and with a diversity of communities ranging from urban to suburban and rural. We believe everyone should be able to easily connect with nature, enjoy high-quality wildlife habitat and engage in wildlife-dependent recreation in their neighborhoods, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

Examples of how MBR engages and benefits BIPOC and diverse communities includes:

Friends of the Mississippi River and Great River Greening actively engage residents who live near project sites in habitat work. Their youth programming targets young people from diverse backgrounds and creates opportunities for exploring environmental careers.

Metro residents can literally step off the light rail or bus and into the wilderness on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to connect with nature and wildlife at no cost. The Refuge and Minnesota Valley Trust provide free busing for schools with a high percentage of low-income students and have a free lending program (e.g. snowshoes, fishing poles, field backpacks with binoculars). Together, they have created a robust internship and apprenticeship program that recruits a diversity of youth to explore conservation careers.

Minnesota Land Trust's commitment includes numerous projects to protect camps. Its recent protection of Camp Katherine Parsons enables the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center to expand programming for North Minneapolis residents at the camp, while protecting high-quality habitat. MLT's "Ambassador Lands Program" connects conservation landowners with community groups that desire access to private land for programming purposes, such as youth mentor hunts, cultural or ceremonial use, conservation employment training and nature-based education.

The Trust for Public Land directly works with and empowers diverse communities to put a park, trail or natural area within a 10-minute walk of every Twin Cities resident. Over the past 20 years, TPL has helped protect land and create natural areas such as the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, Frogtown Park and Farm, Midway Peace Park, Pilot Knob and many more natural areas with quality wildlife habitat.

### **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:**

Local units of government will be notified of pending fee title acquisitions, as required by law.

**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?**

- SNA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal

## Land Use

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

Yes

**Explain what will be planted:**

Easement Acquisition:

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.

Restoration/Enhancement:

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.

**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:**

Lands acquired for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge will be open for public hunting and fishing according to the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act. The lands will be opened through a public process prescribed by the Act. We anticipate hunting and fishing opportunities will be like those already established for lands previously acquired for the Refuge. For specific information, refer to the Refuge's website - <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota-valley/visit-us/activities/hunting>

Lands acquired by The Trust for Public Land will be open for fishing and hunting.

**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:**

We are not aware of any trails or roads at this time, although some parcels acquired in fee title may have existing field roads or low maintenance trails. Properties identified and prioritized for protection through conservation easements often have trails and roads on them; private landowners typically will be allowed to use those trails/roads on their property.

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

Yes

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

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

Any pre-existing low-maintenance roads and trails on properties acquired for the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS) may be continued under a plan developed for the purpose of property access for habitat maintenance and public use of the property for wildlife-dependent recreation (e.g., hunting and fishing).

TPL is not aware of any trails or roads on any of the acquisitions. If any are discovered on lands to be managed by the DNR, they will be managed per DNR policy for WMAs, AMAs, SNAs or State

Forests. If they are discovered on lands to be managed by local units of government, they will be managed per a maintenance and monitoring plan developed in consultation with LSOHC staff.

**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 and enhancement needs associated with fee title and easement projects completed under this grant will be assessed. Needs identified will be addressed through private sources, Conservation Partners Legacy Grant proposals and/or future funding proposals to LSOHC. If funds remain in this grant, an amendment may be submitted to allow those funds to be reallocated to restoration and enhancement on lands protected by this grant.

For the restoration / enhancement on eased lands, 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?
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	No
2022	\$8,200,000	-	\$1,125,500	-	1,581	0	No
2021	\$4,229,000	\$30,655	\$806,640	-	643	0	No
2020	\$6,473,000	\$284,594	\$777,100	\$240,000	1,110	39	No
2019	\$4,163,000	\$615,602	\$664,100	\$5,900	831	179	No
2018	\$2,630,000	\$2,104,714	\$1,112,700	\$686,861	930	625	No
2016	\$4,000,000	\$3,576,843	\$693,100	\$1,828,477	1,057	1,142	No
2015	\$2,000,000	\$1,904,100	\$452,900	\$1,092,020	815	1,145	No
2014	\$2,650,000	\$1,210,600	\$357,000	\$1,343,100	619	309	Yes
2013	\$1,720,000	\$817,000	\$338,000	\$800,400	407	261	Yes
2012	\$3,680,000	\$1,345,800	\$726,000	\$27,500	753	569	Yes
2011	\$5,000,000	\$4,837,200	\$1,517,800	\$1,504,700	917	1,688	Yes
2010	\$2,397,000	\$2,395,400	\$2,066,000	\$2,876,400	407	807	Yes

**Timeline**

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
FMR - Restore 18 acres and enhance 345 acres	June 2028
GRG - Restore 11 acres, 2 miles streambank and 1.5 miles lakeshore; enhance 197 acres	June 2028
MLT - Protect 516 acres under conservation easement	June 2027
MVT - Protect 580 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2027
TPL - Protect 670 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2027

**Budget****Grand Totals Across All Partnerships**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Funding Request</b>	<b>Antic. Leverage</b>	<b>Leverage Source</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel	\$757,500	\$85,800	FMR members/donors, Chanhassen, Comfort Lake, Forest Lake, Nine Mile Creek, Private	\$843,300
Contracts	\$2,017,700	-	-	\$2,017,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$10,500,000	\$5,000,000	-, Washington County	\$15,500,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,000,000	\$500,000	-, MN Valley Trust	\$2,500,000
Easement Acquisition	\$3,763,000	\$753,000	-, Private landowners	\$4,516,000
Easement Stewardship	\$336,000	-	-	\$336,000
Travel	\$22,200	\$2,000	-, Private	\$24,200
Professional Services	\$470,000	\$115,000	-, Nine Mile Creek	\$585,000
Direct Support Services	\$240,100	\$169,100	-, Private, Private	\$409,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,800	-	-	\$4,800
Supplies/Materials	\$87,600	\$3,000	Cities	\$90,600
DNR IDP	\$75,000	-	-	\$75,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$20,303,900</b>	<b>\$6,627,900</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$26,931,800</b>

**Partner: Great River Greening**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$195,600	\$75,300	Chanhassen, Comfort Lake, Forest Lake, Nine Mile Creek, Private	\$270,900
Contracts	\$1,104,800	-	-	\$1,104,800
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,800	-	-	\$3,800
Professional Services	-	\$115,000	Nine Mile Creek	\$115,000
Direct Support Services	\$71,100	\$76,100	Private	\$147,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,800	-	-	\$4,800
Supplies/Materials	\$45,500	-	-	\$45,500
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,425,600</b>	<b>\$266,400</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,692,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
GRG Staff (ecologists, technicians)	0.38	5.0	\$195,600	\$75,300	Chanhassen, Comfort Lake, Forest Lake, Nine Mile Creek, Private	\$270,900

**Partner: Trust for Public Land (TPL)**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$175,000	-	-	\$175,000
Contracts	\$225,000	-	-	\$225,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$10,500,000	\$5,000,000	Washington County	\$15,500,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$2,000	Private	\$2,000
Professional Services	\$120,000	-	-	\$120,000
Direct Support Services	\$93,000	\$93,000	Private	\$186,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$75,000	-	-	\$75,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$11,218,000</b>	<b>\$5,095,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$16,313,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Staff (protection, legal)	0.29	3.0	\$175,000	-	-	\$175,000

**Partner: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust (MVT)**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	-	-	-
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,000,000	\$500,000	MN Valley Trust	\$2,500,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>

**Partner: Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$280,000	-	-	\$280,000
Contracts	\$114,000	-	-	\$114,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,763,000	\$753,000	Private landowners	\$4,516,000
Easement Stewardship	\$336,000	-	-	\$336,000
Travel	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Professional Services	\$350,000	-	-	\$350,000
Direct Support Services	\$76,000	-	-	\$76,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$4,939,000</b>	<b>\$753,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$5,692,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.7	4.0	\$280,000	-	-	\$280,000

**Partner: Friends of Mississippi River (FMR)****Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$106,900	\$10,500	FMR members/donors	\$117,400
Contracts	\$573,900	-	-	\$573,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$3,400	-	-	\$3,400
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$37,100	\$3,000	Cities	\$40,100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$721,300</b>	<b>\$13,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$734,800</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
FMR Staff (ecologists, conservation director, stewardship staff, bookkeeper, interns)	0.37	4.0	\$106,900	\$10,500	FMR members/donors	\$117,400

**Amount of Request:** \$20,303,900**Amount of Leverage:** \$6,627,900**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 32.64%**DSS + Personnel:** \$997,600**As a % of the total request:** 4.91%**Easement Stewardship:** \$336,000**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 8.93%**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage includes committed and anticipated funds from the Metro Big Rivers partners, numerous cities, Washington County, private landowners and other private donors.

**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). The reduction will not be exactly proportional, as partners have some fixed costs that do not change based on project size.

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

Personnel and DSS expenses are scalable, but not proportionately, due to grant management, landowner outreach and other fixed costs. Some easement and fee acquisitions fail to close, but still have costs. Landowner donation of easement value allows grant funds to go further, increasing personnel and DSS costs.

## 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). The reduction will not be exactly proportional, as partners have some fixed costs that do not change based on project size.

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

Personnel and DSS expenses are scalable, but not proportionately, due to grant management, landowner outreach and other fixed costs. Some easement and fee acquisitions fail to close, but still have costs. Landowner donation of easement value allows grant funds to go further, increasing personnel and DSS costs.

## 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?**

FTEs listed in the proposal are an estimate of the personnel time required to deliver the grant outputs included in this proposal. Our basis for billing is the individual projects we work on, ensuring allocation to the appropriate grant award. By using a timesheet-based approach, we use only those personnel funds actually expended to achieve the goals of the grant.

## Contracts

### **What is included in the contracts line?**

FMR, GRG - Restoration / enhancement contracts with service providers.

MLT - Habitat management plan preparation, landowner outreach by county SWCD offices.

TPL - Potential site clean-up and initial restoration activities.

## Fee Acquisition

### **What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?**

2 to 4

## Easement Stewardship

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

Minnesota Land Trust's budget is based on the closing of 12-14 conservation easements. The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000, although under extraordinary circumstances additional funds may be warranted. This figure is derived from MLT's detailed stewardship funding "cost analysis" which is consistent with Land Trust Accreditation standards. MLT shares periodic updates to this cost analysis with LSOHC staff.

## Travel

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

Yes

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

NA

**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?**

GRG - DSS rate has been approved by the DNR in September 2019, GRG's DSS rate includes the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. A portion, not exceeding 50%, of these costs are requested from the grant and the balance is contributed as leverage.

MLT - In a process approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, MLT's DSS rate includes the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. This is similar to the MLT's proposed federal indirect rate. MLT will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses.

TPL - DSS rate is based upon our federal rate which has been approved by the DNR. 50% of these costs are requested from the grant, 50% is contributed as leverage.

FMR and MVT are not requesting DSS.

## Other Equipment/Tools

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

Hand tools, saws, brush cutters, GPS devices, safety gear and other necessary equipment to complete restoration and enhancement activities.

## 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	18	0	11	29
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	670	670
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	100	240	240	0	580
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	516	516
Enhance	10	197	335	0	542
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>1,197</b>	<b>2,337</b>

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

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$92,900	-	\$919,400	\$1,012,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$11,218,000	\$11,218,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$340,000	\$830,000	\$830,000	-	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$4,939,000	\$4,939,000
Enhance	\$115,200	\$127,500	\$891,900	-	\$1,134,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$455,200</b>	<b>\$1,050,400</b>	<b>\$1,721,900</b>	<b>\$17,076,400</b>	<b>\$20,303,900</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	29	0	0	0	0	29
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	670	0	0	0	0	670
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	580	0	0	0	0	580
Protect in Easement	516	0	0	0	0	516
Enhance	542	0	0	0	0	542
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,337</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,337</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$1,012,300	-	-	-	-	\$1,012,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$11,218,000	-	-	-	-	\$11,218,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$2,000,000	-	-	-	-	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$4,939,000	-	-	-	-	\$4,939,000
Enhance	\$1,134,600	-	-	-	-	\$1,134,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,303,900</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$20,303,900</b>

### Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
------	---------	---------	--------	---------

Restore	-	\$5,161	-	\$83,581
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$16,743
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$3,400	\$3,458	\$3,458	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$9,571
Enhance	\$11,520	\$647	\$2,662	-

### Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$34,906	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$16,743	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$3,448	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$9,571	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,093	-	-	-	-

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

8.5

## Outcomes

### Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *Partners work together to identify priority lands using existing data and public plans, then coordinate protection, restoration and enhancement activities in those priority areas. Work builds upon prior phases and is intended to continue into the future for maximum impact. Mapping shows progress in connecting corridors. Species collections and counts measure impact of activities over time on wildlife and Species in Greatest Conservation Need.*

## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

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

FMR and GRG work with their public partners and other interested stakeholders to identify priority projects and areas. Criteria includes ecological and habitat value and potential (biodiversity, size and location), congruence with existing plans and priority areas, adjacency and connectedness to other public and protected lands and complexes, willing and committed landowners and leveraged opportunities.

MLT's competitive RFP process for identifying, prioritizing and selecting parcels for the Metro Big Rivers easement program is attached. MLT prioritizes parcels for restoration and enhancement that are of high ecological significance, adjacent or close to public conservation investments and owned by landowners committed to conservation.

MVT seeks to acquire land within the boundaries established by the USFWS for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in its Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Within those boundaries, parcels are prioritized based on adjacency or proximity to lands already publicly-protected, the opportunity to protect lands from development and restore habitat to meet ecological and public use objectives, and the feasibility of completing large blocks of protected and publicly-managed lands over time.

TPL works with its public partners (Minnesota DNR and local units of government) to identify priority opportunities that expand on and create new public conservation investments that protect high-quality wetland, woodland, prairie and riparian habitat.

### Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
GRG - Lake Ann Park	Carver	11623210	100	\$227,800	Yes
FMR - Vermillion River AMA - Kasel East	Dakota	11419223	23	\$82,200	Yes
FMR - Hastings Sand Coulee SNA	Dakota	11417202	263	\$312,600	Yes
FMR - Vermillion River AMA - Butler	Dakota	11419223	27	\$92,900	Yes
GRG - 9 Mile Creek South Fork	Hennepin	11622202	8	\$846,200	Yes
GRG - WoodRill SNA	Hennepin	11823236	40	\$47,100	Yes
GRG - Loeb Lake Shoreline	Ramsey	02923225	3	\$73,200	Yes
FMR - Applewood Preserve	Ramsey	02822213	25	\$56,400	Yes
FMR - Carver Preserve	Ramsey	02822224	25	\$177,200	Yes
GRG - Frost Lake	Ramsey	02922222	7	\$57,200	Yes
GRG - Crystal Spring SNA	Washington	03219218	40	\$58,900	Yes
GRG - Houle Wetland	Washington	03221207	10	\$115,200	Yes

### Protect Parcels

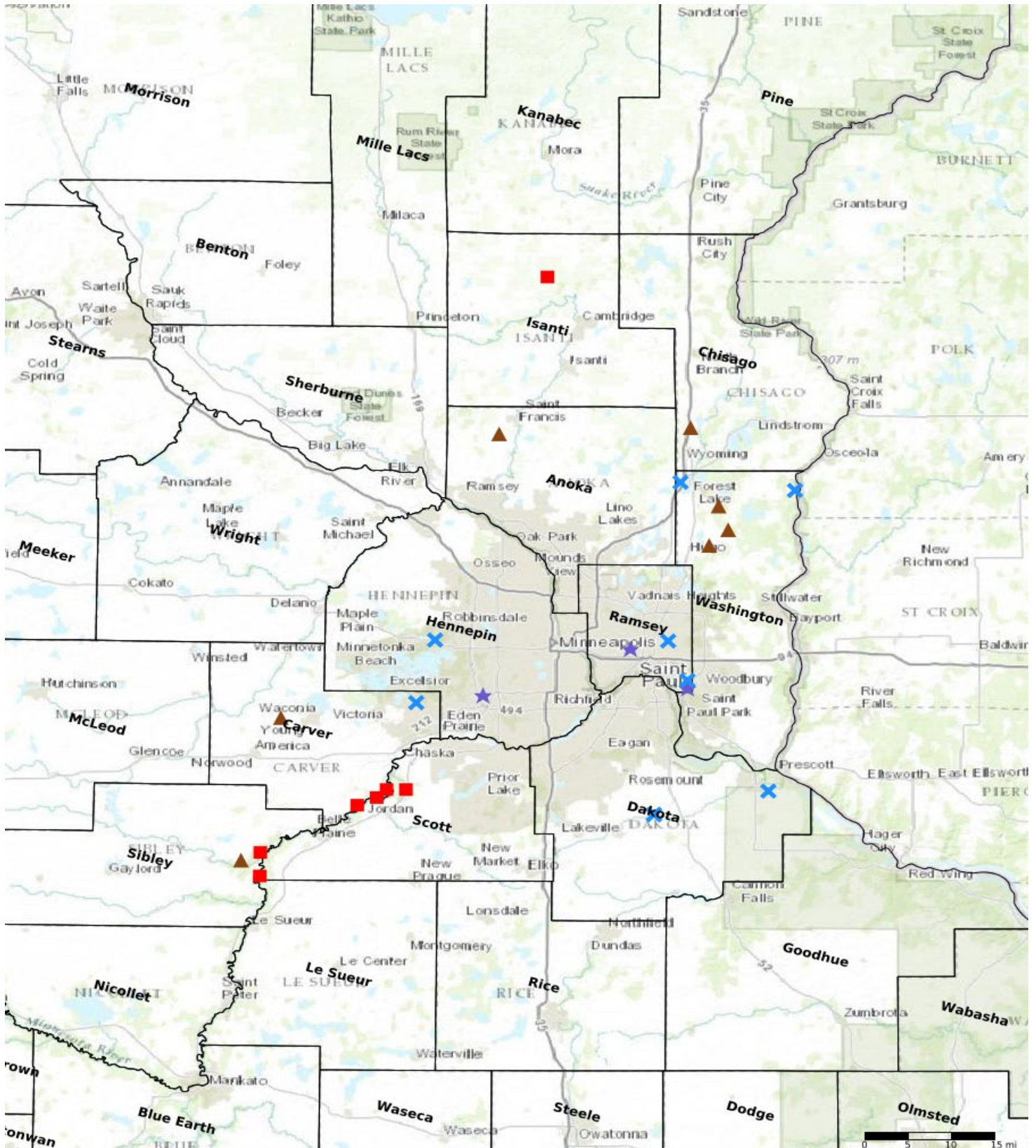
Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
------	--------	------	-------	----------	---------------------

TPL - Mud Lake	Anoka	03325212	488	\$2,700,000	No
MVT - San Francisco Unit Addition	Carver	11424215	353	\$1,147,250	No
TPL - Patterson Lake WMA Addition	Carver	11625220	650	\$4,500,000	No
MVT - San Francisco Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11424212	168	\$546,000	No
MVT - Rapids Lake Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11423206	118	\$826,000	No
TPL - Carlos Avery WMA Addition	Chisago	03321205	60	\$80,000	No
TPL - Stanchfield Creek	Isanti	03724235	710	\$2,200,000	No
MVT - Blakeley Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11326236	194	\$630,500	No
MVT - Jessenland Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Sibley	11326213	200	\$650,000	No
TPL - Vale WMA Addition	Sibley	11326222	165	\$550,000	No
TPL - Paul Hugo Farms WMA Addition	Washington	03121222	230	\$1,000,000	No
TPL - Hardwood Creek WMA Addition	Washington	03221226	470	\$700,000	No

### Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
MVT - Louisville Swamp Unit Addition, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11423204	7	\$650,000	No	3	\$160,000
TPL - Keystone Woods WMA 2	Washington	03121212	670	\$10,500,000	No	10	\$0

## Parcel Map



# Metro Big Rivers

**Metro Big Rivers (MBR) Phase 13 will protect, restore and enhance prioritized wildlife habitat in the Metro Urbanizing Area**, with an emphasis on the Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers and their tributaries. By expanding, connecting and improving conservation lands, MBR benefits wildlife and species in greatest need of conservation and expands opportunities for wildlife-based recreation for metro residents.

Metro Big Rivers is a proven partnership that gets results with OHF funds. MBR has protected and restored / enhanced 7,541 acres of wildlife habitat in the Metro area. It has work in-progress on another 1,900 acres. MBR has leveraged the OHF grants 59% with other funds and landowner donations of easement value to-date.

**ML2023 Request - \$20,303,900**  
**Leverage - \$6,627,900 (32%)**

**Protect 1,766 acres**  
**Restore / Enhance 571 acres**

With OHF and other leverage funds, Metro Big Rivers Phase 13 will permanently protect 1,250 acres in fee title and 516 acres in easement, restore 29 acres and enhance another 542 acres (2,337 acres total).

- Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) will restore / enhance 363 acres at five sites on or near the Mississippi River. It will restore 18 acres prairie, enhance 197 acres prairie (including 90 acres of native prairie) and enhance 148 acres of forest habitat.
- Great River Greening (GRG) will restore / enhance 208 acres across seven sites throughout the metro area. It will restore and stabilize 11 acres of stream and lake shoreline (3.5 miles of shoreline total), enhance 10 acres of wetland and enhance 187 acres of forest habitat.
- Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect through perpetual conservation easement 516 acres of priority wildlife habitat, including riparian lands, forests, wetlands and grasslands.
- Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee title acquisition 580 acres of river frontage, floodplain forest, wetland and upland habitat in the Minnesota River Valley, expanding the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
- The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will protect in fee 670 acres of priority wildlife habitat to create a new WMA in the metro area. TPL's target properties have been prioritized by state and local government partners in natural resource plans.

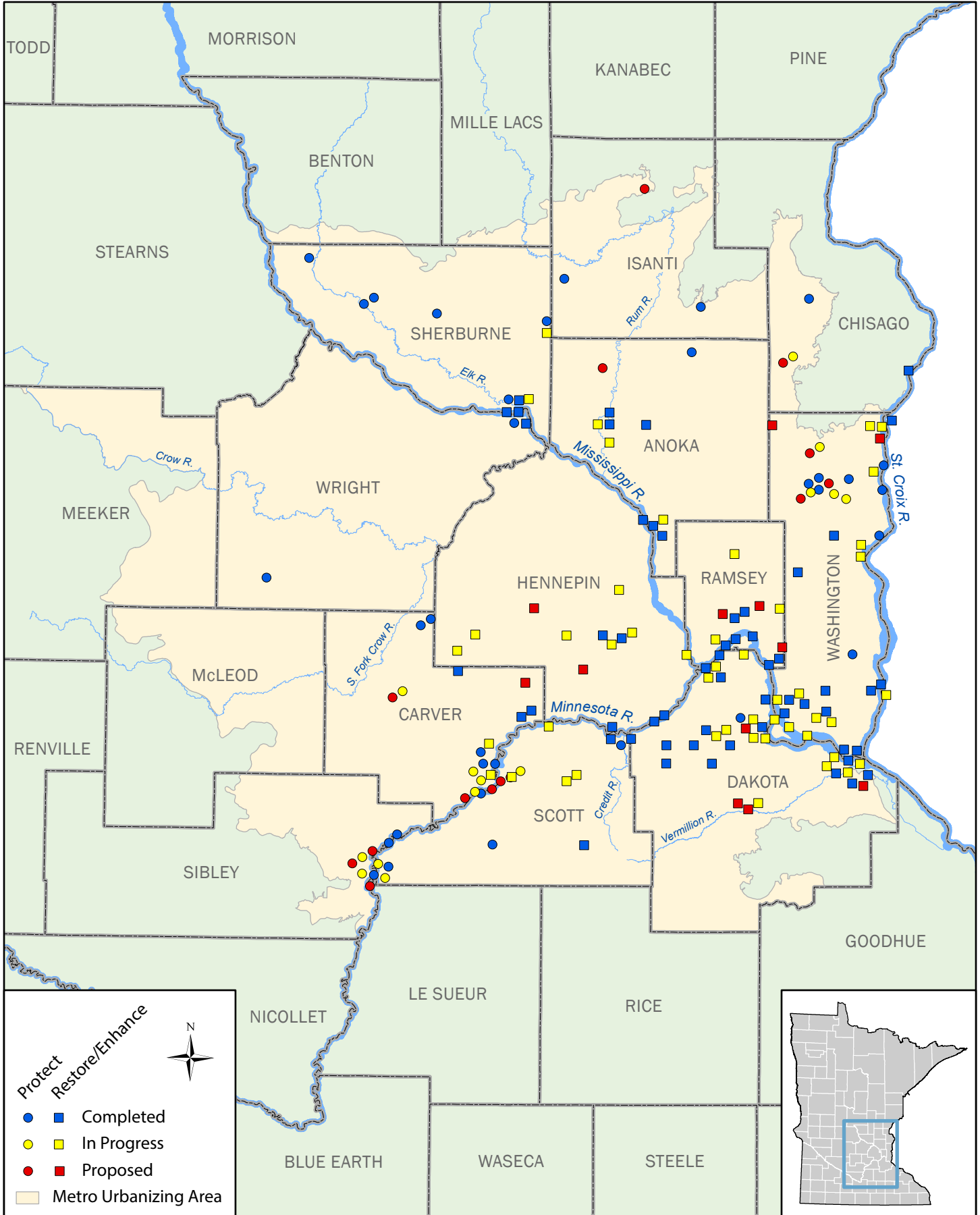
Metro Big Rivers partners work with local, state and federal public partners to identify and prioritize projects to achieve the priorities of the LSOHC for Outdoor Heritage Funds. The partners also work with landowners with a commitment to conservation.



For more information:  
Deborah Loon  
Minnesota Valley Trust  
612-801-1935  
[DLoon@mnvalleytrust.org](mailto:DLoon@mnvalleytrust.org)

# Metro Big Rivers Habitat Partnership

## Phase 13



# TPL and Metro Big Rivers

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is working to permanently protect high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife along the Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix rivers and their tributaries in the Twin Cities region. Despite the impacts of development in the metropolitan urbanizing area, high-quality riparian, forest, wetland and grassland habitat remain. By protecting these threatened lands, we are able to safeguard diverse ecosystems and create close-to-home opportunities for millions of Minnesotans to experience a variety of wildlife-based recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing.

To date, TPL has protected 1,741 acres through Metro Big Rivers with 9 OHF supported acquisitions. We work in partnership with local community and state government partners. Funding comes from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, foundations and individual donors.

## Example of Our Work

### William H. Houlton Conservation Area

With 7 miles of shoreline at the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk Rivers, this 335 acre property was previously one of the largest pieces of unprotected land along this stretch of the Mississippi. Now its floodplain forest, oak savanna, and restored prairie provide outstanding public hunting and fishing opportunities. With OHF funding, it was protected by TPL and restored / enhanced by Friends of the Mississippi River through multiple phases of Metro Big Rivers.



## MBR Phase 13 / ML2023 Proposal

### Keystone Woods WMA

TPL proposes the creation of a significant new WMA in Washington County. This 2,600+ acre property has high biodiversity significance, a number of lakes and excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife, waterfowl and fish. It is one of Washington County's Top 10 Priority Conservation Areas and connects other conservation areas in a corridor to the St. Croix River.

As one of the largest blocks of private land in single ownership in the metro area, this new WMA would provide quality close-to-home hunting and fishing opportunities for metro residents who may be new to WMAs.

Of the 2,600 acres, 1,840 would become the new WMA, with the balance being acquired by Washington County with separate funding, thus leveraging over \$11m of non-OHF funds.

TPL proposes to protect a portion of the WMA land through this proposal and another through its St. Croix proposal. This is a very rare opportunity to protect such a large block of high quality habitat within the Metro Urbanizing Area.



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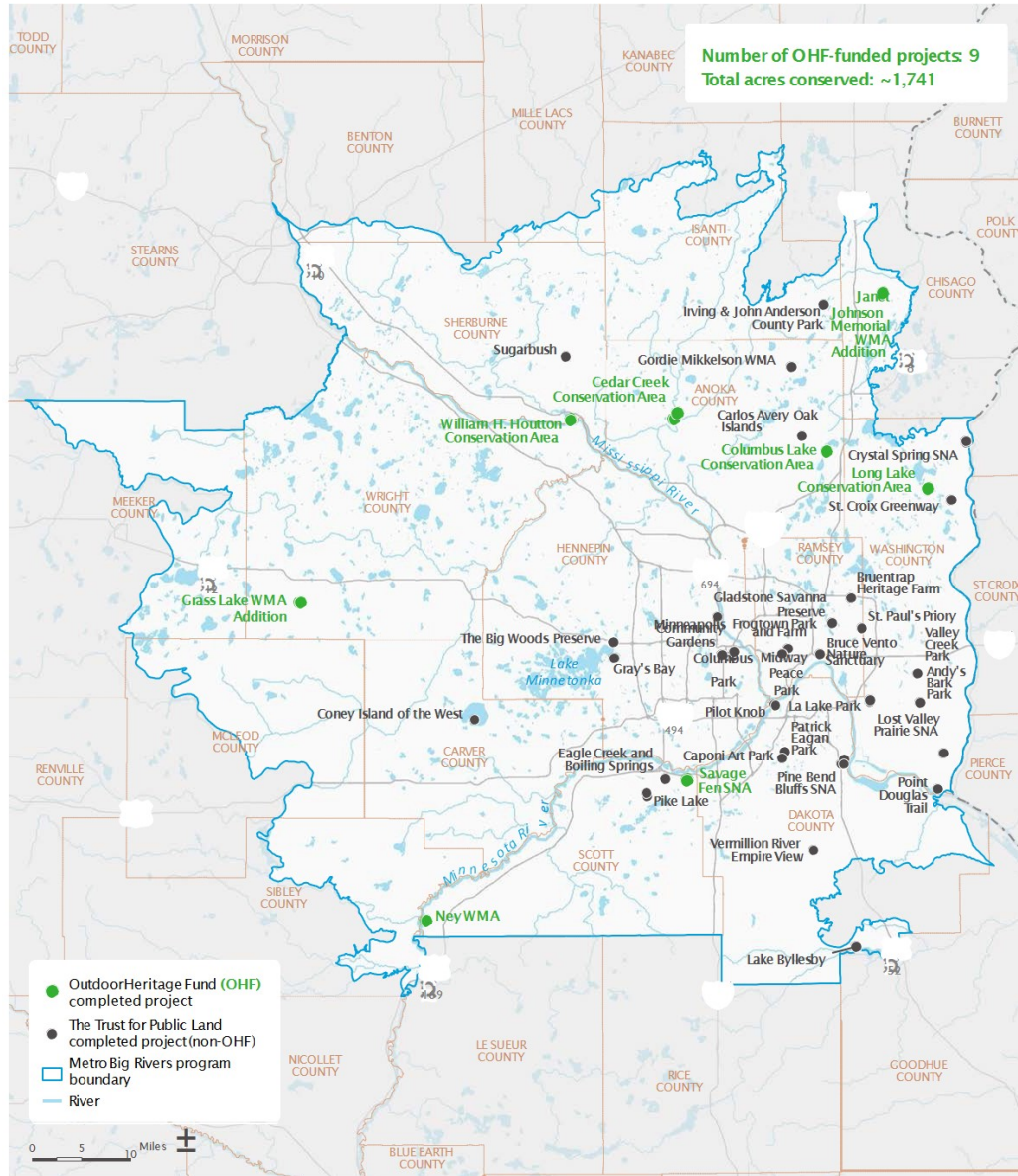
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[tpl.org](http://tpl.org)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

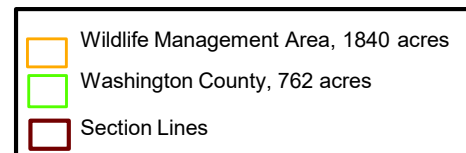
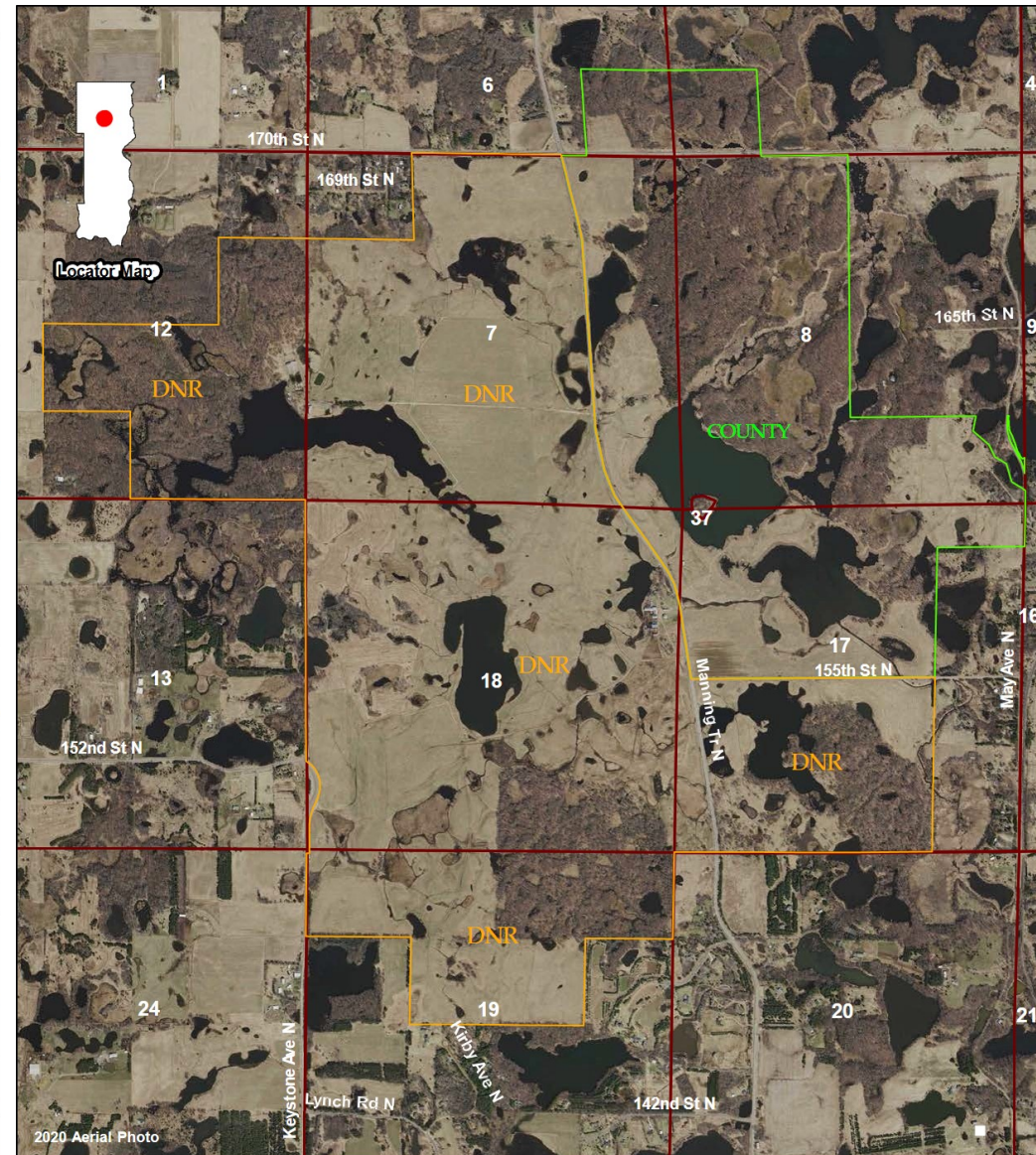
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PHOTOS: Andy Richter  
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# Metro Big Rivers - TPL



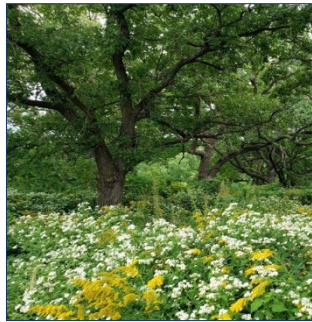
## Keystone Woods WMA Acquisition Washington County T31, R20 S 5-8, 17-19, 37 and T31, R21, S12 2,602 acres



The Minnesota Valley Trust expands and improves opportunities for the public to connect with wildlife and nature on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District.

Stretching nearly 70 miles along the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling to Henderson, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a unique resource accessible to more than 3 million residents of the expanding Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.

The Refuge covers more than 14,000 acres of land and water, providing valuable habitat for a diversity of waterfowl and other migratory birds, fish, and resident wildlife.



Since its creation in 2000, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. (Trust) has acquired more than 6,000 acres to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and its Wetland Management District (District).

In addition to land acquisition, the Trust restores and enhances wildlife habitat throughout the Refuge and supports visitor services and urban outreach objectives.

The Trust works in close partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to set goals and identify opportunities. It works within boundaries established by the USFWS in its Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Refuge.

Land acquisition and restoration/enhancement is pursued primarily for the Refuge expansion units within the Minnesota River corridor, including the Blakeley and St. Lawrence Units (Scott County), Jessenland Unit (Sibley County), and Rapids Lake and San Francisco Units (Carver County). The Trust also pursues acquisition of inholdings to complete other Refuge units from Bloomington to Chaska, as well as Waterfowl Production Areas in the District.

In Metro Big Rivers phases 1 through 8, the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) helped the Trust acquire 711 acres for the Refuge. OHF grants of \$3.54 million were leveraged 77% by \$2.72 million in other, private funds to complete five priority acquisitions. The balance of Phase 7 OHF funds are being used for habitat restoration on the parcel acquired for the Rapids Lake Unit with phases 6-7. Work is underway on phases 9-12.

After acquisition, the Trust completes habitat restoration and enhancement work. Agricultural fields are restored to their native conditions of wetland, grassland, and prairie habitat. Oak savanna, forest, and prairie are restored and enhanced through invasive species removal, seeding, and prescribed fire.

All lands acquired by the Trust are conveyed to the USFWS and opened to the public for wildlife-based recreation, including hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife observation, wildlife interpretation, and photography.

For more information, contact Deborah Loon at [dloon@mnvalleytrust.org](mailto:dloon@mnvalleytrust.org) or 612-801-1935, or by visiting [www.mnvalleytrust.org](http://www.mnvalleytrust.org).

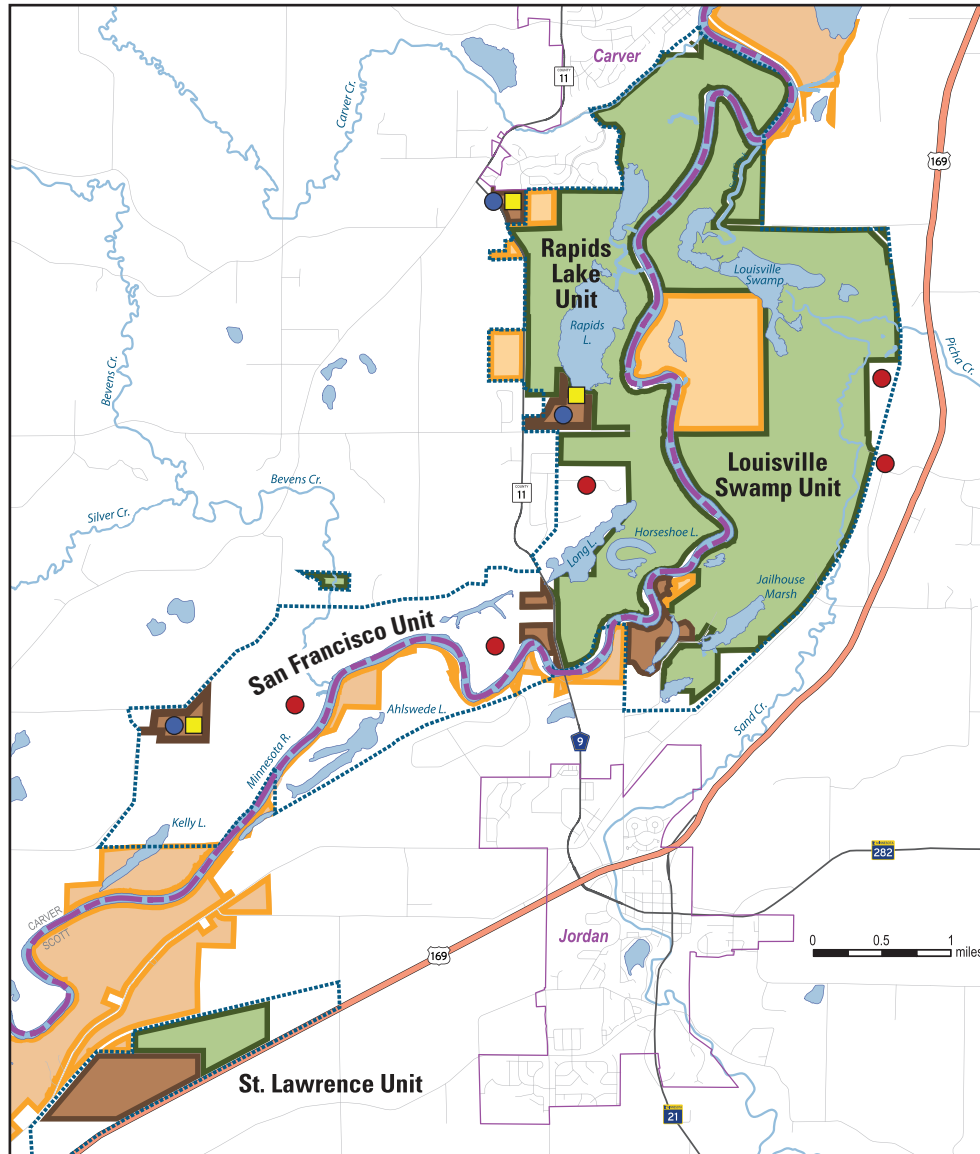


# Metro Big Rivers Habitat Partnership

Phase 13 / ML 2023

## Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

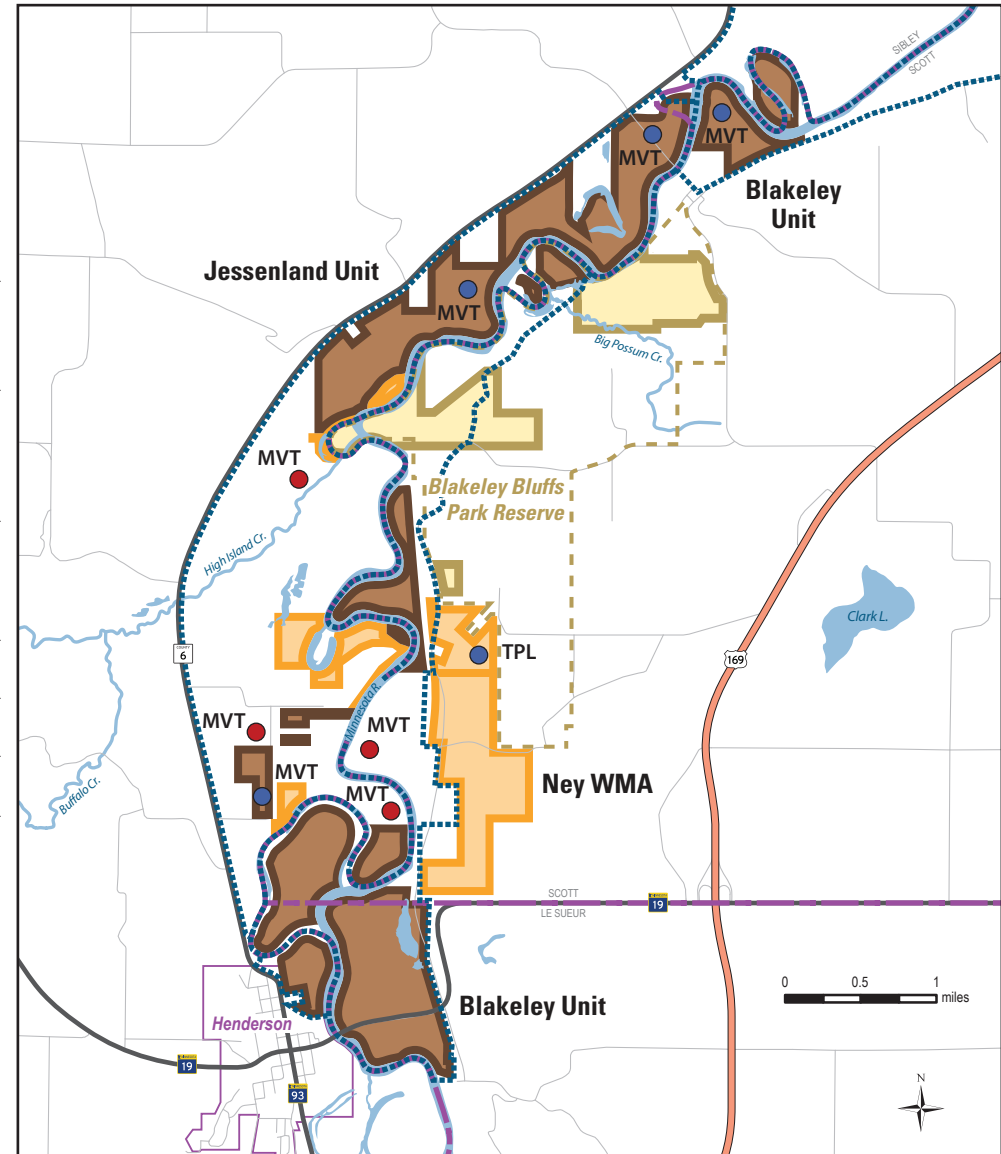
Louisville Swamp, Rapids Lake, St. Lawrence and San Francisco Units



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Protect - completed   | <span style="background-color: brown; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> MN Valley Trust lands |
| <span style="background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> Protect - in progress | <span style="background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> USFWS lands           |
| <span style="background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> Restore - in progress | <span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> MN DNR lands      |
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Protect - proposed   | <span style="background-color: gold; border: 1px solid black;"> </span> Scott County lands     |

## Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Blakeley and Jesseland Units



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="color: blue;">---</span> Refuge acquisition boundary | <span style="color: red;">---</span> Primary road    |
| <span style="color: purple;">---</span> County boundary           | <span style="color: grey;">---</span> Secondary road |
| <span style="color: magenta;">---</span> Municipal boundary       | <span style="color: lightgrey;">---</span> Street    |

MATT MILLETT • JUNE 2022 • SOURCES: MVT, MN DNR, MN DOT, MWMVR, CARVER COUNTY, LE SUEUR COUNTY, SCOTT COUNTY, SIBLEY COUNTY • UTM ZONE 15N



Supplemental Information for Projects  
submitted by  
Great River Greening ML 2023

RESTORING LAND, WATER, AND WONDER



**Lake Ann, Hennepin County** - This project will be completed on a 100 acre big woods parcel around the north, east and south shores of Lake Ann.

Enhancement activities will include:

- Buckthorn removal and follow up treatment.
- Scouting, mapping and treatment of small populations of garlic mustard.
- Removal of emerald ash borer affected green ash.

**9 Mile Creek (southfork), Hennepin County** - The overarching goal of this project is to provide a stable creek channel and restore eroding banks to improve aquatic habitat. Preliminary assessments conducted for this project identified several areas of concern along the creek including excessive bank erosion, channel incision, and floodplain abandonment.

**Wood-Rill SNA, Hennepin County** - This SNA has an outstanding example of Sugar Maple "Big Woods" forest. This forest type is ranked S2, or imperiled, in the state and is increasingly rare in the developing metro-area.

The project will enhance 40 acres of Sugar Maple forest in the northern unit, as buckthorn and honeysuckle are gaining a foothold where there are gaps in the canopy. This builds on the woody invasive treatment that was completed in the southern unit through a Conservation Partners Legacy grant.

**Frost Lake Park, Ramsey County** - Frost Lake Park is an urban pocket park located in St. Paul's Greater East Side neighborhood, a diverse and lower-income urban neighborhood. It is a forested park surrounding Frost Lake in a primarily single family neighborhood adjacent to Frost Lake Elementary School.

While the forested canopy is healthy and diverse, the understory has a medium density infestation of invasive shrub species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle.

Enhancement activities include removal and treatment of invasive species and replanting with a higher diversity of native shrub and plant species.

Neighborhood Demographics:

- 32.1% white, 60.2% BIPOC (14.3% Black/African American, 34.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 11.2% other)
- 18.1% of households below Federal poverty level





**Loeb Lake Shoreline, Ramsey County** - Loeb Lake is located at Marydale Park in St. Paul's Northend neighborhood. The shoreline vegetation surrounding the lake is comprised of turf grass, invasive shrub tree species, and single stands of boxelder. The lake itself is a MN DNR fishing in the neighborhood lake with a fishing pier.

The water quality in Loeb Lake is good considering its urban location. Nutrient levels are low-to-moderate, though these are still pollutants of concern. Ramsey County conducts ongoing water quality monitoring for Loeb Lake.

Shoreline restoration activities include converting all turf between the trail and lake to native prairie vegetation, removal and treatment of invasive tree species, thinning of boxelder stands and replacing with higher diversity of tree species.

Neighborhood Demographics:

- 26.3% white, 69% BIPOC (24.7% African American, 34.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.5% other)
- 27.6% of households below Federal poverty level

**Crystal Spring SNA, Washington County** - Crystal Spring SNA is a more recent addition to the state's SNA program, being added in 2016. The site is the location of natural springs that flow out of the sandstone and support brook trout in the lower portions of the creek. The Red Oak - Basswood forest received an A-rank (excellent) when mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey.

The project will enhance 38 acres of Red Oak - Basswood forest along the bluffs of the St. Croix River. Removal of exotic species at an early stage will ensure the fragile habitat of the site stays intact and is not degraded.

**Houle Parcel, Washington County** - The Houle parcel is located in northwestern Forest Lake and managed by the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District. The property is part of a larger wetland complex that flows east to the Sunrise River. The site is comprised of 10 acres of wetland and upland. Mapped habitats on site include a seepage wetland, green ash/tamarack swamp and upland woodland.

The project will enhance the 10 acres of the site. Activities will include removal and treatment of invasive tree and shrub species, including common and glossy buckthorn across the parcel. It also will include selective tree removal to thin canopy structure and promote a healthier habitat complex.



For more information, contact Todd Rexine at [trexine@greatrivergreening.org](mailto:trexine@greatrivergreening.org) or 651-272-3992.

Visit us at: <https://www.greatrivergreening.org/>

Over its 25 years of community-based habitat restoration and enhancement, Great River Greening has:

Restored and enhanced over 17,500 acres and counting.

Engaged with 49,300 volunteers to protect, restore and care for Minnesota's Natural Heritage.

Through the Outdoor Heritage Fund, as a member of Metro Big Rivers Partnership, Great River Greening has restored and enhanced 1,866 acres and is actively enhancing another 598 acres in the metro area.



**Supplemental Information for Projects Submitted  
by Friends of the Mississippi River  
for OHF ML 2023  
Metro Big Rivers Partnership**



**FMR will restore and enhance a total of 363 acres at five sites near the Vermillion and Mississippi Rivers.**

**Applewood Preserve:**

Enhance 20 acres forest and 5 acres prairie at this nature preserve by invasive woody and weed control, prescribed burns and seeding. Community volunteers will be engaged in planting events to increase the diversity and abundance of native species, especially for [pollinators](#).



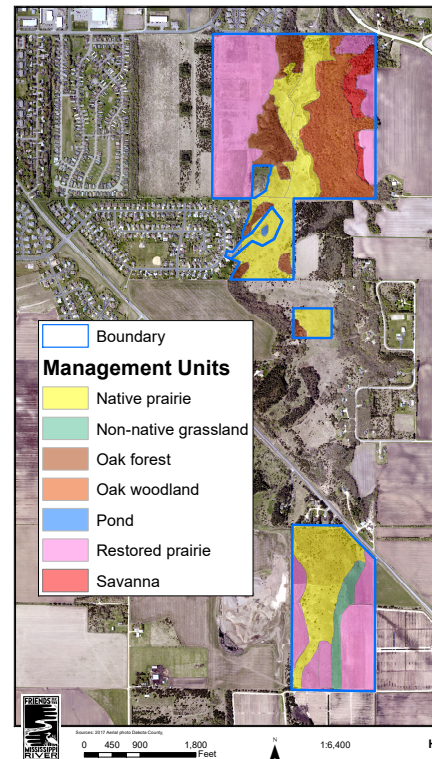
**Carver Preserve:**

Restore 10 acres prairie, with a focus on species for [pollinators](#). 15 acres of woodland will also be enhanced to control invasive species at this nature preserve.



## Hastings Sand Coulee SNA:

This is the largest native prairie remnant in Dakota County, harboring [13 rare plant and animal species](#) and numerous species of greatest conservation need. FMR will restore 8 new acres of prairie and enhance 90 acres of native prairie, 102 acres of restored prairie and 63 acres of oak forest. Methods include removal of invasive woody and herbaceous plants, spot-mowing, spot-spraying, prescribed burns, seeding. All with careful consideration for [rusty patched bumble bee](#) habitat.



## Vermillion River AMA (2 sites):

Restore 50 forested acres within the Vermillion River corridor at two sites, 23 and 27 acres respectively, at the Vermillion River Aquatic Management Area (AMA). Sites are directly east and west of ongoing riparian and upland restoration funded by OHF. Invasive woody removal and revegetation will support habitat improvement for a variety of [game and non-game wildlife](#) along this designated [Trout Stream](#).





## **Metro Big Rivers Protection Program Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities**

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs 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 projects worthy of consideration.

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

As part of its proposals to LSOHC, the Land Trust includes easement sign-up criteria that lay out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust uses to rank potential parcels relative to one another and identify those we will seek to protect with a conservation easement. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criterion. 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.

#### ***Subfactors:***

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

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

#### ***Indicators:***

A suite of weighted indicators is used to score each parcel relative to each of the above subfactors. Indicators are selected based on their ability to effectively inform the scoring of parcels relative to each of the respective subfactors. Weightings for each criterion are assessed and vetted to ensure that a set of indicators for each subfactor produces meaningful results, then applied across each of the proposed parcels.

Data sets used for this purpose must offer wall-to-wall coverage across the program area to ensure that bias for or against parcels does not creep into the equation. Where gaps in such coverages exist, we attempt to fill them in to the extent feasible (via field inventory, etc.).

Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

### ***Factor 2: Cost***

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

Cost, as a primary factor, is assessed independently of the ecological factors. Given equal ecological

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

## Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

- Habitat Size or Quantity (25 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the a given conservation easement, relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator not only ecosystem health but has a direct correlation with species viability.

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

Points	Acres
0	1-9
5	10-14
10	15-39
15	40-49
17	50-59
20	60-79
22	80-99
25	100 or more

- Habitat Condition or Quality (25 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat), imperiled species if known, and climate resilience. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property. In addition, climate resilience information on a property can provide information whether the area is estimated to be resilient in the face of climate change. This is especially important for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, which due to development has a less resilient landscape than other areas of the state.

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

- Habitat Quality (20 points)** – The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) natural community element occurrence (EO) ranking framework and the [MBS Biodiversity Significance Ranks](#) are used to score habitat quality on parcels:

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

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

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

**c) Climate resilience (2 points)** – [The Nature Conservancy’s Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Conservation project](#) identified the areas estimated to be the most climate resilient for characteristic environments of North America. Parcel scoring is based on whether the parcel has above average climate resiliency scores:

Points	Climate Resilience
0	Entire parcel below average or average
1	Half of parcel above average
2	Entire par

- 3. Landscape Context (50 points):** Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

**Scoring:** Parcels are scored as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**b) Ecological Context (18 points)** – As with protected lands context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors: the amount of natural habitat contiguous to the parcel and the ratio of natural land cover to non-natural land cover within a three-mile radius of the parcel.

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

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

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

- (a) Percent of area covered by natural land cover within ½ mile of parcel (6 points):

Points	Natural Land Cover
0	0-19%
2	20-39%
4	40-59%
5	60-79%
6	80-100%

- (b) Percent of area covered by natural land cover from ½ mile to 3 miles of the parcel (4 points):

Points	Natural Land Cover
0	0-19%
1	20-39%
2	40-59%
3	60-79%
4	80-100%

**c) Future Potential (14 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. In the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, special attention is paid to habitat corridors as identified by state and local conservation partners.

**Scoring:** Parcels are scored based on three factors:

- i) Whether the parcel is located in a Minnesota Land Trust priority focal area (6 points). In the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, priority focal areas include lands surrounding large public land holdings such as Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge and Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area, and the Minnesota, Mississippi, St. Croix, and Rum Rivers and their tributaries.

Points	In MLT Priority Focal Area
0	No
6	Yes

- ii) The parcel's position relative to priority areas identified in statewide planning efforts (4 points). Plans referenced include the [Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan](#), the [Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas Program Strategic Land Protection Opportunity Areas](#), [Audubon Important Bird Areas](#).

Points	In Statewide Priority Area
0	No
2	Yes

- iii) The parcel's position relative to local priorities such as county, soil and water conservation district, watershed district, park district, and city and township conservation plans (4 points). In addition, an assessment is made about the degree to which action is being implemented within a priority area.

Points	Priority & Implementation Level
0	No/Low
2	Medium
4	High

**Minnesota Land Trust  
Metro Big Rivers Ranking Sheet**

		SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6
County							
<b>ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SIZE/QUANTITY (25 PTS)</b>	Points						
Size: Acres of existing habitat to be protected by an easement	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>25</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>CONDITION/QUALITY (25 PTS)</b>							
Habitat Quality: Quality of existing ecological systems (SNA Site Eval Score 1-20)	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Imperiled Species: Presence of documented rare features (count 1-3)	3						
Climate: Climate resilience score (above average = 2; half/half = 1)	2						
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>25</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>LANDSCAPE CONTEXT (50 PTS)</b>							
<b>Protected Lands Context (18 pts)</b>							
Acres contiguous protected land	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acres protected land within 1/2 mile	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acres protected land within 1/2-3 miles	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Ecological Context (18 pts)</b>							
Acres contiguous natural habitat	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acres natural habitat within 1/2 mile	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acres natural habitat within 1/2-3 miles	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Prioritization Context (14 pts)</b>							
MLT Priority Conservation Focal Area (y=6)	6						
Conservation plan context (y=4)	4						
County or local partner priority (no/low=0, medium=2, high=4)	4						
<b>SUBTOTAL:</b>	<b>50</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>COST</b>							
Bid amount (\$/per acre)							
Donative value (\$/acre)							
<b>TOTAL ACQUISITION COST:</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -