



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Restoring and Enhancing Minnesota's Important Bird Areas in the St. Croix River Valley
ML 2023 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/16/2022

Proposal Title: Restoring and Enhancing Minnesota's Important Bird Areas in the St. Croix River Valley

Funds Requested: \$1,613,600

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Dale Gentry

Title: Conservation Manager

Organization: Audubon Minnesota

Address: 2355 Highway 36 West, Suite 400

City: Roseville, MN 55113

Email: dale.gentry@audubon.org

Office Number:

Mobile Number: 6512741073

Fax Number:

Website: <https://mn.audubon.org/>

Location Information

County Location(s): Washington and Pine.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban
- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Habitat
- Forest
- Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

Audubon Minnesota is requesting \$1,709,100 funds to enhance 891 acres and restore 35 acres of significant wildlife habitat on public and permanently protected private lands along the Saint Croix River valley. Our project and parcel prioritization criteria place an emphasis on areas that fall within Important Bird Areas (IBA) and priority areas identified by the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan within Pine and Washington counties that border the Saint Croix River.

Design and Scope of Work

Audubon Minnesota will advance conservation in eastern Minnesota by Restoring and Enhancing Minnesota's Important Bird Areas (IBA) in the Saint Croix River watershed. This Program will continue to expand the Outdoor Heritage Funds' legacy of restoration and enhancement of Minnesota's natural heritage. Our Program places an emphasis on Minnesota's Important Bird Areas (IBAs) as they are essential to maintaining healthy and diverse bird populations in the state. The Saint Croix River watershed supports over 329 bird species (as many as 172 breeding species) including state-endangered Henslow's Sparrow and species of special concern Red-shouldered Hawk and Louisiana Waterthrush and Audubon stewardship species (ie. species with more than 5% of the global population breeding in Minnesota) like the Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, Veery, and Bobolink among numerous waterfowl, raptors, and game birds. Gray wolves, fisher, and the American badger are among other wildlife found in the region which contains more than 150 species of greatest conservation (SGCN) need which should also benefit from this project.

While enhancing and restoring habitats within IBAs is a primary goal, we recognize that some of the greatest opportunities exist where we can conserve critical habitats in areas where a high percentage of the habitat has been degraded. Much of southern Minnesota has been converted to agricultural production and the urban and suburban character of the Twin Cities Metro region has further transformed the mixed hardwood forests in east-central Minnesota into other habitat types. Research in other regions reveals that migrant landbirds stopover in high concentrations in hardwood forests, particularly those near heavily urbanized areas, highlighting the importance of the habitat around the Twin Cities Metropolitan region. This invites focused conservation of the remaining natural habitats found near converted habitats. This project will seek to restore and enhance some of the best remaining habitats in a region where most of the historic habitats for breeding and migratory bird have been degraded.

We will expand the available habitat for priority bird species through native seed plantings, management of brush and tree species in grasslands, planting trees and enhancing natural regeneration in forests and savannas, and invasive species control. Projects will be targeted and selected based on a prioritization model that focuses on core habitat, acres of remnant habitat, and habitat conditions. Restoration and enhancement projects will include a site assessment, including an analysis of habitat suitability for priority species and habitat conditions as well as documentation of prescribed habitat management actions (photo points) and recommended follow-up actions for future management.

We will work closely with local staff from the Belwin Conservancy, Minnesota State Forests, and State Parks to identify habitat needs on public and private lands in these key geographies. Audubon will write Habitat Management Action Plans, obtain necessary permits, and complete enhancement and restoration work to create better habitats for species of concern.

These partnership efforts will deliver effective means of enhancing and restoring ecologically significant land for the benefit of birds, wildlife, and people in east-central Minnesota.

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?

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan has identified a group of breeding bird species labeled as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). SGCN are species whose populations are rare, declining, or vulnerable to decline and are below levels desirable to ensure their long-term health and stability. All of these species have experienced significant declines, are dependent on vulnerable habitats, and/or have been recognized as priorities by various resource agencies and experts in the field. The purpose of identifying priority species is to be strategic about identifying a small number of species that should be the focus of conservation efforts in the short term to prevent further population declines. Based on our priority species for the Saint Croix River region, there are 49 Species of Greatest Conservation Need that could benefit from this grassland and woodland habitat restoration and enhancement program, such as the Veery, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, six species of warbler, three species of flycatcher, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo among others. In addition, there are eight bird species that are listed by the state as endangered, threatened, or special concern including the: Henslow's Sparrow, Red-shouldered Hawk, Lark Sparrow, Peregrine Falcon, Louisiana Waterthrush, Purple Martin, Cerulean Warbler, and Hooded Warbler.

This project will specifically highlight opportunities to restore and enhance habitat for the following SGCN: Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, and Wood Thrush.

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

A landmark 2019 study showed North American bird populations have declined by nearly one-third; a loss of three billion birds since 1970. While many factors are involved, the loss of habitat is the most significant cause of bird declines. Grassland birds and forest birds that prefer young or old forests are among the bird populations with the steepest declines.

Prairie and grassland habitats, even when protected, are in danger of becoming overgrown by woody species and invaded by exotic cool-season grasses when there is a lack of disturbance. The same is true for woody invasives in forests. Over time, enhancement and restoration of these lands in need of disturbance become more costly. This project presents an opportunity to protect some of the most critical habitats in areas crucial to Minnesota's biodiversity.

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:

In an effort to protect some of the most unique wildlife habitat in Minnesota, our proposal focuses on the three state, and one global, Important Bird Areas bordering the Saint Croix River. Audubon Minnesota and partners have identified 57 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Minnesota through a Technical Committee, comprised of bird experts and conservationists from across the state including the MN Biological Survey. IBAs have been identified in over 170 countries that provide essential habitats for one or more breeding, wintering, and/or migrating bird species. IBAs are a proactive, voluntary, science-based program that works to identify, monitor, and conserve the most essential habitats for birds. In short, these IBAs are the most important areas in which to preserve Minnesota's game and non-game avian legacy. Audubon sees a tremendous opportunity for directing conservation resources to

protect habitats within IBAs and surrounding areas. We are also using additional plans and analyses, like Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan, and the Minnesota Biological Survey biodiversity significance status, to further refine the geographic scope of our efforts to yield the highest conservation return on investment. Minnesota County Biological Survey information and Natural Heritage Information System data along with recommendations in the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan will be crucial to the prioritization of parcels where restoration and enhancement work is undertaken.

In addition to the rigorous process used to designate IBAs, Audubon has developed a Minnesota Blueprint for Bird Conservation, a comprehensive compilation of national, regional, and state bird and habitat conservation plans that address Minnesota bird species and Minnesota landscapes. The Minnesota Blueprint emphasized bird conservation documents developed by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). This Blueprint builds upon existing efforts by identifying the highest priorities in each ecological region and using select Species of Greatest Conservation Need; synthesizing the best proven conservation practices for each species; establishing measurable goals for species' population targets; and identifying key sites for conservation work.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

Which two other plans are addressed in this proposal?

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Projects Joint Ventures Plan

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

The Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) uses a three-pronged approach to prioritize areas for conservation: critical habitat, Species of Greatest Conservation Need, and opportunities to enjoy wildlife. From this spatial prioritization, the WAP designated the Saint Croix watershed as a Conservation Focus Area. This indicates it is a priority area for working with partners to identify, design, and implement conservation actions over the next 10 years to maintain and enhance the resiliency of the Wildlife Action Network.

The Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture Landbird Conservation Plan points to strategic habitat conservation as the best strategy to restore and maintain landbird populations. These plans highlight the strategy (habitat conservation) and the location (the Saint Croix Watershed Conservation Focus Area) for this project.

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)

Northern Forest

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

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:

Audubon Minnesota will focus restoration and enhancement work on key habitats within the Saint Croix River Watershed, guided by the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, Audubon Important Bird Areas, Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture, and the Minnesota Blueprint for Bird Conservation. These management plans collectively highlight the land bordering the Saint Croix River as critical to the well-being of Minnesota's birds and biodiversity. We collaborate with local, state, and federal governmental and non-profit conservation partners to ensure our activities are complementary to those undertaken by others in the program area and meet their program standards and best management practices. We focus on lands that are within IBAs and are part of the larger prairie/savanna/forest habitat complexes to maximize the benefit to area-sensitive species. Audubon will prioritize properties that support species in greatest conservation need and contain sensitive habitat types as identified within the Minnesota Biological Survey. This work will build high-quality habitat complexes with better connectivity for birds. Along with Audubon Minnesota, the Belwin Conservancy, Minnesota State Parks, and Minnesota State Forests are deeply committed to maximizing and building off these habitat investments over time.

What other fund may contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

Does this proposal include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Leverage is provided from Direct Source Service costs and in-kind match from partners. Audubon is leveraging state funds with private funds contributed to Audubon. These funds are used to offset un-recovered DSS.

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.

LSOHC funding is in addition to other funding sources, and does not supplant that work. Without LSOHC funding, Audubon MN would not have resources to implement enhancement projects, and would have greater challenges in funding personnel salaries associated with this work.

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

Audubon is committed to working with our State and private partners to ensure management recommendations are understood and implemented to the highest degree. Enhancement and restoration that occurs on state-held lands will expand and bolster the habitat work being done on public lands for the benefit of game and non-game bird species and other wildlife. They have very successful stewardship programs that include annual property monitoring, effective records management, investigating potential violations, and defending the land. Likewise, the Belwin Conservancy also monitors its landholdings closely through multiple site visits a year, habitat management prioritization models, and land management. Our enhancement and restoration work will improve habitat conditions for priority species and increase the efficiency of future actions with regard to invasive species and woody species encroachment. Any Outdoor Heritage Funds allocated will expedite and expand the breadth of the enhancement activities on these conserved parcels.

In addition, Audubon will prepare a habitat management action plan for each property, providing ecological

management recommendations for the property over time to maintain and manage the land for grassland and wetland species, including focal species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023-2027	LSOHC, Belwin, DNR	Site recon, Prescription Development and planning	Conduct Site Management	Maintenance
2028-2031	Belwin, DNR	Planning Amendments	Maintenance/Management	-

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

In addition to the SGCN and Minnesota State Listed species previously discussed, we have identified four target species to act as indicators for our work within the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture Landbird management plan: they are the Golden-winged Warbler and Wood Thrush for the forested regions, and the Bobolink and Henslow's Sparrow in the grasslands/savannas. We do not have clear estimates of the state population of these species but we report the 10-year goals for trend estimates from the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture Landbird Conservation Plan.

- 1) Golden-winged Warbler: Reduce the downward trend by 75%
- 2) Wood Thrush: Reduce downward trend by 75%
- 3) Bobolink: Reduce downward trends by 75%
- 4) Henslow's sparrow: Reduce trends in all bird conservation regions by 50%

Our habitat work within this program will assist in collective efforts that strive toward achieving these goals.

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

This work will directly benefit BIPOC communities in some of the counties where Audubon will restore and enhance lands. The proximity of the lower Saint Croix River to the Twin Cities Metropolitan area means that improved habitats will be accessible for outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing by the members of the Twin Cities metropolitan counties which have a higher density of BIPOC communities. Further, birds are excellent indicators of environmental health and ecosystem integrity and our forest and grassland restoration and enhancements to benefit birds will also benefit the overall health of the surrounding ecosystem and create a more diverse habitat for both game and non-game wildlife species.

In the past, indigenous cultures managed the land for game species. Today, indigenous cultures still manage livestock, use prescribed fire for habitat enhancement, and harvest many native plants such as wild rice and many wild fruits. Our work will complement those natural resource management activities and help to maximize the clean water benefits, as well as, preserve the cultural importance of the natural landscape for indigenous communities.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this proposal 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?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- State Forests
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- Other : State Parks

Land Use

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

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

We may not use this approach but 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 (but certainly not all) cases this necessitates the use of GMO treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank. No neonicotinoid treated seeds will be used.

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?
2014	\$300,000	\$300,481	\$12,000	\$18,986	92	292	Yes
2016	\$412,000	\$404,143	\$86,000	\$66,851	385	460	Yes
2019	\$1,357,000	\$547,746	\$200,000	-	1,290	1,350	No
2015	\$209,000	\$116,798	\$30,000	\$28,000	640	456	No
2018	\$408,000	\$387,971	\$27,900	\$11,446	590	456	No
2022	\$1,247,000	\$34,919	\$179,200	\$21,805	1,287	0	No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Implement a portion of the Habitat Management Action Plans for restoration and enhancement recommendations on private land easements and public lands to benefit targeted bird species.	June 2025
Conduct habitat restoration and enhancement of both public	June 2026

and permanently protected private lands.	
Complete restoration and enhancement habitat projects. Post-management summary of habitat suitability for targeted species.	June 2027

Budget**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$376,200	\$95,500	Audubon, Audubon	\$471,700
Contracts	\$1,185,000	-	-	\$1,185,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$38,400	-	-	\$38,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
Supplies/Materials	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,613,600	\$95,500	-	\$1,709,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Grant Administrator	0.05	4.0	\$19,100	-	-	\$19,100
Conservation Director	0.1	4.0	\$53,000	\$20,000	Audubon	\$73,000
Conservation Manager	0.25	4.0	\$86,100	\$19,500	Audubon	\$105,600
St. Croix project ecologist	0.75	4.0	\$218,000	\$56,000	Audubon	\$274,000

Amount of Request: \$1,613,600**Amount of Leverage:** \$95,500**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 5.92%**DSS + Personnel:** \$414,600**As a % of the total request:** 25.69%**Easement Stewardship:** -**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage is provided from Direct Source Service costs and partner in-kind match. Audubon is also leveraging state funds with private funds contributed to Audubon. These funds are used to offset un-recovered DSS.

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?

This project is scalable; the number of acres could be reduced proportionally. Acres of restoration and enhancement projects would be reduced if the project received 70% of requested funding.

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

Based on our experiences with other LSOHC supported projects, personnel and dedicated support staff are important to project success and more difficult to scale down, though possible.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

This project is scalable; the number of acres could be reduced proportionally. Acres of restoration and enhancement projects would be reduced if the project received 50% of requested funding.

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

Based on our experiences with other LSOHC supported projects, personnel and dedicated support staff are important to project success and more difficult to scale down, though possible.

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?

We have never requested funds for the St. Croix project position but Audubon's conservation staff (e.g. Conservation Manager) have been included in other requests to LSOHC.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

The contract line item is directed to enhancement and restoration projects. We will use Minnesota-based contractors for aspects of project work, including heavy equipment work, brush mowing, tree removal in prairies, selective herbicide use for invasive species and site preparation, and seedings.

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

Audubon Minnesota staff may rent vehicles for grant-related purposes as needed.

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?

Our Direct Support Services is based on Audubon's federally negotiated indirect rate of 24.66%. In this proposal, we are requesting reimbursement of 10% of eligible costs from LSOHC and matching 14.66%. The indirect cost rate only applies to the first \$25,000 of the Contracts line item. Please see attachment for documentation.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

Field gear, field guides, office supplies for fieldwork and file management, smartphone applications related to mapping or plant ID, maps, and plant books.

Federal Funds

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

No

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	35	35
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	-	-	891	891
Total	0	0	0	926	926

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$112,000	\$112,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$1,501,600	\$1,501,600
Total	-	-	-	\$1,613,600	\$1,613,600

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	35	0	0	0	0	35
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	451	0	0	0	440	891
Total	486	0	0	0	440	926

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$112,000	-	-	-	-	\$112,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$758,200	-	-	-	\$743,400	\$1,501,600
Total	\$870,200	-	-	-	\$743,400	\$1,613,600

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$3,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$1,685

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$3,200	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$1,681	-	-	-	\$1,689

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

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 ~ *Outcomes can be measured by the number of acres impacted and the number of projects Audubon and partners restore or enhance. Habitat Management Action Plans will detail specific restoration or enhancement prescriptions for each project on public lands and permanent conservation easements. The quality of work and level of success of projects on State Forest and State Park lands will be monitored through various DNR monitoring protocols. All of the project work undertaken can be assessed based on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Join Venture Landbird Conservation Plan.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ *Outcomes can be measured by the number of acres impacted and the number of projects Audubon and partners restore or enhance. Habitat Management Action Plans will detail specific restoration or enhancement prescriptions for each project on public lands and permanent conservation easements. The quality of work and level of success of projects on State Forest and State Park lands will be monitored through various DNR monitoring protocols. All of the project work undertaken can be assessed based on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Join Venture Landbird Conservation Plan.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

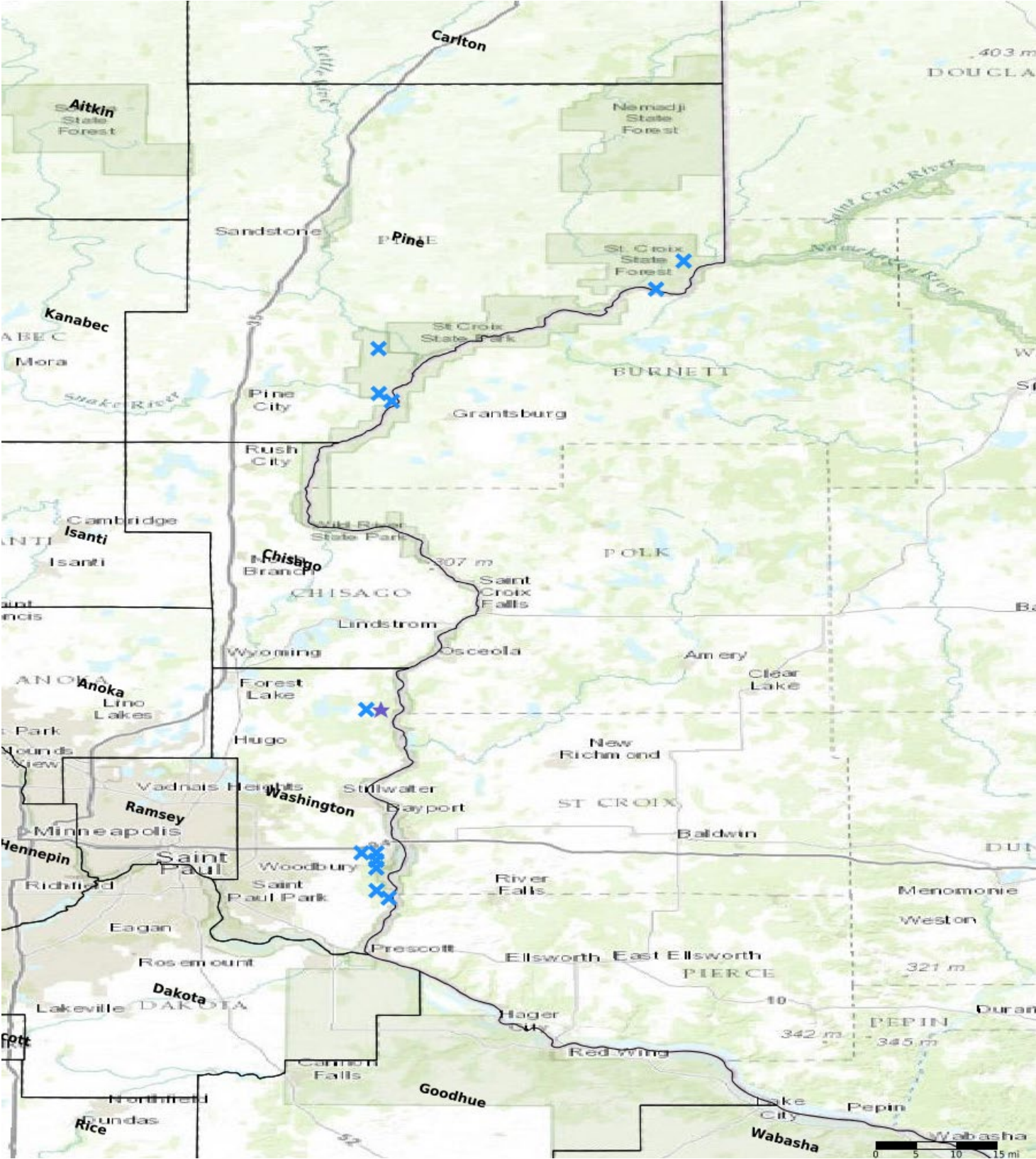
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Audubon collaborated with MN Department of Natural Resources divisions of forestry and parks and trails and the Belwin Conservancy to identify priority parcels for enhancement and restoration projects. Projects were targeted and selected based on a prioritization model that focuses on core habitat, geography, conservation estate, potential target species suitability, acres of remnant habitat, and current habitat condition. Additional parcels were added as specific prioritization mapping, site visits, and habitat assessments further narrow our focus.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
MN State forest 5	Pine	03819206	20	\$20,500	Yes
MN State forest 4	Pine	04020236	100	\$107,500	Yes
MN State forest 3	Pine	03920236	80	\$56,000	Yes
MN State forest 2	Pine	04116220	40	\$41,000	Yes
MN State forest 1	Pine	04216234	200	\$215,000	Yes
Afton Valleys	Washington	02720202	50	\$120,000	Yes
Afton 50th Street	Washington	02820234	125	\$218,750	Yes
Belwin Savanna Hills	Washington	02820210	33	\$33,660	Yes
Afton Slopes	Washington	02820203	40	\$88,000	Yes
Belwin Valley Creek	Washington	02820215	33	\$33,660	Yes
Belwin Afton Hills	Washington	02820204	130	\$132,600	Yes
William O'Brien West	Washington	03220236	35	\$62,000	Yes
William O'Brien Savanna	Washington	03220235	40	\$38,000	Yes

Parcel Map



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



Audubon and the Belwin Conservancy

Minnesota contains a unique mix of wetlands, grasslands, and woodlands that have experienced significant landscape-level change. Through time, the region has been maintained by dynamic cycles of precipitation, fire, and grazing which provide essential habitat to declining forest and prairie bird species like the Henslow's Sparrow, and Bobolink in the grassland and Red-headed Woodpeckers and Wood Thrush in the forests with countless other wildlife species.

Audubon Minnesota and the Belwin Conservancy will expand the available habitat for priority bird species in the state park lands in the St. Croix Lake Important Bird Area. We will utilize a variety of activities: management of brush and tree species, invasive species control, and diversifying oak savannas. Projects will be targeted and selected based on a prioritization model that focuses on suitability for priority bird species, core habitat, conservation estate, acres of remnant habitat, and habitat condition. Restoration and enhancement projects will include a site assessment, including a rapid analysis of habitat suitability for priority species and habitat condition as well as documentation of prescribed habitat management actions and recommended follow-up actions for future management.

Project Title:

Restoring and Enhancing
Minnesota's Important
Bird Areas in the Saint Croix
River Valley

Conservation Manager:

Dale Gentry

dale.gentry@audubon.org

Executive Director:

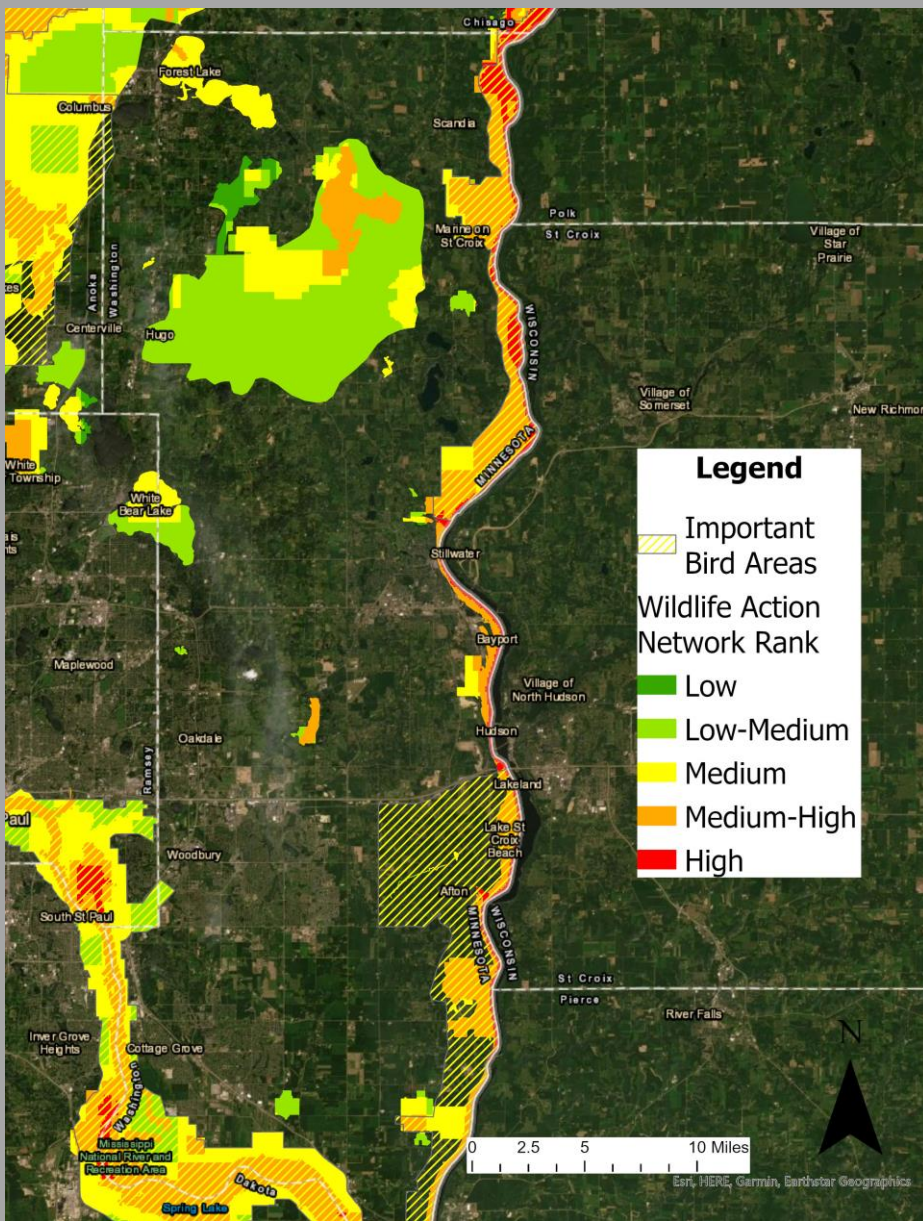
Rob Schultz

rob.schultz@audubon.org

Audubon Minnesota

2355 Highway 36 West,
Suite 400 Roseville, MN
55113

<https://mn.audubon.org/>



The project areas in Minnesota State Parks will focus on the St. Croix Lake IBA in areas that score high or medium-high on the DNR Wildlife Action Network ranking.

Outlook for the Project

- **163 acres:**
 - Manage invasive species in woodlands and oak savannas to support juvenile recruitment in upland forests
 - Activities include mechanical removal and herbicide treatment of invasive plants, and planting native shrubs and trees where appropriate
- **33 acres:**
 - Managing woody invasives in a dry prairie/oak savanna
 - Activities include mechanical removal and herbicide treatment of invasive plants, and planting native shrubs and trees where appropriate

