



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Big Rivers Phase 14
ML 2024 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 05/31/2023

Proposal Title: Metro Big Rivers Phase 14

Funds Requested: \$16,113,600

Confirmed Leverage Funds: \$1,709,700

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Deborah Loon

Title: Executive Director

Organization: MN Valley Trust (Metro Big Rivers)

Address: 3815 East American Boulevard

City: Bloomington, MN 55425

Email: DLoon@mnvalleytrust.org

Office Number: 612-801-1935

Mobile Number: 612-801-1935

Fax Number:

Website: www.mnvalleytrust.org

Location Information

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

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 14 will protect 900 acres in fee title and 517 acres in permanent conservation easement, restore 883 acres and enhance 735 acres of priority habitat in the big rivers corridors in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area (3,035 acres total). Partners will leverage OHF grants at least 10% 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 14 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 availability, increases wildlife-based recreational opportunities, and connects metro residents with nature.

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) will enhance 321 acres to increase native plant diversity, improve pollinator and wildlife habitat, bolster water quality, and improve public access to natural spaces. Projects include invasive plant removal, seeding and planting native prairie and forest, mowing, spot-spraying, and prescribed burning. 20 acres enhancement occur on native prairie.

- * Hastings Sand Coulee SNA: Enhance 160 acres prairie and 59 acres oak forest
- * Camp Cozy Park: Enhance 30 acres forest and 19 acres prairie
- * River Oaks Park: Enhance 1 acre prairie and 1 acre forest
- * Bailey Point Nature Preserve: Enhance 17 acres prairie and 7 acres riparian forest
- * Vermillion River Linear Park: Enhance 15 acres prairie and 12 acres riparian forest

Great River Greening (GRG) will restore and enhance 277 acres of forest and prairie. Projects include invasive tree removal, tree stand thinning, onsite biochar processing, planting and seeding native grass and wildflowers, planting climate-resilient large stock and bareroot tree and shrubs, mowing, herbicide application and spot-spraying, and prescribed burning. GRG will purchase a mobile biochar system (grant funds 50%) to process biomass, reduce offsite disposal, minimize site impacts of pile burning, and incorporate biochar onsite to promote healthier soil.

- * Lake Ann Park phase 2: Enhance 40 acres forest
- * Kelsey Round Lake: Enhance 30 acres forest
- * Medina Lake Nature Preserve: Restore 14 acres forest
- * Wayzata Nature Center: Enhance 6 acres woodland
- * Wood Lake Nature Center: Enhance 21 acres forest
- * Wood-Rill SNA: Enhance 40 acres big woods
- * Floral Park: Restore 13 acres oak woodland
- * Hazelnut Park: Restore 8 acres oak woodland
- * Bailey School Forest: Restore 28 acres prairie

- * Frost Lake Park: Enhance 7 acres woodland
- * Houle Wetland: Enhance 10 acres tamarack/ash complex
- * Crystal Spring SNA: Enhance 40 acres forest

Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect 517 acres through perpetual conservation easement and restore 120 acres of priority habitat on permanently-protected lands, including riparian lands, forests, wetlands and grasslands. Protection projects will be selected through a process that ranks proposals based on ecological significance and cost (criteria attached).

Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee acquisition 500 acres of river frontage, floodplain forest, wetland and upland habitat to expand the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Prospective lands are prioritized by the USFWS and will be restored/enhanced, then open for wildlife-based recreation.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will protect through fee acquisition 400 acres of priority wildlife habitat and restore/enhance 900 acres of prairie and forest habitat on a recently-acquired WMA complex. Prospective acquisition sites are prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource plans. Lands will be managed by public partners and open for wildlife-based recreation.

Explain how the proposal addresses habitat protection, restoration, and/or enhancement for fish, game & wildlife, including threatened or endangered species conservation

Metro Big Rivers projects protect and improve habitats needed by wildlife species in greatest conservation need (SGCN) and other targeted species. Many of Minnesota’s forest and grassland SGCNs are migratory. Improving habitat along and near 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 Important Bird Area. This corridor provides critical habitat for neotropical migrant birds and numerous SGCN. 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 forest, woodlands, prairie, riverine, lakeshore, and wetland habitat at 12 conservation sites.

Minnesota Land Trust will target its protection and restoration/enhancement action to build high-quality habitat complexes that support SGCN and T&E species in the Metro area. Permanently-protected privately-owned lands will be prioritized to build the size of and connections between existing protected lands, enhancing the ability of these species to persist over the long term. 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 are the elements of this proposal that are critical from a timing perspective?

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 expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:

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 (building complexes and connections between existing protected lands).

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 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

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

Explain how this proposal will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.

The Metropolitan Urbanizing Area is expected to be impacted by climate change at a disproportional rate over other areas of Minnesota due to impacts stemming from the “heat island effect” and other factors. Metro Big Rivers partners use The Nature Conservancy’s climate resiliency data layer (Anderson, et. al. 2023), to inform land protection, restoration and enhancement. We work in climate-resilient areas, prioritize lands that increase connectivity and build habitat complexes, and select vegetation for plantings taking into account current climate adaptation models. This approach provides the best opportunities to reverse the decline in biodiversity caused by habitat loss and degradation, maintain biodiversity over the long-term and provide high-quality natural areas that support the ability of wildlife to move and adapt to stressors, including those accelerated by a changing climate.

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 this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:

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 14 includes a diversity of projects that will significantly expand and improve the conservation legacy in the MUA. Our projects will protect, restore and enhance prairie, oak savanna, forest, wetland, grassland and shoreline habitat, all within the MUA.

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.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this proposal?

- N/A

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.

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, TPL) 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

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

Metro Big Rivers partners have a shared objective of providing all metro residents with high-quality natural spaces nearby. We believe everyone should be able to easily connect with nature, enjoy high-quality wildlife habitat and engage in wildlife-dependent recreation, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Our projects benefit a diversity of communities in the MUA, from lower-income, densely populated neighborhoods to less-populated but urbanizing suburban/rural areas.

Examples of how MBR engages and benefits diverse communities include:

Friends of the Mississippi River and Great River Greening actively engage residents in habitat work in and near their neighborhoods through targeted outreach for volunteer events. Their youth programming targets young people from diverse backgrounds for exploring environmental careers. FMR’s Environmental Stewards Institute (ESI) increases the number of underrepresented youth participating in environmental career pathway programs; at least 60% of participants identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC).

Metro residents can step off the light rail 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, binoculars). Their robust internship and apprenticeship program recruits a diversity of youth to explore the outdoors and conservation careers.

Minnesota Land Trust’s commitment includes numerous projects to protect camps. 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 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. TPL has helped create natural areas such as the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, Frogtown Park and Farm, Midway Peace Park and Pilot Knob.

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 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- SNA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal
- WMA

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.

Will neonicotinoid pesticide products be used within any activities of this proposal?

No

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.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- Federal
- Local Unit of Government

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA
- National Wildlife Refuge
- SNA

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 that are current OPEN appropriations?

Yes

Approp Year	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
2023	\$15,339,000	-	-	-
2022	\$8,200,000	\$156,700	\$8,043,300	1.91%
2021	\$4,229,000	\$748,400	\$3,480,600	17.7%
2020	\$6,473,000	\$2,136,900	\$4,336,100	33.01%
2019	\$4,163,000	\$2,990,200	\$1,172,800	71.83%
2018	\$2,630,000	\$2,364,900	\$265,100	89.92%
2016	\$4,000,000	\$3,961,800	\$38,200	99.05%
2015	\$2,000,000	\$1,986,700	\$13,300	99.33%
2014	\$2,650,000	\$1,210,600	\$1,439,400	45.68%
2013	\$1,720,000	\$817,000	\$903,000	47.5%
2012	\$3,680,000	\$1,353,100	\$2,326,900	36.77%
2011	\$5,000,000	\$4,837,200	\$162,800	96.74%
2010	\$2,397,000	\$2,395,400	\$1,600	99.93%
Totals	\$62,481,000	\$24,958,900	\$37,522,100	39.95%

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
FMR - Enhance 321 acres	June 2029

GRG - Restore 63 acres and enhance 214 acres	June 2029
MLT - Protect 517 acres under conservation easement	June 2028
MVT - Protect 500 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2028
TPL - Protect 400 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2028
MLT - Restore 120 acres	June 2029
TPL - Restore 700 acres and enhance 200 acres	June 2029

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$1,394,100	\$247,100	Cities, Foundations, Cities, Foundations	\$1,641,200
Contracts	\$3,441,500	\$155,000	Cities, Foundations, Private	\$3,596,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,520,000	-	-	\$3,520,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,989,500	\$400,000	-, MN Valley Trust	\$2,389,500
Easement Acquisition	\$4,050,000	\$607,000	-, Private landowners	\$4,657,000
Easement Stewardship	\$392,000	-	-	\$392,000
Travel	\$41,000	\$1,200	-, Private	\$42,200
Professional Services	\$461,000	-	-	\$461,000
Direct Support Services	\$435,500	\$274,400	FMR, Foundations, Private	\$709,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$80,500	-	-	\$80,500
Capital Equipment	\$25,000	\$25,000	-, Foundation	\$50,000
Other Equipment/Tools	\$17,500	-	-	\$17,500
Supplies/Materials	\$216,000	-	-	\$216,000
DNR IDP	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Grand Total	\$16,113,600	\$1,709,700	-	\$17,823,300

Partner: Trust for Public Land (TPL)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$275,000	-	-	\$275,000
Contracts	\$1,500,000	\$145,000	Private	\$1,645,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,520,000	-	-	\$3,520,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$1,200	Private	\$1,200
Professional Services	\$111,000	-	-	\$111,000
Direct Support Services	\$92,000	\$92,000	Private	\$184,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$70,000	-	-	\$70,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Grand Total	\$5,618,000	\$238,200	-	\$5,856,200

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Staff (protection, legal)	0.52	3.0	\$275,000	-	-	\$275,000

Partner: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust (MVT)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	-	-	-
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,989,500	\$400,000	MN Valley Trust	\$2,389,500
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,500	-	-	\$10,500
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,000,000	\$400,000	-	\$2,400,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$700,000	-	-	\$700,000
Contracts	\$412,000	-	-	\$412,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$4,050,000	\$607,000	Private landowners	\$4,657,000
Easement Stewardship	\$392,000	-	-	\$392,000
Travel	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000
Professional Services	\$350,000	-	-	\$350,000
Direct Support Services	\$189,000	-	-	\$189,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$7,000	-	-	\$7,000
Supplies/Materials	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$6,126,000	\$607,000	-	\$6,733,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Restoration Staff	1.0	4.0	\$400,000	-	-	\$400,000
MLT Protection Staff	0.75	4.0	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000

Partner: Great River Greening

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$324,100	\$232,100	Cities, Foundations	\$556,200
Contracts	\$949,200	-	-	\$949,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$15,000	-	-	\$15,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$109,500	\$137,400	Foundations	\$246,900
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	\$25,000	\$25,000	Foundation	\$50,000
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,500	-	-	\$10,500
Supplies/Materials	\$170,000	-	-	\$170,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,603,300	\$394,500	-	\$1,997,800

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
GRG Staff (ecologists, technicians)	0.64	5.0	\$324,100	\$232,100	Cities, Foundations	\$556,200

Capital Equipment

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Portable Biochar Kiln	\$25,000	\$25,000	Foundation	\$50,000

Partner: Friends of Mississippi River (FMR)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$95,000	\$15,000	Cities, Foundations	\$110,000
Contracts	\$580,300	\$10,000	Cities, Foundations	\$590,300
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$45,000	\$45,000	FMR	\$90,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$40,000	-	-	\$40,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$766,300	\$70,000	-	\$836,300

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
FMR Staff (ecologists, conservation director, stewardship staff, bookkeeper, interns)	0.22	4.0	\$95,000	\$15,000	Cities, Foundations	\$110,000

Amount of Request: \$16,113,600

Amount of Leverage: \$1,709,700

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 10.61%

DSS + Personnel: \$1,829,600

As a % of the total request: 11.35%

Easement Stewardship: \$392,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 9.68%

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$1,709,700	\$1,709,700	100.0%	-	0.0%

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

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

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

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.

If the project received 30% 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, MLT, TPL - 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.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

- Appraisals
- Design/Engineering
- Other : Phase 1 Environmental Review
- Surveys
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

4 to 7

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 10-14 conservation easements. The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$28,000, although under extraordinary circumstances additional funds may be warranted. This figure is derived from MLT's 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?

FMR – As of May 15, 2023, FMR's DSS rate is in the process of being approved by DNR staff. Our 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.

GRG – As 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.

MVT is 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	727	135	21	883
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	400	400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	80	200	220	0	500
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	517	517
Enhance	10	212	513	0	735
Total	90	1,139	868	938	3,035

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	20
Total	20

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$2,059,900	\$705,900	\$143,100	\$2,908,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$4,118,000	\$4,118,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$320,000	\$800,000	\$880,000	-	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$5,308,000	\$5,308,000
Enhance	\$123,100	\$448,400	\$1,207,200	-	\$1,778,700
Total	\$443,100	\$3,308,300	\$2,793,100	\$9,569,100	\$16,113,600

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	883	0	0	0	0	883
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	400	0	0	0	0	400
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	500	0	0	0	0	500
Protect in Easement	517	0	0	0	0	517
Enhance	735	0	0	0	0	735
Total	3,035	0	0	0	0	3,035

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$2,908,900	-	-	-	-	\$2,908,900
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$4,118,000	-	-	-	-	\$4,118,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$2,000,000	-	-	-	-	\$2,000,000
Protect in Easement	\$5,308,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,308,000
Enhance	\$1,778,700	-	-	-	-	\$1,778,700
Total	\$16,113,600	-	-	-	-	\$16,113,600

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

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

Restore	-	\$2,833	\$5,228	\$6,814
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$10,295
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$10,266
Enhance	\$12,310	\$2,115	\$2,353	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$3,294	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$10,295	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$4,000	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$10,266	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,420	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

3.25

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

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

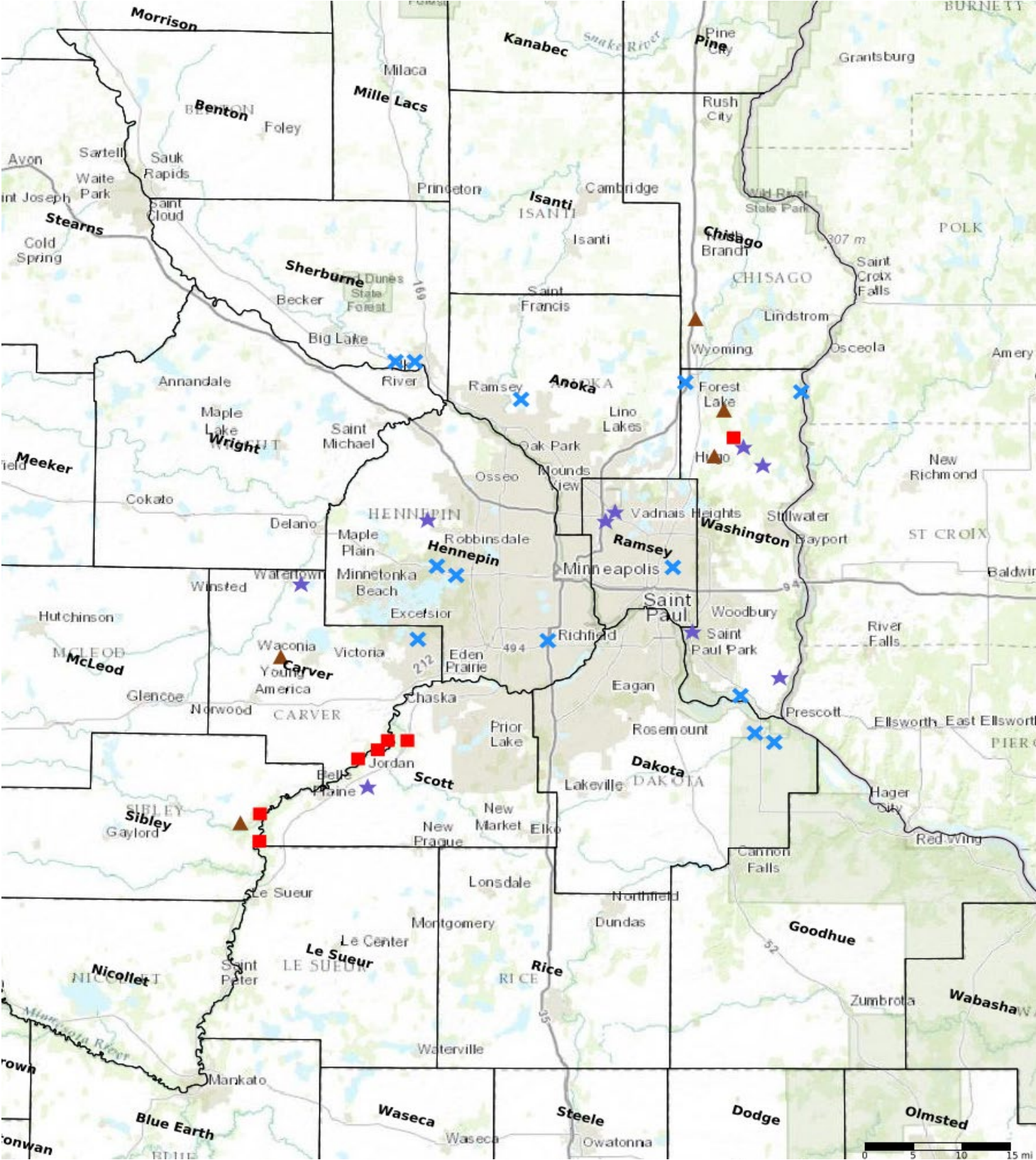
Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
GRG - Kelsey Round Lake (corrective action)	Anoka	03224220	30	\$105,800	Yes
GRG - Lake Ann: Phase 2	Carver	11623210	60	\$246,500	Yes
MLT - Sand Creek	Carver	11424235	21	\$98,000	Yes
MLT - Oak Lake	Carver	11725210	45	\$80,000	Yes
FMR - Hastings Sand Coulee SNA	Dakota	11417202	219	\$269,400	Yes
FMR - Vermillion River Linear Park	Dakota	11517233	27	\$96,100	Yes
GRG - Medina Lake Nature Preserve	Hennepin	11823202	14	\$178,300	Yes
GRG - Wayzata Nature Center	Hennepin	11722205	6	\$45,200	Yes
GRG - Woodlake Nature Center	Hennepin	02824233	21	\$110,200	Yes
GRG - WoodRill SNA	Hennepin	11823236	40	\$55,300	Yes
GRG - Frost Lake Park Phase 1	Ramsey	02922222	7	\$61,800	Yes
GRG - Floral Park	Ramsey	03023222	13	\$220,100	Yes
GRG - Hazelnut Park	Ramsey	03023228	8	\$107,500	Yes
FMR - Bailey Point Nature Preserve	Sherburne	03326233	24	\$114,600	Yes
FMR - Camp Cozy	Sherburne	03326231	49	\$212,500	Yes
FMR - River Oaks Park	Washington	02721235	2	\$28,400	Yes

GRG - Bailey School Forest	Washington	02822225	28	\$285,000	Yes
MLT - St. Croix River	Washington	02720221	40	\$76,000	Yes
MLT - Carnelian Creek	Washington	03120228	14	\$34,000	Yes
GRG - Crystal Spring SNA	Washington	03219218	40	\$64,500	Yes
GRG - Houle Wetland Buffer	Washington	03221207	10	\$123,100	Yes
TPL - Keystone Woods WMA	Washington	03120218	900	\$1,500,000	Yes

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
TPL - Mud Lake	Anoka	03221226	488	\$2,700,000	No
MVT - Rapids Lake Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11423206	118	\$826,000	No
MVT - San Francisco Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11424212	168	\$546,000	No
TPL - Patterson Lake WMA Addition	Carver	11625220	650	\$4,500,000	No
MVT - San Francisco Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11424215	353	\$1,147,250	No
TPL - Carlos Avery WMA Addition	Chisago	03321205	60	\$80,000	No
TPL - Stanchfield Creek	Isanti	03121212	710	\$2,200,000	No
MVT - Blakeley Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11326236	194	\$630,500	No
MVT - Louisville Swamp Unit Addition, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11423204	5	\$650,000	No
TPL - Vale WMA Addition	Sibley	11326222	165	\$550,000	No
MVT - Jessenland Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Sibley	11326213	200	\$650,000	No
TPL - Paul Hugo Farms WMA Addition	Washington	03121222	230	\$1,000,000	No

Parcel Map



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

Metro Big Rivers

Metro Big Rivers (MBR) Phase 14 will protect, restore & enhance 3,035 acres of priority 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. Through Phase 12, MBR has protected and restored / enhanced 8,039 acres of wildlife habitat in the metro area and has work in-progress on another 3,200 acres. MBR has leveraged OHF grants by 55% with other funds and landowner donations of easement value to-date.

ML2024 Request - \$16,113,600
Leverage - \$1,709,700 (10%)

Protect 1,417 acres
Restore & Enhance 1,618 acres

With OHF and other leverage funds, Metro Big Rivers Phase 14 will permanently protect 900 acres in fee title and 517 acres in easement, restore 883 acres and enhance another 735 acres (3,035 acres total).

- Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) will enhance 321 acres at five sites on or near the Mississippi River. It will enhance 212 acres prairie and 109 acres of forest habitat.
- Great River Greening (GRG) will restore / enhance 277 acres across twelve sites throughout the metro area. It will restore 63 acres and enhance 214 acres of prairie and forest habitat.
- Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect 517 acres through perpetual conservation easement and restore / enhance 120 acres of priority wildlife habitat, including riparian lands, forests, wetlands and grasslands.
- Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee title acquisition 500 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 title 400 acres of priority wildlife habitat and restore / enhance 900 acres of prairie and forest habitat on a recently-acquired WMA complex. Prospective acquisitions are prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource plans.

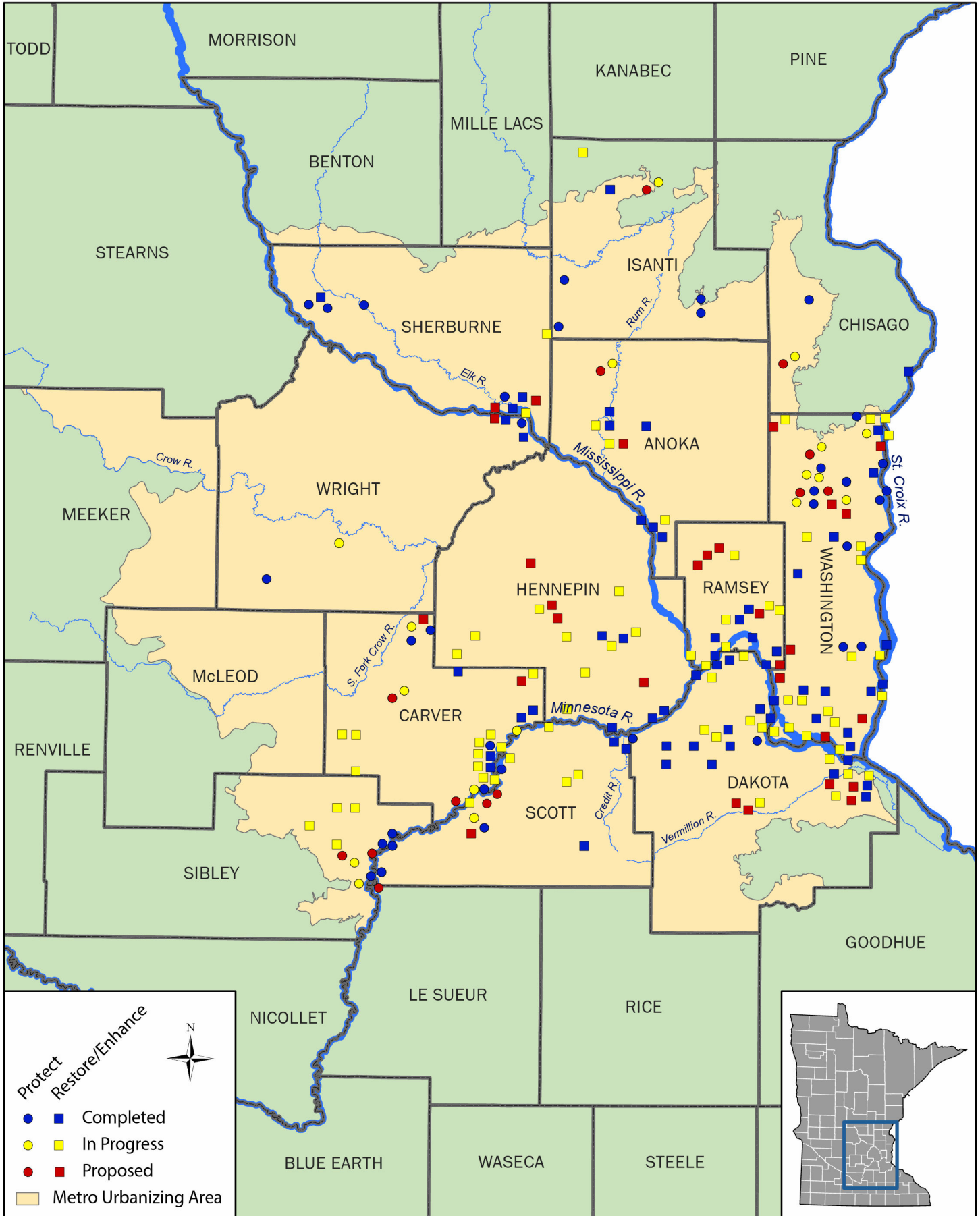
Metro Big Rivers partners work with local, state and federal public partners to identify and prioritize projects in the Metro Urbanizing Area to achieve the priorities of the LSOHC for Outdoor Heritage Funds. The partners also work with landowners who have a commitment to conservation.



For more information:
Deborah Loon
Minnesota Valley Trust
612 801 1935
DLoon@mnvalleytrust.org

Metro Big Rivers Habitat Partnership

Phase 14



MATT MILLETT - MAY 2023 - SOURCES: LSOHC, FMR, GRG, MLT, MVT, TPL, DNR - UTM ZONE 15N



Metro Big Rivers - Phase 14

FY2025/ML2024

PROJECT INFORMATION

Enhance:

212 acres of prairie

109 acres of forest

Location:

5 sites in Sherburne, Dakota, and Washington Counties

Total Project Cost:

\$766,300



Woody encroachment at Camp Cozy and a 2019 prescribed burn at Bailey Point

Sherburne - Camp Cozy Park and Bailey Point Nature Preserve

Camp Cozy is a 49-acre natural area owned by the City of Elk River. Boasting forested shoreline along the Elk River and two remnant dry prairies, the site hosts important pollinator and wildlife habitat. The site will undergo extensive invasive species management in the forest and reduction of woody cover and diversification of native grasses and wildflowers in the dry prairie. Bailey Point is a 24-acre natural area at the confluence of the Mississippi and Elk Rivers. This second phase of restoration here will focus on the continued reduction of invasive woody species in the floodplain forest and further establishing diverse native plants in the restored prairie. Frequent disturbance by flooding in this park on the Elk River provides an opportunity to establish a flood-tolerant shrub and herbaceous layer following invasive species management.





A map of the 60-acre Vermillion Linear Park and spring blooms at the Sand Coulee SNA

Dakota –Vermillion River Linear Park and Hastings Sand Coulee SNA

Vermillion River Linear Park is a 60-acre passive park and natural area owned by the City of Hastings. Situated along the Vermillion River, the site contains floodplain forest and restored dry and mesic prairie. The site will undergo invasive and weedy tree removal to expand prairie habitat and reduction of herbaceous invasive species in the floodplain forest. The Hastings Sand Coulee SNA is a 276-acre property owned by the MN DNR and managed by FMR. This phase of restoration will focus on the continued reduction of invasive woody species in the woodland areas and further establishing diverse native plants in the remnant and restored prairies. Spot spray, prescribed burns, seed collection, and seeding will all be used



A prescribed burn through the woodland and the view from the bluff prairie at River Oaks

Washington – River Oaks Park

River Oaks Park is a 2-acre natural area owned by the City of Cottage Grove. Boasting stunning blufftop views of the Mississippi River and a remnant dry blufftop prairie and savanna, the is a hidden gem and part of an important corridor of wildlife habitat. The site will undergo enhancement through woody invasive plant management in the forest and reduction of woody cover and diversification of native grasses and wildflowers in the dry prairie.



In Metro Big Rivers Phase 14, Great River Greening proposes to conduct forest and prairie restoration and forest enhancement on 277 acres across 12 sites.

Projects will include invasive tree removal, tree stand thinning, onsite biochar processing of biomass removal, planting and seeding of native grass and wildflowers, plantings of large stock and bareroot tree and shrubs with facilitated watering, mowing, herbicide application and spot-spraying, and prescribed burning.

GRG also requests 50% of funds needed to acquire a mobile biochar system to process biomass to reduce offsite disposal, minimize site impacts related to brush pile burning and incorporate biochar into onsite soil to promote a healthier soil complex.



GRG crew processing removed woody invasives on-site with a biochar system

With MBR 14, GRG will complete the following projects:

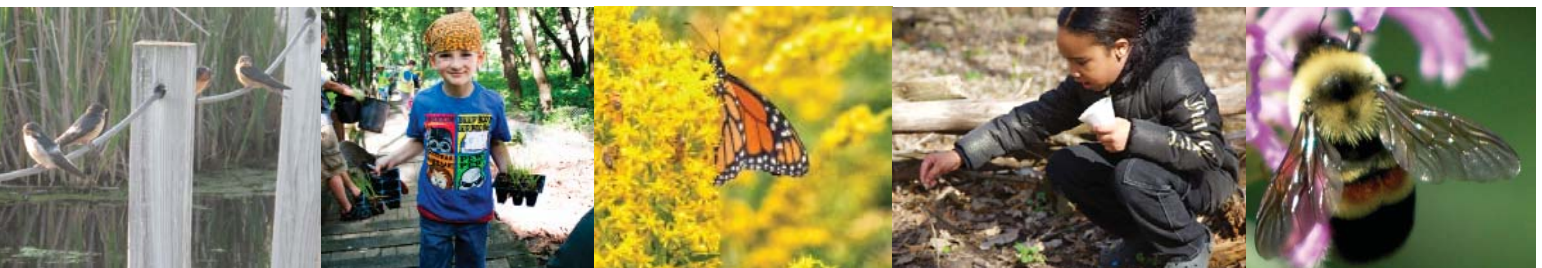
Kelsey Round Lake, Anoka County - Kelsey Round Lake Park is a 153 acre park with in the city of Andover. The park is primarily composed of natural areas encompassing wetlands, oak forest and prairie complexes.

Lake Ann Phase 2, Hennepin County - 100 acre big woods parcel part of the Greenwood Shores and Lake Ann Park complex around the north, east and south shores of Lake Ann. This is a continuation on an additional 40 acres of enhancement work that will begin with work on 60 acres though MBR13 (ML2023).

Medina Lake Nature Preserve, Hennepin County - The nature preserve encompasses approximately 70 acres that includes a portion of Lake Medina and several surrounding acres. The area provides a wildlife habitat and is a beautiful asset to the city, but it mainly serves the Bridgewater at Lake Medina subdivision, because its only access is by crossing a walking bridge over the wetlands. This is the headwaters of Elm Creek, an impaired water.

Wayzata Nature Center, Hennepin County - Wayzata Nature Center is a wetland complex in Wayzata surrounded by a forested edge. The site is accessible from the local neighborhood and the city is taking action to revitalize this parcel of natural area within an older residential area of the city.

Wood Lake Nature Center, Hennepin County - Wood Lake was dedicated as the first municipal nature center in 1971 and was one of the first nature centers built in the Twin Cities. Wood Lake Nature Center is a 150-acre natural area dedicated to environmental education, wildlife observation, and outdoor recreation. The park also features several wildlife viewing areas, a picnic ground, and three miles of trails and boardwalks. The trails are either blacktop or crushed limestone and most are wheelchair accessible during summer months.





Metro Big Rivers - Phase 14

FY2025/ML2024

Wood-Rill SNA, Hennepin County - An outstanding example of Sugar Maple “Big Woods” forest preserved in the urban framework. This forest type is ranked S2, or imperiled, in the state and is increasingly rare in the developing metro-area.

Floral Park, Ramsey County

Hazelnut Park, Ramsey County - Floral and Hazelnut are two pocket parks with in the city of Arden Hills. The parks maintain 50% to 75% of their acreage in natural areas., which is primarily comprised of Oak woodland. They provide direct access to nature for residents and habitat and refuge for wildlife in a built environment. Both sites are adjacent to vegetated utility corridors that connect to other regional natural areas.

Frost Lake Park, Ramsey County - Frost Lake is an urban pocket park located in St. Paul’s Greater East Side 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.

Bailey School Forest, Washington County - Bailey Park serves as a unique function for the city of Newport. It is both a city park where residents can enjoy a relaxing hike immersed in natural areas, as well as an officially designated school forest that serves as an environmental learning park for the students in the South Washington County School District. As part of the property there is roughly 28 acres of degraded grassland and shrubland that are ready for prairie restoration.

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 being mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey.

Houle Parcel, Washington County - The Houle parcel is located in north western 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 upland. Mapped habitats on site include a seepage wetland, green ash/tamarack swamp and upland woodland.



GREAT RIVER GREENING
251 Starkey Street, Suite 2200
Saint Paul, MN 55107
(651) 665-9500





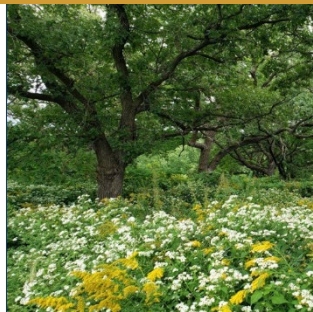
Metro Big Rivers - Phase 14

FY2025/ML2024

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). The Trust also restores and enhances wildlife habitat throughout the Refuge, supports visitor services and urban outreach, and employs interns and apprentices.

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 to expand 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 were used for habitat restoration on the parcel acquired with Phases 6-7. MBR 9 and 10 grants are completing restoration and enhancement on over 900 acres on the Refuge and District. Acquisitions with Phases 11-13 are in-progress.

After acquisition, the Trust completes habitat restoration and enhancement work. Agricultural fields are restored to their native conditions of wetland and prairie habitat. Oak savanna, woodlands, 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 or 612-801-1935, or by visiting www.mnvalleytrust.org.



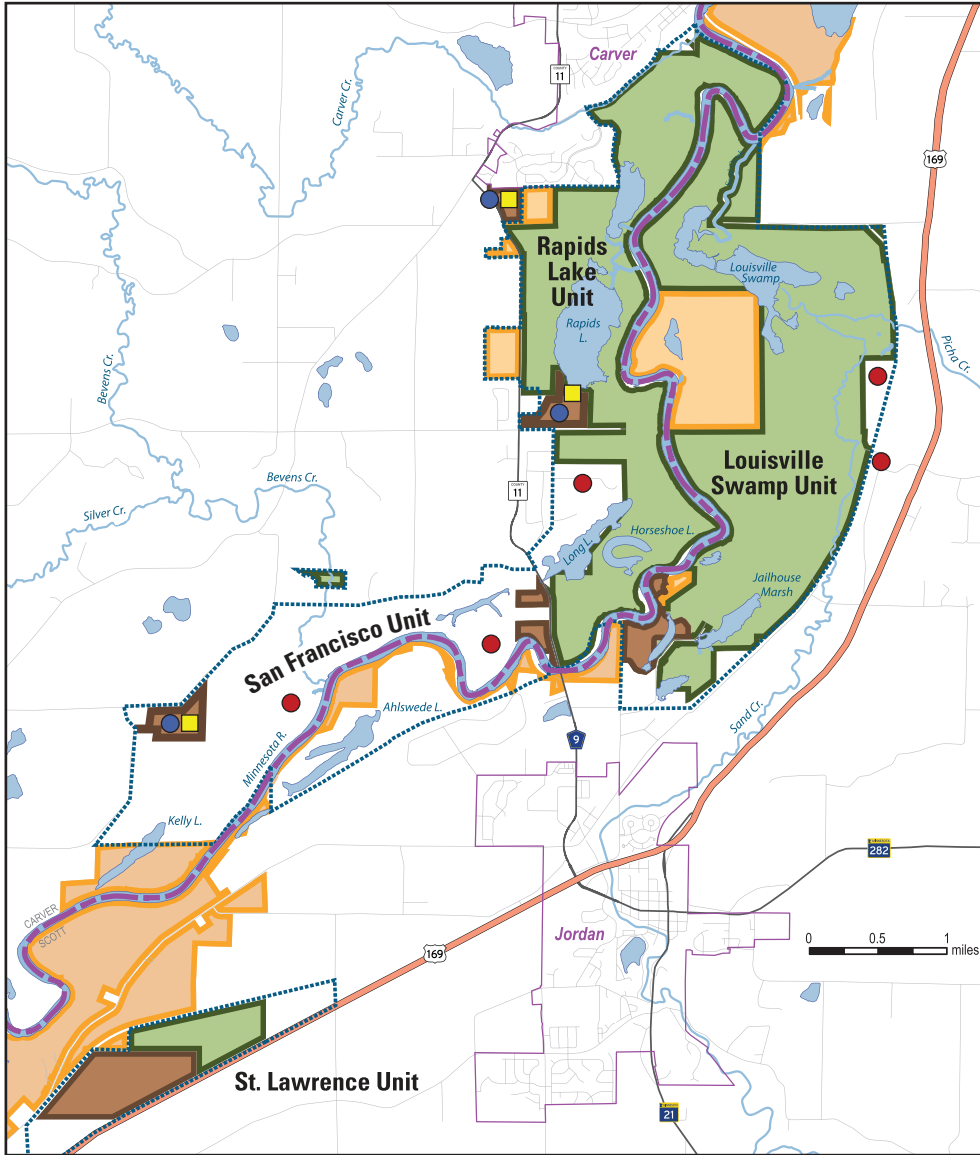
Metro Big Rivers Habitat Partnership

Phase 13 / ML 2023



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

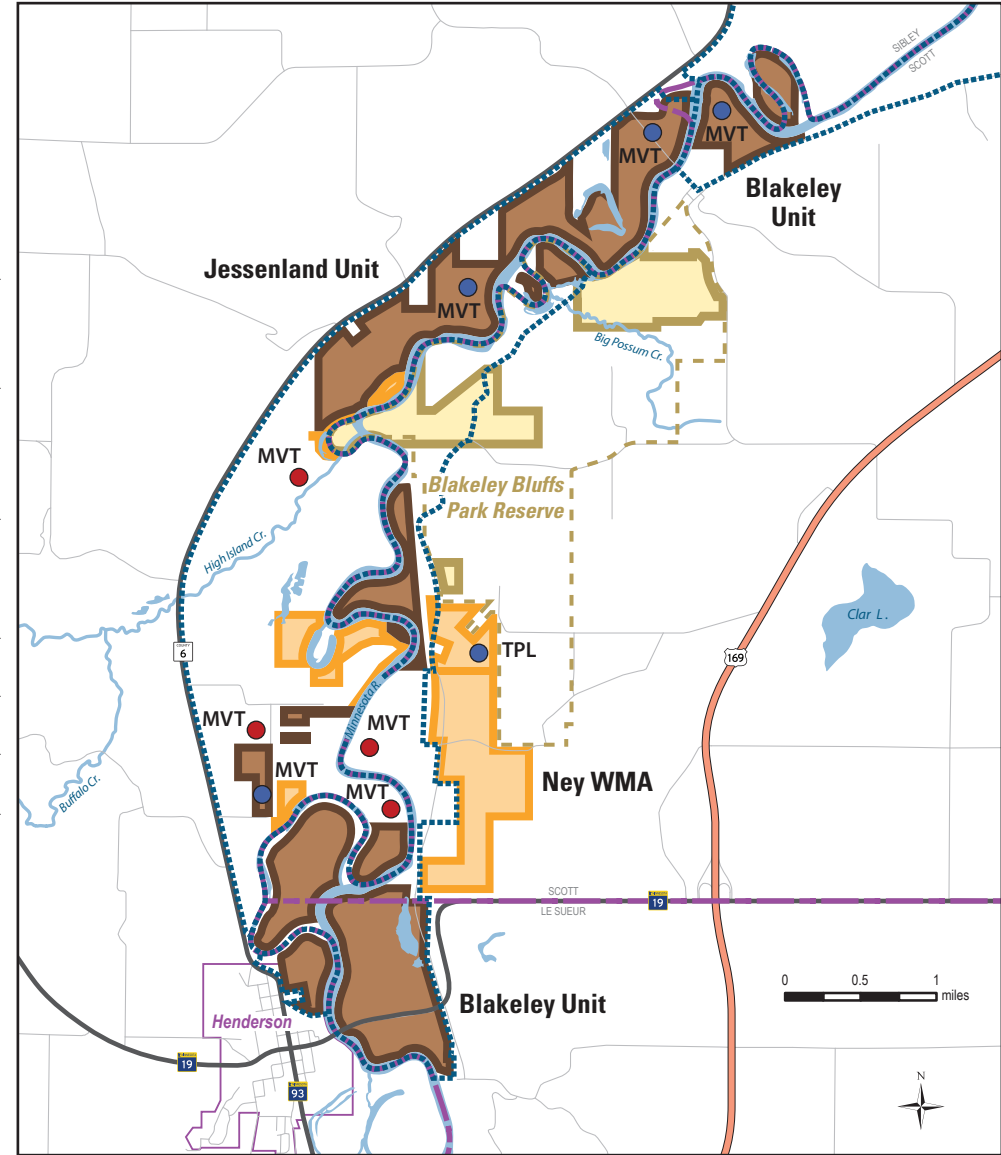
Louisville Swamp, Rapids Lake, St. Lawrence and San Francisco Units



- | | |
|--|---|
| ● Protect - completed | MN Valley Trust lands |
| Protect - in progress | USFWS lands |
| Restore - in progress | MN DNR lands |
| ● Protect - proposed | Scott County lands |

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Blakeley and Jesseland Units



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

- | | |
|---|---|
| Refuge acquisition boundary | Primary road |
| County boundary | Secondary road |
| Municipal boundary | Street |



**TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND™**

Metro Big Rivers - Phase 14

FY2025/ML2024

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. In addition to safeguarding the diversity of threatened ecosystems and creating connections between habitat corridors, this work provides close-to-home public access for hunting and fishing for millions of Minnesotans.

The Metro Big Rivers program is unique due to its proximity to the Twin Cities. 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 create close-to-home opportunities for millions of Minnesotans to experience a variety of wildlife-based recreation opportunities.

To date, TPL has protected 1,741 acres through nine OHF-supported acquisitions with protection of another 1,840 acres underway. Through MBR 14, TPL will protect another 400 acres of high quality habitat across the Metro and restore/enhance 900 acres on previously protected land.

How we work

In partnership with several conservation organizations, TPL is proactively working with communities, and local and state government to **expand, restore, enhance, and connect quality habitat in the metropolitan/urbanizing area.** Through fee-title acquisition, The Trust for Public Land is protecting high-priority property to conserve habitat and provide land for people to get outside and enjoy. Funding comes from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, foundations, and individual contributions.



PHOTO: Andy Richter

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Bob McGillivray – Land Protection Director
2610 University Avenue, Suite 300
St. Paul, MN 55114
651.999.5307

Bob.McGillivray@tpl.org

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Examples of our work

- Keystone Woods WMA:** TPL is currently working on the creation of a huge new WMA in Washington County. This 2,600+ acre property has high biodiversity significance, a number of lakes and is one of the County's Top 10 Priority Conservation Areas; connects other conservation areas in a corridor to the St. Croix River; has excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife, waterfowl, and fish; and as one of the largest blocks of private land in single ownership in the Metro, would provide quality close-to-home hunting and fishing opportunities for Metro residents, many who may be new to WMAs. Of the 2,600 acres, 1,840 will become the new WMA, with the balance being acquired by the County through separate funding, thus leveraging over \$11m of non-OHF funds. With the Keystone Woods property now under contract TPL will acquire Phase I (~475 acres) in Summer 2023, with Phase II (~1,365 acres) following in Fall 2023. Restoration & Enhancement of the property will begin over the next five years, led by TPL in cooperation with DNR, with aid from other conservation partners, including Ducks Unlimited. Activities will be focused on prairie & forest restoration, and woodland enhancement via invasive species removal.
- Long Lake Conservation Area:** In 2020 TPL acquired this wooded 37-acre property with shoreline along Long Lake and pocketed with several small ponds and wetlands. The property is within the St. Croix Moraine complex, a band of rolling hills that characterizes much of the landscape in northern Washington County. Adjacent to a 120-acre conservation easement and within Washington County's Carnelian Creek Conservation Area the property provides outstanding public hunting and fishing opportunities.





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

1. **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

2. **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:

- a) **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							
ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE		0	0	0	0	0	0
SIZE/QUANTITY (25 PTS)		Points					
Size: Acres of existing habitat to be protected by an easement	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL:	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONDITION/QUALITY (25 PTS)		Points					
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						
SUBTOTAL:	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
LANDSCAPE CONTEXT (50 PTS)		Points					
Protected Lands Context (18 pts)							
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
Ecological Context (18 pts)							
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
Prioritization Context (14 pts)							
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						
SUBTOTAL:	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
COST							
Bid amount (\$/per acre)							
Donative value (\$/acre)							
TOTAL ACQUISITION COST:		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -