



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR WMA & SNA Acquisition, Phase XVII
Laws of Minnesota 2025 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/09/2025

Project Title: DNR WMA & SNA Acquisition, Phase XVII

Funds Recommended: \$1,916,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2025, Ch. 36, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 2(h)

Appropriation Language: \$1,916,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire in fee and restore and enhance lands for wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, and to acquire land in fee for scientific and natural area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquisition of lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Jeff Tillma

Title: Division of Fish and Wildlife Acquisition Coordinator

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Location Information

County Location(s): Renville, Chippewa and Redwood.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Prairie

Narrative**Abstract**

Acquire approximately 200 acres of high priority habitat for designation as Wildlife Management Area or Scientific and Natural Area in the LSOHC Prairie Planning Section emphasizing Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Conservation That Works 3.0, WMA and AMA Acquisition & Management Strategic Plan and SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan with priority given to sites of high and outstanding biodiversity significance by the Minnesota Biological Survey. All lands will be open for public hunting and fishing (a limited number of SNA's are proposed for limited hunting for instance archery only or hunting but no trapping).

Design and Scope of Work

Approximately 200 acres of wildlife habitat will be protected through fee title acquisition and development as Wildlife Management Areas or Scientific & Natural Areas. While the state cannot promise leverage or match without first having funding appropriated, previous Outdoor Heritage appropriations to DNR for WMA and SNA acquisitions have been leveraged through donations, Reinvest in Minnesota Critical Habitat Match, and Surcharge (a \$6.50 surcharge on small game license sales).

Wildlife Management Areas. WMAs protect lands and waters which have a high potential for wildlife production and provide for public hunting, fishing and trapping, and for other compatible outdoor recreational uses such as wildlife viewing and hiking. While highly successful, the current WMA system does not meet all present and future needs for wildlife habitat, wildlife population management, hunter access and wildlife related recreation. This is notably true in the LSOHC Prairie Planning Section where public ownership in many counties is less than 5 percent. DNR Section of Wildlife uses a GIS-based tools to identify the highest priority tracts for potential WMA acquisitions. This quantitative approach scores and ranks acquisition proposals based on a set of weighted criteria and creates a standardized method for evaluating proposed acquisitions on a statewide level. Criteria are periodically reviewed and adapted to changing priorities.

Scientific & Natural Areas. The SNA Program will increase public hunting and fishing opportunities while protecting sites with outstanding natural values. Protection is targeted at high priority areas identified in the SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan with emphasis on prairie core areas identified in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan. A quantitative system scores and ranks acquisition proposals based on a weighted set of six criteria. Priority is given to sites of high and outstanding biodiversity significance by the Minnesota Biological Survey, high quality native plant communities and habitat for endangered and threatened species. Larger parcels which adjoin other conservation lands, improve habitat management, are under imminent threat and are partially donated are also rated highly.

DNR strategic acquisition priorities include, but are not limited to, protection of:

Prairies, Grasslands, and associated Wetlands Existing, high quality significant or rare natural resources Water resources

Critical pollinator habitat essential for native species and agricultural crops

Large blocks of habitat or natural intact communities, that improve riparian and terrestrial connectivity or maintain ecosystem services through protection of climate resilient, high biodiversity areas

Potential acquisition opportunities from willing sellers are coordinated with stakeholders and partners to eliminate duplication and identify concerns and support. Coordinating with partners has been successful to ensure we are working cooperatively and on priority parcels.

Properties acquired through this appropriation require County Board of Commissioners' written approval in the county of acquisition, will be designated as WMA or SNA through a Commissioner's Designation Order, brought up to minimum DNR standards, and listed on the DNR website. Basic site improvements will include boundary and LSOHC acknowledgement signs and may include any necessary site cleanup and parcel initial development.

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

Potential acquisitions for WMAs and SNAs are objectively scored for their wildlife habitat value. The DNR uses weighted criteria and prioritizes high scoring parcels for acquisition. For example, candidates for WMAs score higher with a prairie grouse lek, in a pheasant habitat complex, presence of shallow lakes, and occurrence of deer wintering areas; candidates for WMAs and SNAs score higher which contain threatened, endangered, and other rare species and species of greatest conservation need and protect high quality native plant communities which support wildlife.

Native plant communities with exceptional value as wildlife habitat proposed for protection through this proposal include Southern dry prairie, dry sand-gravel prairie, mesic prairie, dry hill prairie, mesic brush prairie, wet seepage prairie, and other priority plant communities.

The following species in greatest conservation need and rare species targeted in this proposal include but are not limited to: mammals– white-tailed jackrabbit, prairie vole, harvest mouse, northern grasshopper mouse, and western harvest mouse; birds – bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, oven bird, chestnut-collared longspur (endangered), upland sandpiper, American bittern, marbled godwit, Nelson's sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, black-throated blue warbler, red-shouldered hawk, Loggerhead shrike, cerulean warbler; reptiles/amphibians - wood turtle (threatened) and mudpuppy; Topeka shiner; invertebrates – regal fritillary, Dakota skipper, Iowa Skipper, Ottoe Skipper, Pawnee Skipper, Poweshiek skipper, leadplant flowermoth, phlox moth, and plants/trees – small white lady's slipper and Western prairie fringed orchid, slender naiad, butternut.

What are the elements of this plan that are critical from a timing perspective?

This proposal aims to place under permanent protection key habitat types currently facing a range of urgent threats in Minnesota, from development to degradation.

Minnesota once had millions of acres of native prairie and wetlands as part of prairie grassland/wetland habitat complexes. Today, only a small percentage of those acres remain. And, each year additional acres of grassland and wetland habitat is lost to agriculture, drainage, development, and degradation due to invasive species. Retiring CRP acres further reduce grassland habitat. There is an urgent, and ongoing need to permanently protect what remains of our states grasslands and grassland/wetland habitat complexes.

Describe how the plan expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:

The DNR uses GIS-based scoring systems to objectively rank potential acquisitions and develop statewide priority lists.

These systems incorporate scientific data giving priority to locations within and that add to: 1) an important habitat corridor or complex (such as identified by the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Pheasant Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan), 2) native plant communities and sites of outstanding and high biodiversity significance mapped by Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS), and 3) parcels that adjoin existing units or other conservation lands.

The end result is the prioritization of acquisitions that protect larger blocks of habitat or natural intact communities, improve riparian and terrestrial connectivity or maintain ecosystem services through protection of climate resilient, high biodiversity areas.

Which top 2 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Area's Long Range Plan

Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

Explain how this plan 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.

Our goal is to permanently protect and restore approximately 300 acres of habitat. Protecting the remaining high quality habitats is especially important to prevent further loss of existing diverse high quality habitats. Prairie restoration includes planting a diverse mix of grasses and forbs ensuring a plant community that will be more resilient to a changing climate. Native plant communities filter run off and increase groundwater recharge helping to improve water quality and supply for riparian wildlife and fish. Increasing native habitat and improving plant diversity across larger landscapes will help buffer the impacts of climate change as species adapt to a changing environment.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Prairie

Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ Acres of grassland/wetland habitat complexes acquired that support upland game birds, migratory waterfowl, big-game, and unique Minnesota species (e.g. endangered, threatened, and special concern species and Species in Greatest Conservation Need). Species lists (and numbers where available) of those species observed or documented.

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 an acceleration of the DNR WMA and SNA acquisition program work to a level not attainable but for this appropriation.

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

According to WMA/AMA Directive on development standards, WMAs are developed to at least minimum standards within two years of acquisition for facility and habitat development that will provide basic asset preservation, public access and safety, environmental and cultural resource protection and soil and water resource conservation.

Initial development efforts can extend 2-3 years beyond the “minimum standard” time table to establish high quality native plant communities. All new WMA acquisitions require a WMA Initial Development Plan (IDP) be completed by the Area Wildlife Supervisor responsible for land management and approved by the Region.

SNAs have similar standards with site specific work being directed by each site’s Adaptive Management Plan. As part of the state outdoor recreation system, ongoing maintenance will be accomplished through routine management activities accomplished by our network of DNR offices. Periodic enhancements will be accomplished by staff, CCM crews, temporary project staffing, through vendor contract or by volunteers if appropriate.

Long-term management costs (e.g., invasive species treatments, prescribed fire, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination funding sources, including, but not limited to the Game and Fish Fund, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund, federal grants, and small game surcharge.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2029 and beyond	Game and Fish Fund, Surcharge, other	Ongoing management to DNR standards for WMA and SNA units	-	-
2028	Outdoor Heritage, ML25	Initial habitat development, native vegetation established, invasive species control, wetlands restored (as needed)	-	-
2026	Outdoor Heritage, ML25	Boundary survey, parking area development, boundary signs and other sign posting	Additional initial site development	-

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

DNR’s OHF projects aim to serve all Minnesotans. At the same time, we are bringing more focus in all our work to BIPOC and diverse communities. The Minnesota DNR has adopted advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a key priority in its 2020-22 strategic plan. The plan focuses on increasing the cultural competence of our staff, creating a workforce that is reflective of Minnesota, continuing to strengthen tribal consultation and building partnerships with diverse communities.

The OHF funds high quality habitat projects that provide ecosystem services like clean water and carbon sequestration that support environmental justice. OHF also supports public access and recreational opportunities on these lands. OHF projects and outcomes benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities.

The DNR has diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that benefit all OHF projects:

- Multilingual and culturally specific hunting and fishing education programs take place on public lands.
- All hiring is equal opportunity, affirmative action, and veteran-friendly. Contracting seeks out Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned businesses.
- Public engagement seeks out BIPOC voices and involves diverse communities. Outreach and marketing of projects has this focus as well.
- Partnerships are at the center of all projects. Tribes in particular are consulted in all pertinent areas of the DNR's work, under EO 19-24.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program 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)?**

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

No

Describe the permanent protection and justification for additional protection:

Some lands proposed for acquisition may contain a portion of protected land. In these cases, we will seek LSOHC approval, appraise protected acres separately and seek to have that value donated or pay for them using non-OHF funds.

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?

Yes

Explain what will be planted and include the maximum percentage of any acquired parcel that would be planted into foodplots by the proposer or the end owner of the property:

WMA's are part of the State's Outdoor Recreation System established by State Statute 86A. Subdivision 8 of that statute defines the purpose of use of WMA's as, " A state wildlife management area shall be established to protect those lands and waters which have a high potential for wildlife production and to develop and manage these lands and waters for the production of wildlife, for public hunting, fishing, and trapping, and for other compatible outdoor recreational uses."

To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming on a small percentage of WMA's (<1%) specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife, recreation or reduce crop depredation from neighboring properties in agriculture-dominated landscapes with limited winter food sources.

Commonly planted crops include corn, soybeans, small grains and hay that can include alfalfa or a wildlife mix. Crops are chosen based on a particular wildlife or recreational need and follow crop rotations that adhere to soil health principles. Most food plots occupy a small portion of a particular tract and may include up to 5% of a particular parcel. Percentages are much lower considering the entire WMA.

We don't have any plans to plant food plots on the parcels currently listed in this proposal. However, future management needs may change or additional parcels may be added later that may include food plots.

Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?

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:

All WMA lands to be acquired will be open for hunting and fishing with no variations from State of Minnesota regulations.

All SNAs acquired with this funding would be open to the most appropriate types of hunting for the particular parcels. Priority will be given to acquiring lands to be open to all hunting, trapping and fishing.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of MN

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA

SNA

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

1-3

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

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

No

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

Yes

All parcels acquired with this appropriation will be restored and brought up to DNR WMA minimum standards.

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

Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Develop acquired lands to minimum WMA/SNA standards including signage, parking areas, and native vegetation planting if necessary	6/30/2033
Acquire in fee 200 acres for designation as Wildlife Management Areas and Scientific and Natural Areas	6/30/2029

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2033

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

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

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

- (1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2029;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this section is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2033;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2030;
- (4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and
- (5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

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

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$38,300	-	-	\$38,300
Contracts	\$42,200	-	-	\$42,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,705,000	-	-	\$1,705,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$9,100	-	-	\$9,100
Professional Services	\$44,700	-	-	\$44,700
Direct Support Services	\$16,400	-	-	\$16,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$60,300	-	-	\$60,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,916,000	-	-	\$1,916,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
WMA acquisition coordinator	0.09	3.0	\$38,300	-	-	\$38,300

Amount of Request: \$1,916,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$54,700

As a % of the total request: 2.85%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

Project outputs and budget line items will be reduced proportionately.

Does this project 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?

Project outputs and budget line items (excluding personnel and DSS) would be reduced proportionately.

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

Personnel would not be reduced. DSS would be recalculated to take into account the overall reduction in the budget.

Why?

- 1) WMA acquisition personnel are at part-time levels
- 2) DSS is determined by a calculator, not directly proportional to funding

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Includes anticipated needs related to habitat and site development to bring newly acquired parcels up to MN DNR WMA/SNA standards.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Appraisals

Other : Title opinions, other legal services to secure easements and drainage agreement releases

Surveys

Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

1-3

Travel

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

No

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

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?

Direct Support Services is determined using the standard DNR Direct & Necessary Cost Calculator. Landowner payments and real estate transaction costs are deleted from the top before other parts of the calculator are applied.

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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	200	-	-	200
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	200	-	-	200

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

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	53
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Easement	-
Enhance	-
Total	53

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$1,916,000	-	-	\$1,916,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	\$1,916,000	-	-	\$1,916,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	200	-	200
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	200	-	200

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$1,916,000	-	\$1,916,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	\$1,916,000	-	\$1,916,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	\$9,580	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$9,580	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

The DNR uses GIS-based scoring systems to objectively rank potential acquisitions and develop state wide priority lists.

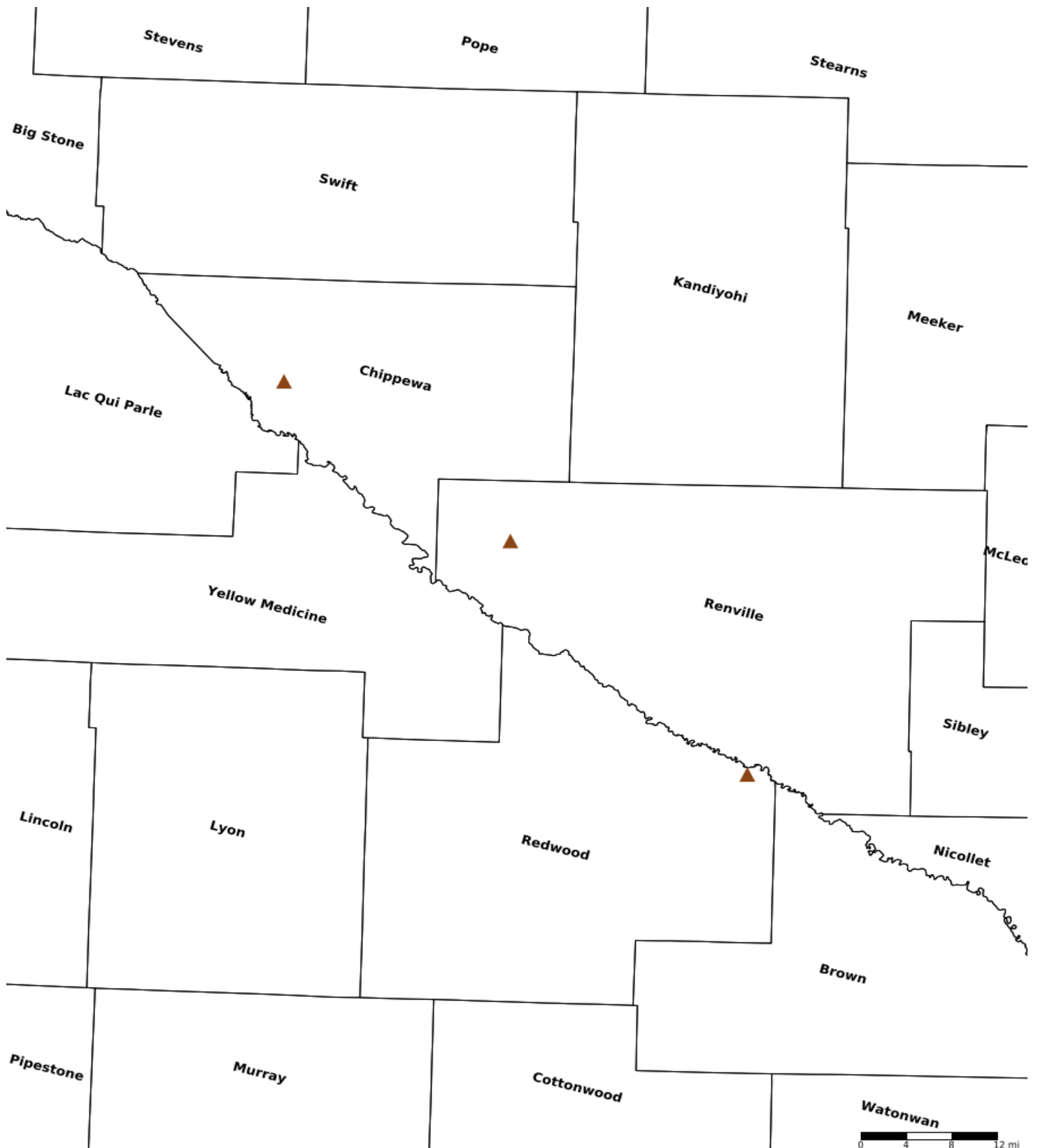
These systems incorporate scientific data giving priority to locations within and that add to: 1) an important habitat corridor or complex (such as identified by the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Pheasant Action Plan, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan, and the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan), 2) native plant communities and sites of outstanding and high biodiversity significance mapped by Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS), and 3) parcels that adjoin existing units or other conservation lands.

In addition, scoring takes into account habitat containing endangered, threatened, and other rare species, watershed/wetland qualities as well as habitat management considerations and suitability for public access, hunting and fishing

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Bergo WMA Tract 11	Chippewa	11841223	147	\$400,000	No
Cedar Mountain WMA/SNA Tract 9	Redwood	11234215	279	\$800,000	No
Rosaasen Slough WMA Tracts 27 & 28	Renville	11637231	260	\$1,500,000	No

Parcel Map



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