



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Protection Program Phase 13 Laws of Minnesota 2025 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/05/2025

Project Title: Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Protection Program Phase 13

Funds Recommended: \$2,183,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2025, Ch. 36, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(d)

Appropriation Language: \$2,183,000 the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, in cooperation with the Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District, to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore and enhance forest wildlife habitat within the boundaries of the Minnesota National Guard Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape and Army Compatible Use Buffer. Of this amount, up to \$110,000 is to establish a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. Subdivision 8, paragraph (b), does not apply to this project. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Shannon Wettstein

Title: District Manager

Organization: Morrison SWCD

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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Activity types:

Protect in Easement

Enhance

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Forest

Habitat

Wetlands

Prairie

Narrative**Abstract**

Phase 13 of the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape ACUB Partnership will utilize permanent conservation easements (BWSR RIM) to acquire 850-acres of high quality habitat in order to accomplish: PERMANENT PROTECTION of high-quality habitat corridors, ENHANCEMENT and RESTORATION practices to protect soil and water, and create CONNECTIVITY between habitat corridors and public lands. This effort will be in coordination with the CRSL partnership and the Morrison SWCD to secure habitat corridor easements that will action the goals of the State Wildlife Action Plan, local Landscape Stewardship Plan and the CRSL Strategic Plan.

Design and Scope of Work

Phase 13 will permanently protect approximately 850-acres and fund restoration and enhancement activities that will benefit fish, game, and migratory bird habitat in an area ripe for development within portions of Crow Wing, and Cass County that lie within the 5-mile ACUB agreement area along the MN State Highway 210 corridor.

The targeted area scores high on the Wildlife Action Network indicating multiple overlapping priorities within the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), the Brainerd Lakes CFA, and the Sentinel Landscape program area. This phase will secure approximately 11 permanent conservation RIM easements, utilizing partnerships with Camp Ripley, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and the Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Easement acquisition in this area will protect forest habitat corridors that are critical to the public for fishing, hunting, recreational opportunities, and overall development of landscape resilience. These habitat corridors and complexes are critical protection priorities for the State of Minnesota, MN National Guard's (MNNG) and National Guard Bureau's (NGB) mission to sustain military training of soldiers, our local economy, the National Mississippi River Flyway, and Mississippi Headwaters Board mission.

Parcels were prioritized and targeted to maximize habitat benefits. Evaluation criteria includes: ecological and habitat factors for resident and migratory wildlife species, restoration potential of marginal agricultural lands, restoration potential for wetlands, and overall connectivity of the parcels. The focus area is occupied by several threatened and endangered species, including the Northern Long-eared bat, and Gray wolf, along with two species proposed for listing, the Tricolored bat and Monarch butterfly. Efforts to protect, enhance, and restore parcels in this area ensures perpetual, good quality habitat for these at-risk species in an area that is facing imminent threat of conversion due to the increase in development pressures along the MN State Highway 210 corridor.

In 2016, Camp Ripley and strategically identified lands near the installation were designated as a federal Sentinel Landscape, now one of twelve in the nation. This designation by both State (2015) and Federal entities coordinates strategies to protect this landscape. Many agencies have identified their scope of priorities within the CRSL 10-mile boundary. The CRSL Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program has over 350 interested landowners on a waiting list for participation. To date OHF support of almost \$19M has leveraged over \$44.2M in federal dollars to protect over 42,000 acres.

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

The focus area for this proposal falls within the Camp Ripley-Pillsbury-Lake Alexander Important Bird Area (IBA). The 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies 346 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) 92 being birds. This project area supports the greatest concentration of nesting Red-shouldered hawks in the state along with 65 other SGCN birds. Ten of these are considered Mission Sensitive Species (MSS) by the Department of Defense (DoD). These species are at higher risk of listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) which has a high potential to impede the training and testing mission of Camp Ripley. Thirty-six other non-avian SGCN have also been identified within this area totaling nearly 30% of all SGCN within the state. This project directly addresses two primary causes of SGCN declines, habitat fragmentation and climate change impacts. The 2019 State Wildlife Action Plan was amended to include the Brainerd Lakes Conservation Focus area (CFA), an area of habitat and species priorities that overlap with the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape. The area contains medium-high, and high priority scores within the CFA.

The focus area is occupied by several threatened and endangered species, including the Northern Long-eared bat, and Gray wolf, along with two species proposed for listing, the Tricolored bat and Monarch butterfly. Efforts to protect, enhance, and restore parcels in this area ensures perpetual, good quality habitat for these at-risk species. The proposal focuses on areas with overlapping priorities for all species listed above to maximize habitat resilience benefits.

The project area is on the fringe of forest habitat that is under extreme pressure from development leading to habitat fragmentation. Creating a connected network of perpetual, resilient habitat corridors is essential to the long-term recovery of these species under the Endangered Species Act, in addition to the state listed SGCN species and neotropical migratory birds in the area.

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

This program has an established parcel ranking and scoring methodology, with 350 landowners on the waiting list. Urgency exists as we see ownership changes and pressure to convert lands to non-habitat uses. As development pressure and land values rise, the cost to protect lands increases, and opportunity to do so decreases. This state funding leverages annual DOD funding in addition to NRCS funding for practices and technical assistance. Our program lead by the Morrison SWCD has a proven track record of being able to deliver easements, monitor compliance and foster additional habitat enhancement through BMP program integration. This CRSL program protects the multiple benefits of wildlife and habitat protection, water quality protection and the training sustainability of Camp Ripley. All of these benefits roll up to a positive regional economic impact from outdoor recreation, tourism, employment and the local tax base.

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

The focus area is on the fringe of forest habitat that is under extreme pressure from development leading to habitat fragmentation and has been limited to ensure a concentration of easement acquisitions that provide landscape scale benefits. The MN County Biological Survey has identified several native plant communities within this project area that are vulnerable to extirpation as well as sites with existing high biodiversity. The target work area also contains high value existing habitat and public access via existing Wildlife Management Areas, State Forest and Scientific Natural Areas that are being buffered with easements. Protecting these parcels is a high priority for the ACUB Program, and the DNR State Wildlife Action Plan.

The area is occupied by several threatened and endangered species, including the Northern Long-eared bat, and Gray wolf, along with two species proposed for listing, the Tricolored bat and Monarch butterfly. The proposal focuses on areas with overlapping multi-agency priorities for all threatened or endangered species listed above, in addition to state listed SGCN species and neotropical migratory birds in the area, to maximize habitat resilience benefits.

Creating a connected network of perpetual, resilient habitat corridors is essential for the adaptation and long-term recovery of these species. This effort will ensure public lands with high biodiversity are not negatively impacted by the pressures of development and continue to be viable habitat that also benefits public recreational opportunities

Which top 2 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 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.

This project directly addresses two primary causes of SGCN declines, habitat fragmentation and climate change impacts. Climate and habitat resilience are built on the protection and restoration of high-quality habitats, while prioritizing patch connectivity to ensure a network of perpetual, resilient habitat corridors. This resilient matrix of high-quality protected habitat provides species with the ability to move and improves their chance to adapt with the changing climate.

The project area was selected to have overlapping benefits for threatened and endangered species to maximize habitat resilience. There are also many restoration and enhancement opportunities in the focus area to further build resiliency across the landscape.

Protection and enhancement of these parcels is critical to the long-term health and recovery of area wildlife species.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Northern Forest

Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *A summary of the total acres of associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes. Sustained habitat availability within a certain region is expected to maintain the carrying capacity of associated wildlife within that region. This would affect both game and non-game species. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured.*

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 proposal is not supplanting or a substitution for any previous funding not from Legacy Fund sources or for the same purpose.

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement into perpetuity. The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and enforcement of its conservation easements. Easements are monitored for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site monitoring is performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and partners' staff document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs have been calculated at \$10,000 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2025-Ongoing	Stewardship Account	Compliance checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations.	Enforcement Action taken by MN Attorney Generals office.
2025-Ongoing	Landowner Responsibility	Maintain compliance with easement terms.	-	-

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

Keeping land and water systems intact that protect Mississippi River quality and quantity do have long-term cost benefits related to water treatment and future treatment costs in downstream communities. The sustainability of Camp Ripley as a training facility ensures permanent employment opportunities and year round training to state agencies, law enforcement and other branches of military service which do not exclude on the basis of race, sex or national origin.

The CRSL partnership worked to develop and support Sylvan Township in a Minnesota Historical Society Cultural Resource grant of \$145,000 to conduct a Cultural Literature Review of the CRSL program area. This research resulted in a novel methodology to gather and make accessible in GIS spatial data and full report all of the known and potential cultural information in the CRSL. Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and local tribe members were

interviewed for this project and the project results were shared with THPO leadership, the Office of the State Archeologist and the State Historic Preservation Office. All of this work supports a CRSL strategy to focus protection on culturally significant sites that also share protection of habitat values.

Morrison SWCD is planning a Planting for the Future program as a part of a partnership between the district, Camp Ripley and Tribal schools from around Minnesota. This program is a cultural exchange between the tribe's students that conduct native species plantings and harvesting on Camp Ripley, drum ceremonies and learning about the National Guard.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

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

Yes

Who will manage the easement?

BWSR

Who will be the easement holder?

The State of Minnesota

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

We are planning to execute 11 easements with this funding.

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?

Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

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?

No

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

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:

This appropriation is funding a program that will have a parcel list identified at a later time. Roads or trails are typically excluded from the easement area if they serve no beneficial purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring, or enforcement. This question is being answered with utmost flexibility in absence of a LSOHC definition of trails and specified trail types (permanent or temporary, beneficial for maintenance, animal trails, etc.).

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the BWSR RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,500 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5-years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the RIM Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Though uncommon, there could be a potential for new trails to be developed, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). This question is being answered with utmost flexibility in absence of a LSOHC definition of trails and specified trail types (permanent or temporary, beneficial for maintenance, animal trails, etc.).

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the BWSR RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,500 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5-years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the RIM Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

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

Yes

Restoration funds have been built into the budget. Landowners will work with the Morrison SWCD to develop a conservation plan and provide technical and financial assistance to execute the restoration or enhancement project using BWSR specifications and NRCS practice 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
Easements recorded	June 30, 2027
Allocations to specific parcels	June 30, 2025
Final report submitted	November 1, 2027
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30, 2025

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2028**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	\$92,300	-	NA	\$92,300
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$1,863,200	-	-	\$1,863,200
Easement Stewardship	\$110,000	-	-	\$110,000
Travel	\$3,900	-	-	\$3,900
Professional Services	\$70,400	-	-	\$70,400
Direct Support Services	\$36,100	-	-	\$36,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$5,500	-	-	\$5,500
Supplies/Materials	\$1,600	-	-	\$1,600
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,183,000	-	-	\$2,183,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Easement Specialist	0.75	3.0	\$92,300	-	NA	\$92,300

Amount of Request: \$2,183,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$128,400

As a % of the total request: 5.88%

Easement Stewardship: \$110,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 5.9%

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

The number of easements could be scaled back depending on appropriation. All associated personnel/equipment/stewardship would be proportionate.

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?

The number of easements could be scaled back depending on appropriation. All associated personnel/equipment/stewardship would be proportionate.

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

They would be proportionately reduced.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Other : Morrison SWCD staff to navigate landowners through the easement process including the initial application, assistance clearing title and final easement execution.

Easement Stewardship

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

The number of easements anticipated for protection is 11. Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs have been calculated at \$10,000 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement.

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

N/A

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?

BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type that is done.

Other Equipment/Tools

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

Sign posts, signs and hardware will be purchased to properly sign easement boundaries.

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

Yes

Is Confirmation Document attached?

[Yes](#)

Cash : \$1,157,250

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	850	-	850
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	850	-	850

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$2,183,000	-	\$2,183,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$2,183,000	-	\$2,183,000

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	850	850
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	850	850

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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	\$2,183,000	\$2,183,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$2,183,000	\$2,183,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$2,568	-
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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	\$2,568
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1.5 miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

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

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

The Morrison SWCD conducts ongoing outreach to landowners with large parcels that have high ecological valued properties within the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape. Landowners interested in participating in the program complete and submit an interest form to the Morrison SWCD, then it is sent on to Camp Ripley for ranking. Camp Ripley ranks parcels of land to be considered for possible funding through the ACUB program based on a number of criteria which considers encroachment threat and highest ecological benefits. Highest ranked landowners are provided back to the SWCD. The SWCD approaches prioritized landowners for possible participation in the program.