



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Big Rivers Phase 15
ML 2025 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/03/2024

Proposal Title: Metro Big Rivers Phase 15

Funds Requested: \$21,763,900

Confirmed Leverage Funds: \$2,244,600

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Deborah Loon

Title: Executive Director

Organization: MN Valley Trust (Metro Big Rivers)

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Location Information

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

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 15 will protect 833 acres in fee title and 517 acres in permanent conservation easement, restore 846 acres and enhance 859 acres of priority habitat in the big rivers corridors in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area (3,055 acres total). Partners will leverage OHF grant by 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 15 will protect, restore and enhance 3,055 acres of 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 conservation need (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 296 acres at 5 sites to increase native plant diversity, improve pollinator and wildlife habitat, bolster water quality, and improve public access to natural spaces. Projects include invasive woody plant removal, seeding and planting native prairie and forest species, mowing, spot-spraying, and prescribed burning. 39 acres of enhancement occur on remnant native prairie.

- Hastings Sand Coulee SNA: Enhance 57 acres of prairie, including 36 acres native prairie, and 62 acres forest
- Highlands of Riverpointe: Enhance 31 acres prairie and 22 acres forest
- Pine Bend Bluffs SNA: Enhance 42 acres forest
- Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park: Enhance 10 acres prairie, including 3 acres native prairie, and 58 acres forest
- Riverside Park: Enhance 1 acre prairie and 13 acres forest

Great River Greening (GRG) will restore and enhance 374 acres of forest and prairie at 12 sites. Projects include invasive tree removal, shoreline restoration, tree stand thinning, onsite biochar processing, planting and seeding native grass and wildflowers, planting climate-resilient trees and shrubs, mowing, herbicide application and spot-spraying, and prescribed burning.

- Marsh East: Restore 8 acres oak savanna
- Kelsey Round Lake: Enhance 31 acres forest
- Innsbruck Park: Restore 22 acres forest
- Locke Park: Restore and enhance 83 acres woodland
- Ritter Farm: Restore 20 acres prairie
- Bailey School Forest: Restore 45 acres and enhance 10 acres oak forest
- Bass Lake Preserve Phase2: Restore 11 acres woodland
- Parkers Lake Park: Restore 1800 lineal feet (2 acres) shoreline

- Mississippi River Bluffs Phase 1: Enhance 22 acres of river bluff forest and savanna
- Wood-Rill SNA: Enhance 40 acres big woods
- Crystal Spring SNA: Enhance 40 acres forest
- Falls Creek SNA Phase 2: Enhance 40 acres forest

Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect 517 acres through perpetual conservation easement, restore 55 acres and enhance 180 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 383 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.

Trust for Public Land (TPL) will protect through fee acquisition 450 acres of priority wildlife habitat and restore/enhance 800 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.

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 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 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 15 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 partners will raise funds and work with partners to ensure the project benefits are maintained. FMR and GRG will continue hosting volunteer events to maintain habitat investments.

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:

MBR 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, from lower-income, densely-populated neighborhoods to 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 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 increases underrepresented youth participating in environmental career pathway programs; at least 65% of participants identify as black, indigenous, or a person of color.

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 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 community groups with conservation landowners for youth mentor hunts, cultural or ceremonial use, conservation training and nature-based education.

Through its partnership with the MN Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Trust for Public Land facilitates mentored hunting and angling opportunities for diverse communities on public lands and waters across Minnesota, with a focus on ones protected by the OHF. Like mentee participants, the mentors come from historically marginalized communities with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. We know that seeing diversity in outdoor spaces helps foster a sense of representation, belonging and inclusion.

Activity Details

Requirements

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, 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:

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 insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this proposal 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:

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 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
- County

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA
- National Wildlife Refuge
- SNA
- State Forest
- AMA
- Other

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 through LSOHC in the past?

Yes

Are any of these past appropriations still OPEN?

Yes

Approp Year	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
2024	\$8,123,000	-	-	-
2023	\$15,339,000	\$10,584,383	\$4,754,617	69.0%
2022	\$8,200,000	\$6,101,585	\$2,098,415	74.41%
2021	\$4,229,000	\$3,401,401	\$827,599	80.43%
2020	\$6,473,000	\$5,749,912	\$723,088	88.83%
2019	\$4,163,000	\$4,000,000	\$163,000	96.08%
Totals	\$46,527,000	\$29,837,281	\$16,689,719	64.13%

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
FMR - Enhance 296 acres	June 2030
GRG - Restore 191 acres and enhance 183 acres	June 2030
MLT - Protect 517 acres under conservation easement	June 2029
MVT - Protect 383 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2029
TPL - Protect 450 acres through fee title acquisition	June 2029
MLT - Restore 55 acres and enhance 180 acres	June 2030
TPL - Restore and enhance 800 acres	June 2030

Budget**Grand Totals Across All Partnerships**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$1,688,700	\$279,500	FMR, Cities, Foundations	\$1,968,200
Contracts	\$5,832,700	\$280,000	Cities, Foundations, Foundation	\$6,112,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,000,000	-	-	\$3,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$4,693,000	\$650,000	-, MN Valley Trust	\$5,343,000
Easement Acquisition	\$4,500,000	\$650,000	-, Private landowners	\$5,150,000
Easement Stewardship	\$392,000	-	-	\$392,000
Travel	\$51,800	\$1,200	-, Private	\$53,000
Professional Services	\$504,000	-	-	\$504,000
Direct Support Services	\$521,100	\$383,900	FMR, Foundations, Private	\$905,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$120,000	-	-	\$120,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$20,500	-	-	\$20,500
Supplies/Materials	\$390,100	-	-	\$390,100
DNR IDP	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Grand Total	\$21,763,900	\$2,244,600	-	\$24,008,500

Partner: Trust for Public Land (TPL)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$395,000	-	-	\$395,000
Contracts	\$1,500,000	\$250,000	Foundation	\$1,750,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,000,000	-	-	\$3,000,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$1,700,000	-	-	\$1,700,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	\$1,200	Private	\$1,200
Professional Services	\$125,000	-	-	\$125,000
Direct Support Services	\$101,600	\$101,600	Private	\$203,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$113,000	-	-	\$113,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Grand Total	\$6,984,600	\$352,800	-	\$7,337,400

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Staff (Protection, Legal)	0.77	3.0	\$395,000	-	-	\$395,000

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	\$2,993,000	\$650,000	MN Valley Trust	\$3,643,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$7,000	-	-	\$7,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$3,000,000	\$650,000	-	\$3,650,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$675,000	-	-	\$675,000
Contracts	\$1,254,700	-	-	\$1,254,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$4,500,000	\$650,000	Private landowners	\$5,150,000
Easement Stewardship	\$392,000	-	-	\$392,000
Travel	\$22,000	-	-	\$22,000
Professional Services	\$379,000	-	-	\$379,000
Direct Support Services	\$182,300	-	-	\$182,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$4,000	-	-	\$4,000
Supplies/Materials	\$6,000	-	-	\$6,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$7,415,000	\$650,000	-	\$8,065,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.75	4.0	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
MLT Restoration Staff	0.75	5.0	\$375,000	-	-	\$375,000

Partner: Great River Greening

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$513,700	\$254,500	Cities, Foundations	\$768,200
Contracts	\$2,010,000	-	-	\$2,010,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$24,000	-	-	\$24,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$150,000	\$195,100	Foundations	\$345,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$16,000	-	-	\$16,000
Supplies/Materials	\$317,700	-	-	\$317,700
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$3,031,400	\$449,600	-	\$3,481,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
GRG Staff (Ecologist, technicians, etc.)	0.97	5.0	\$513,700	\$254,500	Cities, Foundations	\$768,200

Partner: Friends of Mississippi River (FMR)

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$105,000	\$25,000	FMR	\$130,000
Contracts	\$1,068,000	\$30,000	Cities, Foundations	\$1,098,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$5,800	-	-	\$5,800
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$87,200	\$87,200	FMR	\$174,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$500	-	-	\$500
Supplies/Materials	\$66,400	-	-	\$66,400
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,332,900	\$142,200	-	\$1,475,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
FMR Staff (Ecologists, Conservation Director, Bookkeeper, College intern)	0.26	4.0	\$105,000	\$25,000	FMR	\$130,000

Amount of Request: \$21,763,900

Amount of Leverage: \$2,244,600

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 10.31%

DSS + Personnel: \$2,209,800

As a % of the total request: 10.15%

Easement Stewardship: \$392,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 8.71%

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$2,244,600	\$2,244,600	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 October 27, 2023, FMR's DSS rate has been approved by DNR staff. The 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	676	168	2	846
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	317	317
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	516	516
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	517	517
Enhance	0	109	750	0	859
Total	0	785	918	1,352	3,055

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	39
Total	39

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$1,891,000	\$1,600,000	\$131,000	\$3,622,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$3,392,300	\$3,392,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$5,092,300	\$5,092,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$5,789,000	\$5,789,000
Enhance	-	\$530,000	\$3,338,300	-	\$3,868,300
Total	-	\$2,421,000	\$4,938,300	\$14,404,600	\$21,763,900

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	846	0	0	0	0	846
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	317	0	0	0	0	317
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	516	0	0	0	0	516
Protect in Easement	517	0	0	0	0	517
Enhance	859	0	0	0	0	859
Total	3,055	0	0	0	0	3,055

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$3,622,000	-	-	-	-	\$3,622,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$3,392,300	-	-	-	-	\$3,392,300
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$5,092,300	-	-	-	-	\$5,092,300
Protect in Easement	\$5,789,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,789,000
Enhance	\$3,868,300	-	-	-	-	\$3,868,300
Total	\$21,763,900	-	-	-	-	\$21,763,900

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$2,797	\$9,523	\$65,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$10,701
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$9,868
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$11,197
Enhance	-	\$4,862	\$4,451	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$4,281	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$10,701	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$9,868	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$11,197	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$4,503	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

5.5

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	Description
GRG - Locke Park	Anoka	03024211	83	\$663,500	Yes	Restore 83 acres of upland and lowland forest along Rice Creek.
GRG - Kelsey Round Lake (Corrective Action)	Anoka	03224220	31	\$357,400	Yes	Enhance 31 acres of oak forest through multiple years of invasive species treatment
GRG - Innsbruck Park	Anoka	03024224	22	\$225,400	Yes	Restore 22 acres of upland and lowland forest surrounding a wetland complex.
MLT - Oak Lake	Carver	11725210	43	\$254,000	Yes	Restore prairie and wetland in ag fields. Easement in process.
FMR - Hastings Sand Coulee SNA	Dakota	11417202	119	\$200,900	Yes	Enhance 57 acres of prairie, including 36 acres native prairie, and 62 acres forest
MLT - Musser Park	Dakota	02822231	25	\$188,800	Yes	Enhance oak savanna and restore wetland
GRG - Ritter Farm Park	Dakota	11421223	20	\$200,900	Yes	Restore 20 acres of prairie
GRG - Parkers Lake Park	Hennepin	11822228	2	\$131,000	Yes	Restore 2 acre vegetated shoreline along 1800 lineal feet of Parkers Lake
GRG - Marsh East	Hennepin	02724217	8	\$170,200	Yes	Restore 8 acres of oak savanna
GRG - Bass Lake Preserve, Phase 2	Hennepin	02824206	11	\$121,000	Yes	Restore 11 acres of forest understory
GRG - Mississippi River Bluffs, Phase 1	Ramsey	02923232	22	\$186,300	Yes	Enhance 22 acres of river bluff forest and savanna
MLT - Sand Creek	Scott	11424235	110	\$763,600	Yes	Enhance prairie, wetland, and oak woodland
FMR - Riverside Park	Washington	02722212	14	\$170,200	Yes	Enhance 1 acre prairie and 13 acres forest
MLT - Cedarcliff	Washington	03219206	45	\$347,800	Yes	Enhance oak woodland
MLT - Carnelian Creek	Washington	03120228	12	\$71,600	Yes	Restore prairie in ag fields. Easement in process.
GRG - Houle Wetland Buffer	Washington	11823236	40	\$110,900	Yes	Enhance 40 acres forest through low density woody invasive species removal.
GRG - Crystal Spring SNA	Washington	03219218	40	\$111,100	Yes	Enhance 40 acres of forest through low density woody invasive species removal.
GRG - Falls Creek SNA, Phase 2	Washington	03219219	40	\$124,000	Yes	Enhance next 40 acres of forest through low density invasive species removal
GRG - Bailey School Forest	Washington	02822225	55	\$666,400	Yes	Restore 45 acres and enhance 10 acres of oak forest.
TPL - Keystone Woods WMA	Washington	03121218	800	\$1,500,000	Yes	Restore 600 acres of prairie, enhance 200 acres of forest
FMR - Pine Bend Bluffs SNA	Washington	02722227	42	\$121,000	Yes	Enhance 42 acres forest

FMR - Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park	Washington	02721214	68	\$131,000	Yes	Enhance 10 acres prairie, including 3 acres native prairie, and 58 acres forest
FMR - Highlands of Riverpointe	Wright	12023212	53	\$186,300	Yes	Enhance 31 acres prairie and 22 acres forest

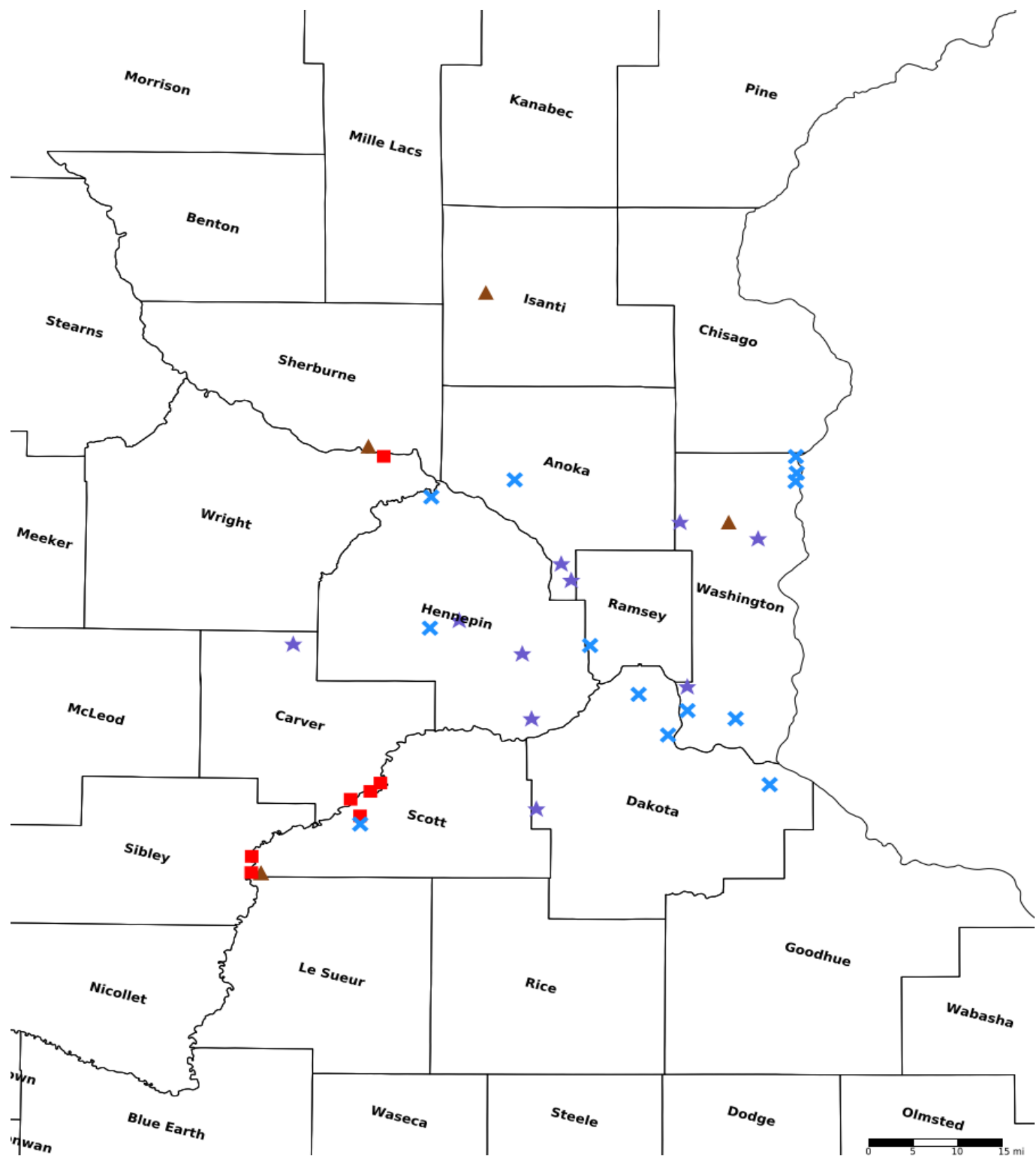
Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
MVT - San Francisco Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Carver	11424215	353	\$1,147,250	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 - Green Lake SNA	Isanti	03625226	190	\$600,000	No
TPL - Ney WMA Addition II	Scott	11325231	40	\$500,000	No
MVT - Blakeley Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11326236	194	\$630,500	No
TPL - Mississippi Sherburne North	Sherburne	03327235	34	\$1,200,000	No
MVT - Jessenland Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Sibley	11326224	367	\$1,835,000	No
TPL - Keystone Woods WMA Addition I (Hugo)	Washington	03121213	80	\$1,120,000	No
TPL - Mississippi River Conservation Area	Wright	12123218	133	\$3,500,000	No

Protect Parcels with Buildings

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
TPL - Ney WMA Addition	Scott	11325231	56	\$475,000	No	1	-
MVT - St. Lawrence Unit Addition, MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott	11424226	16	\$1,500,000	No	1	-

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 15 will protect, restore & enhance 3,055 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 13, MBR has protected and restored / enhanced 10,077 acres of wildlife habitat in the metro area and has work in-progress on another 2,000 acres. MBR has leveraged OHF grants by 44% with other funds and landowner donations of easement value to-date.

ML2025 Request - \$21,763,900
Leverage - \$2,244,600 (10%)

Protect 1,350 acres
Restore & Enhance 1,705 acres

With OHF and other leverage funds, Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 will permanently protect 833 acres in fee title and 517 acres in easement, restore 846 acres and enhance another 859 acres (3,055 acres total). Partner objectives are summarized here:

- Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) will enhance 296 acres at five sites on or near the Mississippi River. It will enhance 99 acres prairie and 197 acres of forest habitat.
- Great River Greening (GRG) will restore / enhance 374 acres of forest habitat across twelve sites throughout the metro area.
- Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will protect 517 acres through perpetual conservation easement and restore / enhance 235 acres of priority wildlife habitat, including riparian lands, forests, wetlands and grasslands.
- Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT) will protect through fee title acquisition 383 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 450 acres of priority wildlife habitat and restore / enhance 800 acres of prairie and forest habitat on the recently-acquired Keystone Woods WMA complex. Prospective acquisitions are prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource plans.

See supplemental information in the following pages. 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.

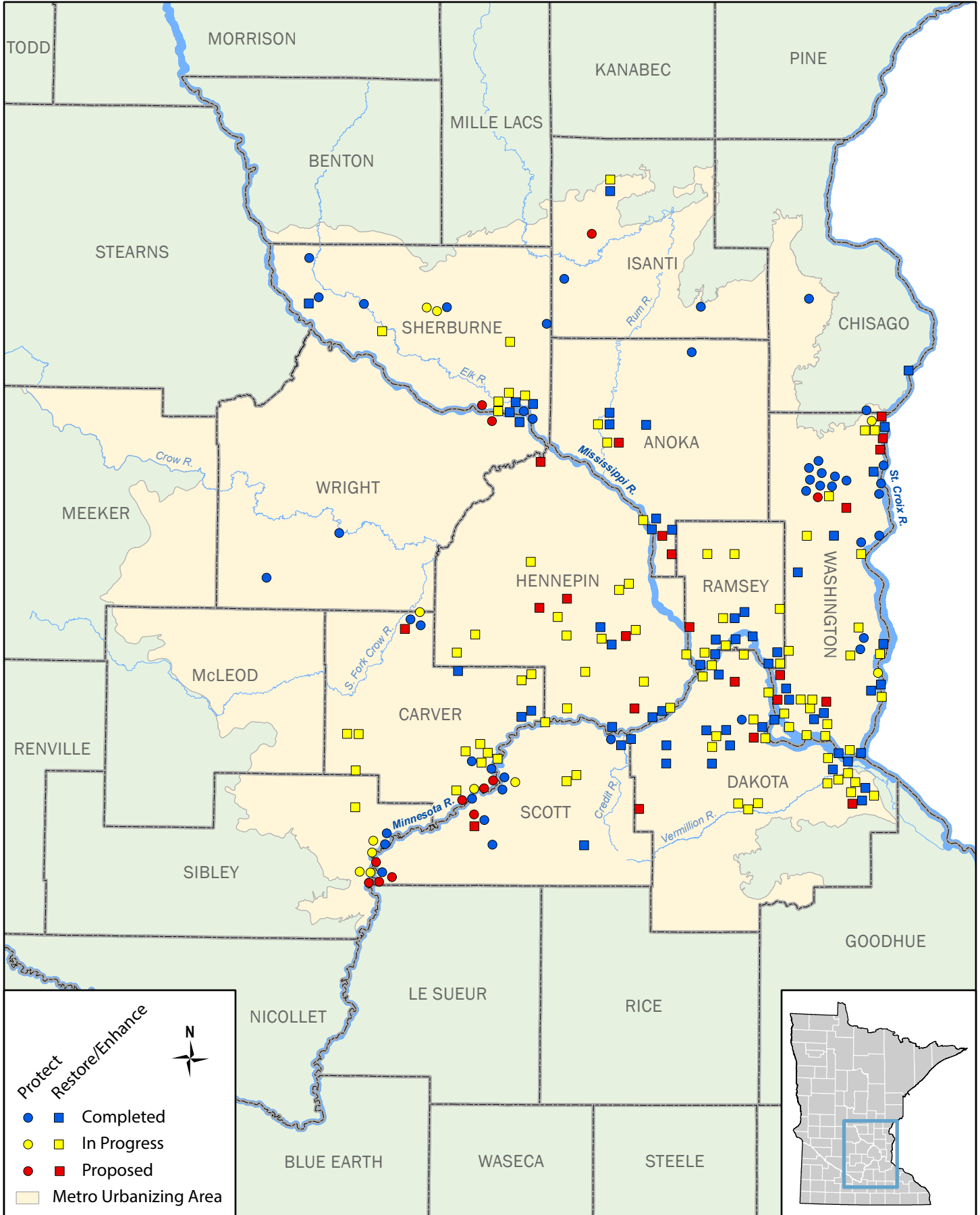


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For more information:
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Minnesota Valley Trust
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Metro Big Rivers Habitat Partnership

Phase 15





Metro Big Rivers – Phase 15

FY 2026/ML2025

PROJECT INFORMATION

Enhance

99 acres of prairie
197 acres of forest

Location

5 sites in Dakota, Washington and Wright Counties

Total Project Cost:

\$1,332,900



A 2024 burn at the Sand Coulee SNA and a remnant bluff prairie at Pine Bend SNA

Dakota – Hastings Sand Coulee SNA and Pine Bend Bluffs SNA

The Hastings Sand Coulee SNA is a 276-acre property owned by the MN DNR and managed by FMR. This next phase of restoration will focus on continued invasive species reduction and prescribed burns on 75 woodland acres and further establishing diverse native plants in 44 acres of remnant and restored prairies through invasive herbaceous and woody plant management. This proposal will also fund rare species monitoring, seeding, and two volunteer events to remove invasive species and collect native seeds.





Oak woodland at Riverside Park and restored acres (MBR10) at Cottage Grove Ravine Park

Washington – Riverside Park and Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

Situated along the Mississippi River in South St. Paul, Riverside Park is home to a diversity of habitats: floodplain forest, oak forest, oak woodland, and prairie. The park has been degraded by invasive species, and management will focus on the reduction of those species while diversifying the canopy, shrub layer, and understory vegetation.

Work at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park will enhance remnant and restored prairie acres and tackle new acres of forest enhancement, building upon previous phases of OHF funding to improve the amount of restored habitat that benefits wildlife and park users.



Woody encroachment in both grassland and forest units– Highlands of Riverpointe

Wright – Highlands of Riverpointe

Highlands of Riverpointe is a 53-acre park along the Crow River in eastern Wright County. The park's linear form creates a diversity of habitat types along the river, as well as opportunities for public access. These plant communities require woody management and supplemental seeding and planting to increase resiliency and provide better pollinator and wildlife habitat.



Great River Greening proposes restoring and enhancing 374 acres across 12 sites. Projects include forest and prairie enhancement and restoration and shoreline restoration for habitat creation. Activities involve invasive shrub and woodland forb control, tree removal for oak wilt control and oak savanna establishment, forest understory native grass and wildflower seeding and planting, prairie preparation, planting, and establishment maintenance, with years of follow-up work to ensure habitat success. Community stewardship and promotion of OHF values and goals will also be a priority of these projects.



Innsbruck Park, Anoka County

This 22 acre natural resource-based conservation park contains a mixture of ecological areas, from wetlands to woodlands.

Kelsey Round Lake, Anoka County

A 153 acre park within the City of Andover primarily composed of natural areas encompassing wetlands, oak forest, and prairie complexes.

Locke Park, Anoka County

A large park surrounding the meandering Rice Creek with upland and lowland forest habitats with unique topography and extensive walking trails.

Ritter Farm Park, Dakota County

This park is a focus of the City of Lakeville, with multiple types of uses in all seasons for visitors to experience a large former farm on foot, horseback, and with a new educational building as well. The property includes multiple habitats including connected prairie restorations and native woodlands.





Marsh Lake East, Hennepin County

A well-connected urban park adjacent to a large wetland on the Nine Mile Creek, directly between Normandale Community College and the City of Bloomington's Ice Garden community center.

Parkers Lake, Hennepin County

Highly trafficked urban lake with 1,800 linear feet of shoreline open for turf to native vegetation conversion. This boat launch adjacent area is a very visible portion of the park, with the habitat creation providing community education opportunities.

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 metro area.

Mississippi River Bluffs - Phase 1, Ramsey County

Three parks focused on, portions of Desnoyer, Shadow Falls, and Crosby Farm, provide access to sandstone outcroppings only found in this habitat. Further phases are expected along the river bluffs.

Bailey School Forest, Washington County

This park serves a unique function for the City of Newport, being both a frequently visited neighborhood park as well as an officially designated school forest providing educational opportunities for students in the South Washington County School District.

Crystal Spring SNA, Washington County

A newer addition to the state's SNA program being added in 2016, this 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) by the Minnesota Biological Survey.

Falls Creek SNA - Phase 2, Washington County

This large SNA contains sloped ravines traveling to the St. Croix River, as well as serves as a migration point for birds traveling up the valley. Adjacent SNAs connect this habitat unique to this region.





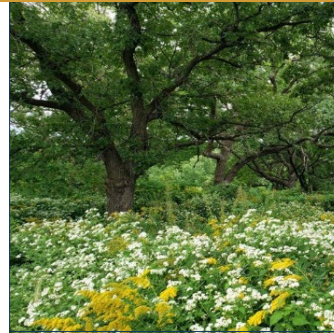
Metro Big Rivers - Phase 15

FY2026/ML2025

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 for the Refuge units within the Minnesota River corridor, including the Blakeley, Louisville Swamp 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 Metro Big Rivers (MBR) 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.

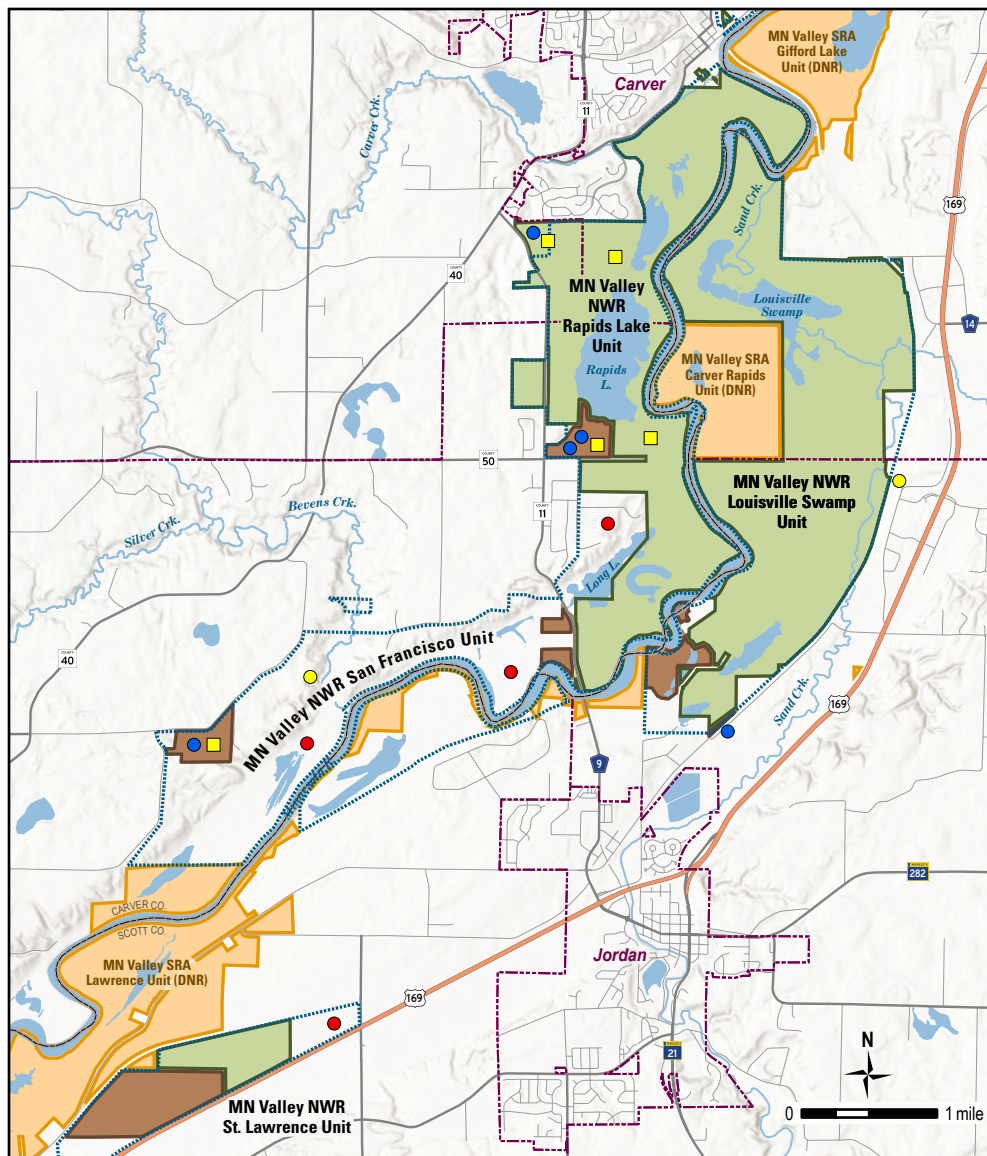
The MBR 11 grant recently acquired a parcel for the Louisville Swamp Unit; the balance of the grant will complete restoration and enhancement on the acquired parcel. Acquisitions with Phases 12-14 are in-progress, with another acquisition for the Louisville Swamp Unit scheduled to close in June 2024 with MBR 12.

After acquisition, the Trust completes habitat restoration and enhancement work. Agricultural fields are restored to their native conditions of wetland and prairie habitat. 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.

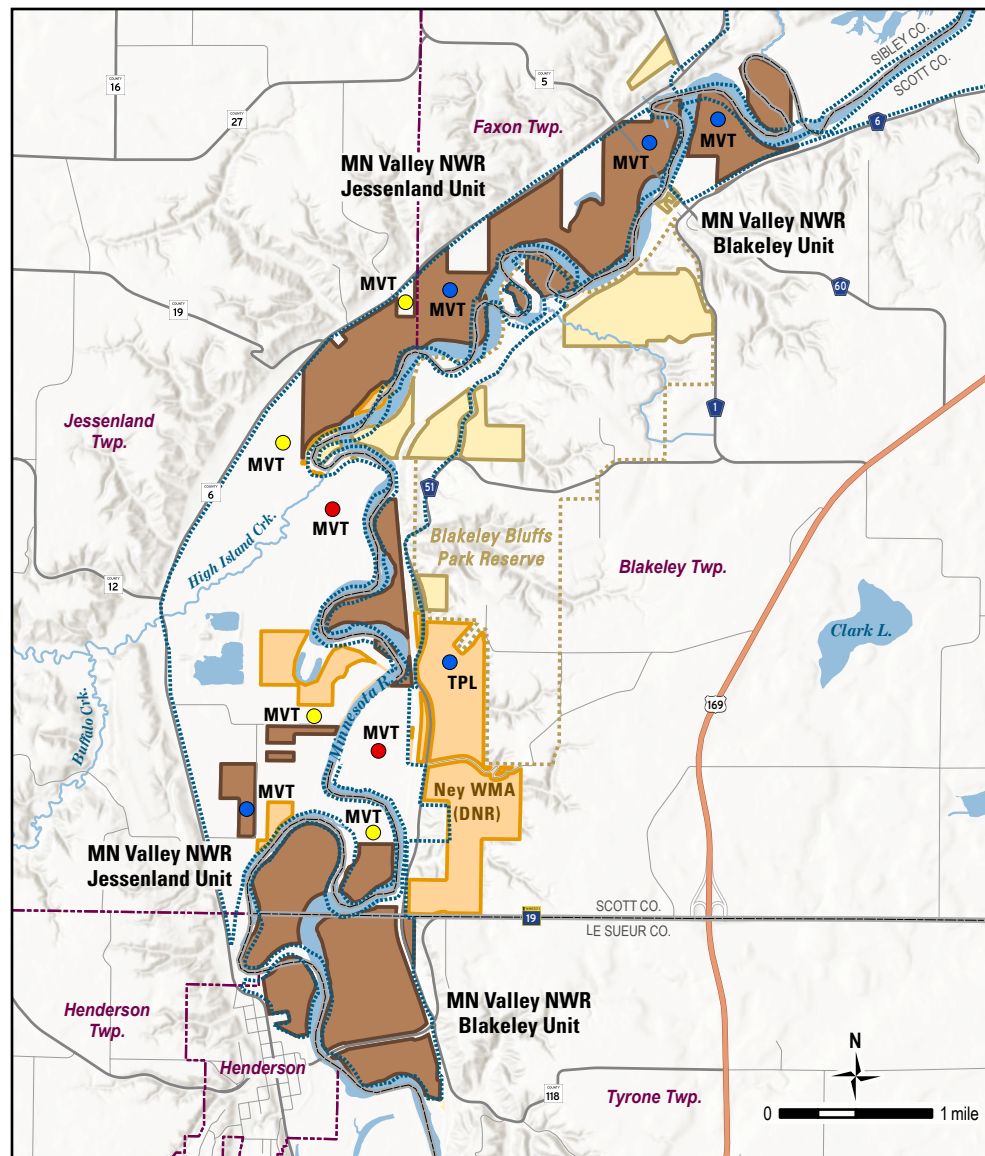
With MBR 15, the Minnesota Valley Trust anticipates adding another 383 acres to the Refuge through 2 fee title acquisitions.



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Louisville Swamp, Rapids Lake, St. Lawrence & San Francisco Units



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Blakeley & Jessenland Units



- Protect – Completed
- Protect – In Progress
- Restore/Enhance – In Progress
- Protect – Proposed
- MN Valley Trust Property
- USFWS Property
- MN DNR Property
- Scott County Property

- Refuge Acquisition Boundary
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundary
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Street

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TRUST FOR
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Metro Big Rivers - Phase 15

FY2026/ML2025

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 1,939 acres through eight OHF supported MBR acquisitions. With MBR 15, TPL will protect an additional 400 acres of high quality habitat across the Metro and restore/enhance 800 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.

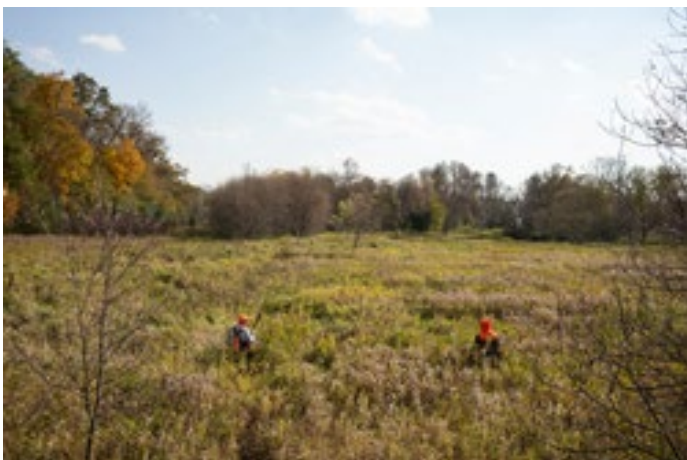


PHOTO: Andy Richter

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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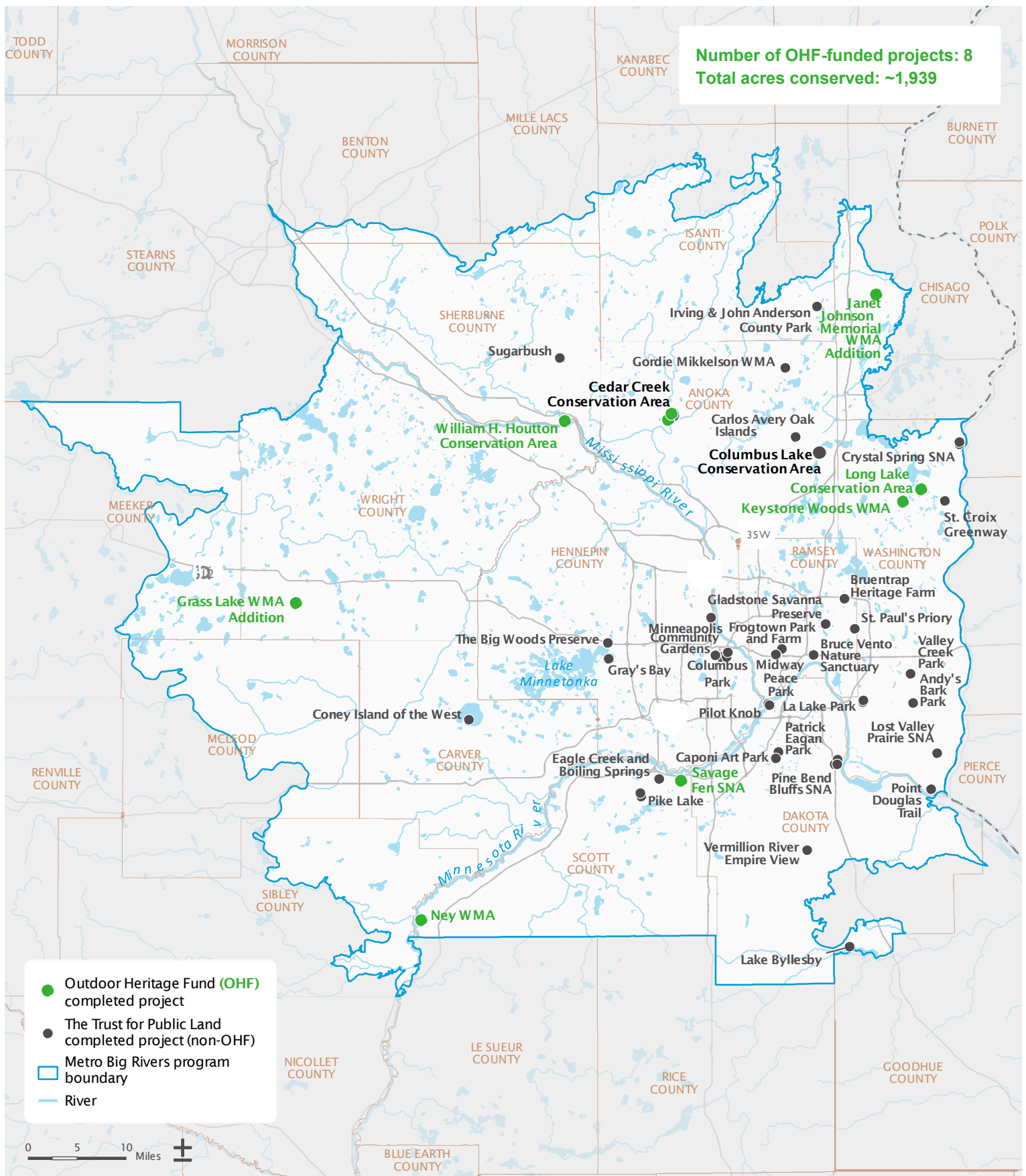
Bob.McGillivray@tpl.org

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Examples of our work

- **Keystone Woods WMA:** In Fall 2023, TPL acquired 1,833 acres of the 2,600 acre property owned by the Kelley Land and Cattle Company in northern Washington County. Acquired over two phases with multiple OHF appropriations, this new sprawling Wildlife Management Area (WMA) has high biodiversity significance and excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife, waterfowl, and fish. Phase 1 (456 acres) of the property has been conveyed to the MN DNR and TPL will convey Phase II (1,377 acres) within the calendar year. The remainder of the Kelley land will be acquired by Washington County through separate funds, thus leveraging over \$11M of non-OHF funds. Restoration and enhancement of the Keystone Woods WMA property has begun and will continue over the next five years, led by TPL in cooperation with DNR and 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

MINNESOTA RIVERS: SUB-PROGRAMS

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

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs an RFP (Request for Proposals) model to both identify high-quality projects and introduce a level of competition into the easement acquisition process. Below, we briefly discuss how the system works and the framework put in place to sort the varied opportunities that come before us.

How the Ranking System Works

The parcel ranking framework employed through the Minnesota Land Trust's RFP process is intended as a ***decision support tool*** to aid in identifying, among the slate of landowners submitting bids for conservation easements, the most ecologically significant opportunities for the price. Using this framework, the Land Trust and its partners use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those projects worthy of consideration.

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

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

The Framework

We evaluate potential projects based on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost. Both are assessed independent of one another.

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

The Ecological Significance score is determined by looking at 3 subfactors.

Subfactors:

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

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

Indicators:

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

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

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

Factor 2: Cost

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

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

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

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scoring: Parcels are scored as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

c) Future Potential (14 points) – The degree to which the area within which a parcel lies has been identified as a priority for conservation action and the degree to which action is being implemented in that area is a direct indicator of the long-term potential for maintenance of biodiversity associated with a parcel. Lands affiliated with priority areas are more likely to be complemented with additional levels of nearby protected lands than those outside of priority areas. In areas experiencing high levels of development, this factor may carry a significant amount of weight in setting protection priorities. In the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, special attention is paid to habitat corridors as identified by state and local conservation partners.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on three factors:

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

Points	In MLT Priority Focal Area
0	No
6	Yes

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

Points	In Statewide Priority Area
0	No
2	Yes

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

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

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

County			SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6
ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE			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:		\$	-	\$	-	\$	-



City of Lakeville
Positioned to Thrive

May 16, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FY 2026 /ML 2025 L-SOHC proposal: Metro Big Rivers, Phase 15

Dear L-SOHC members,

The City of Lakeville extends our support for Great River Greening, as a member of the Metro Big Rivers Partnership, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

We support this request for assistance on the Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural resource preservation. The City of Lakeville has had the Ritter Farm property since 1989 as a park. The park has largely been left natural with a few mowed areas and trails, as well as one 4 acre prairie restoration that took place near the possession of the park. With lack of staff and resources, the nearly 360 acre park has become overrun with exotic species like buckthorn that threaten oak regeneration and other invasive trees like Siberian Elm, black locust, and Norway maple threaten to overtake the lands. Lakeville has partnered with GRG since 2019 to begin to restore the prairie and woodland areas. With the partnership and grant dollars received, we have been able to begin to restore the landscape to a high value natural area.

We feel the Ritter Phase III proposal meets the practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan which will continue to enhance and maintain the quality of Minnesota's natural areas.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort.

35 Holyoke Avenue, Lakeville, MN 55044
952-985-4400 • 952-985-4499 fax
www.lakevillemn.gov



City of Lakeville
Positioned to Thrive

Sincerely,

Ann Messerschmidt
Environmental Resources Specialist II

May 16, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FY 2026 /ML 2025 L-SOHC proposal: Metro Big Rivers, Phase 15

Dear L-SOHC members,

The City of St. Louis Park extends our support for Great River Greening, as a member of the Metro Big Rivers Partnership, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

We support this request for assistance on the Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural resource preservation. We also support Great River Greening's efforts to demonstrate the conservation and stewardship that everyday individuals can participate in with these public projects, as well as gain understanding of practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan that will continue to maintain the quality of Minnesota's natural areas.

The City of St. Louis Park's strategic priority to "continue to lead in environmental stewardship" aligns with Great River Greening's efforts through these grant activities. The project outlined in this proposal to continue ecological restoration efforts at the Bass Lake Preserve in a dense urban area is a great example of this work.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort.

Sincerely,



Michael Bahe
Natural Resources Manager
City of St. Louis Park



Fridley Civic Campus

May 14, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FY 2026 /ML 2025 L-SOHC proposal: Metro Big Rivers, Phase 15

Dear L-SOHC members,

The City of Fridley extends our support for Great River Greening, as a member of the Metro Big Rivers Partnership, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

We support this request for assistance on the Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural resource preservation. We also support Great River Greening's efforts to demonstrate the conservation and stewardship that everyday individuals can participate in with these public projects, as well as gain understanding of practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan that will continue to maintain the quality of Minnesota's natural areas.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort.

Sincerely,

Mike Maher

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director
City of Fridley



**SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA**

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION
ANDY RODRIGUEZ, CPRP, DIRECTOR

City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Tel: 651-266-6400

May 14, 2024

TO: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
Saint Paul, MN 55155

FROM: Andy Rodriguez, Director, Department of Parks & Recreation

SUBJECT: Letter of support for FY 2026 /ML 2025 L-SOHC proposal: Metro Big Rivers, Phase 15

Dear L-SOHC members,

City of Saint Paul, Parks and Recreation extends our support for Great River Greening, as a member of the Metro Big Rivers Partnership, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

We support this request for assistance on the Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural resource preservation. We also support Great River Greening's efforts to demonstrate the conservation and stewardship that everyday individuals can participate in with these public projects, as well as gain understanding of practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan that will continue to maintain the quality of Minnesota's natural areas.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort.

Sincerely,

Andy Rodriguez (May 15, 2024 12:10 CDT)

Andy Rodriguez, CPRP
Director, Department of Parks & Recreation

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
MELVIN CARTER, MAYOR
STPAUL.GOV

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION &
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER





SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

May 15, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FY 2026 /ML 2025 L-SOHC proposal: Metro Big Rivers, Phase 15

Dear L-SOHC members,

The South Washington Watershed District extends our support for Great River Greening (GRG), as a member of the Metro Big Rivers Partnership, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

We support this request for assistance on the Metro Big Rivers Phase 15 proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural areas preservation. The Newport Bailey School Forest Project is located along the bluffline of the Mississippi River, which is a vital flyover site on this major migration corridor. Restoration of a mosaic of oak forest, savanna and grassland openings on this site will offer invaluable benefit to a wide range of plant and animal species as well as improve the soil health, slope stabilization and long-term management potential of the site. We also support GRG's efforts to demonstrate the conservation and stewardship that everyday individuals can participate in with these public projects, gaining an understanding of practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan that continues to maintain the quality of the states's natural areas.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort.

Sincerely,

Watershed Restoration Specialist, South Washington Watershed District



SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

May 15, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FMR Cottage Grove Ravine Park Restoration Projects

Dear Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council members,

I am writing to offer my support to the proposed Cottage Grove Ravine Park Restoration Project being conducted by Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR). The ongoing efforts on this site through the collaboration of the County, the South Washington Watershed District (SWWD), FMR and others have continued to significantly improve park habitat and visitor usability in this important jewel in the County Park system.

The mission of the SWWD is to manage water and related resources of the District in Cooperation with our Citizens and Communities. To this end, the SWWD works to restore both aquatic and terrestrial habitats as a means to protect waters of the District. The SWWD works in partnership with cities, citizens, non-profits and other government agencies with an interest in the wide array of programs that support our organizations' mutual goals.

Continuing the enhancement of mixed native plant communities within Ravine Park has been a shared long-term collaborative commitment by the SWWD, FMR and the County for many years. These efforts have continued to transform highly degraded landscapes into restored and protected, functioning ecosystems. The current proposal continues these enhancement efforts on 9.5 acres of critically imperiled bluff prairie and 58 acres of mixed and oak forest. This work will continue to expand the scale of restored areas in the park, building on years of opening up highly degraded forests and prairie pockets smothered by invasive species. The continuing and proposed activities facilitate the long-term ability of site managers to support healthy natural communities using periodic management practices. The proposed work will continue to protect and enhance the substantial restoration investments already committed to this public asset. FMR's commitment to community involvement through volunteer events will further strengthen connections to this important piece of Washington County natural space.

The SWWD supports FMR's proposed enhancement of these mixed prairie and forest communities within the Cottage Grove Ravine Park as these efforts support the habitats and water resources needed to support healthy natural and human communities.

Anthony Randazzo

Watershed Restoration Specialist, South Washington Watershed District



May 16, 2024

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Letter of support for FMR Highlands of River Pointe Park Restoration Project

Dear Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council members,

I am writing to extend support to the Highlands of River Pointe Park Restoration Project proposed by Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) in the City of Otsego, Minnesota. I believe the planned work will significantly improve park habitat and visitor usability in this important park along the Crow River.

The mission of the Otsego Parks and Recreation Department is to preserve land for future generations by managing high-quality natural areas for parks, open space, river access, and trail corridors. This mission is pursued while acknowledging and protecting the Mississippi and Crow River corridors in the city. The department also prioritizes the connection of neighborhoods to parks and river access points. FMR's habitat restoration and enhanced plant communities at Highlands of River Pointe Park will support these goals.

FMR has been an outstanding partner over the past two years helping the city to protect and restore natural areas. Their work in the city of Otsego and the greater Twin Cities metro is well-respected and vitally important for creating healthy natural habitats for plants, animals, and humans. FMR created the first-ever ecological management plan for the City of Otsego and will begin implementing that plan later this year. We look forward to the broad benefits that this restoration will provide.

The proposal for Highlands of River Pointe Park initiates enhancement efforts on 22 acres of forest along the Crow River which have been degraded by invasive species and 31 acres of mesic prairie that have declined due to woody encroachment and a lack of disturbance regime. The proposed activities of invasive plant management, prescribed fire, and supplemental seeding facilitate the long-term ability of site managers to support healthy natural communities using periodic management practices. FMR's work will improve public access to the Crow River along the perimeter of the park—restored native

plant communities will reduce soil erosion and preserve points of access for the community.

The Otsego Parks and Recreation Department enthusiastically supports FMR's proposed enhancement of these prairie and forest communities within the Highlands of River Pointe Park. This proposal is paramount to creating a space where the community can feel connected to nature, and where nature is thriving.

With the growth trend Otsego has had over the past 20 years, it is crucial we try and preserve the natural open spaces along our rivers. Alongside FMR the City of Otsego will continue to work on the protection and restoration of our natural areas. The City of Otsego City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission are committed to enhancing all natural areas in the city.

Sincerely,

Nick Jacobs

Nick Jacobs

Parks and Recreation Director