



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Forest Restoration and Enhancement, Phase 6
Laws of Minnesota 2026 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/08/2026

Project Title: DNR Forest Restoration and Enhancement, Phase 6

Funds Recommended: \$1,944,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2026, Ch. 126, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(d)

Appropriation Language: \$1,944,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources to restore and enhance forest wildlife habitats on public lands throughout Minnesota.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Ted Dick

Title: Forest Habitat Supervisor

Organization: DNR

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Location Information

County Location(s): Beltrami, Houston, St. Louis, Cass, Lake, Fillmore, Olmsted, Todd, Benton, Winona, Otter Tail, Cook, Crow Wing, Becker, Lake of the Woods, Carlton, Koochiching and Hubbard.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Forest / Prairie Transition

Metro / Urban

Southeast Forest

Prairie

Activity types:

Restore

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Forest

Habitat

Narrative**Abstract**

Forest and brushland habitats in Minnesota require restoration and enhancement work to expand their value to wildlife and fish species. Activities such as shearing, prescribed fire, planting to increase species diversity, and invasive species treatment increase the quality of critical wildlife habitat (e.g., deer and moose thermal habitat). This project will also benefit water quality and outdoor recreation. The DNR Conservation Agenda, Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, and Fish Habitat Plan will guide habitat enhancements in this proposal to meet the objectives put forth in these plans.

Design and Scope of Work

Minnesota's forest habitats include many native plant communities in different growth stages. Forests include riparian areas along rivers and lakes, upland forests, wet forests, and conifer forests. Each of these habitats are home to a wide array of game and non-game species, including multiple Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Forests provide outdoor recreation, timber products, and support to local communities. Forests protect water quality and sequester carbon. However, forests face increasing stress from invasive species, climate change, critical habitat loss, conversion to non-forest, and fragmentation. Beyond more traditional forest management activities, some sites require vital enhancements to maximize diversity of trees, shrubs, and ground vegetation for fish and wildlife. For example, reintroduction of 'good fire' on the landscape provides needed biological legacies that enhance habitat for birds, pollinators, mammals and amphibians. The use of fire is also a tool that helps reduce the need for herbicide and mechanical treatments in forest habitat enhancement and invasive species control efforts.

Healthy, diverse forests increase water retention and filtration and store and sequester carbon and also are more resilient and provide other ecosystem services. We will accomplish strategic and targeted forest enhancements using contractors to conduct activities that support healthy, diverse, and resilient habitats. Activities may include:

- 1) Controlling invasive vegetation, woody vegetation removal, and prescribed fire
- 2) Assisting oak regeneration through seeding and tree planting to provide important mast for forage
- 3) Maintaining wet forest ecosystems by increasing tree species diversity ahead of emerald ash borer (EAB)
- 4) Enhancing spruce budworm-damaged forest habitat by establishing and tending diverse, long-lived conifer stands to provide thermal cover
- 5) Restoring ecologically beneficial fire to Minnesota's State Forests

DNR land managers collaborate with other state, federal, and county agencies and many conservation

organizations to take a landscape view of forests and manage across administrative units. For example, DNR managers are working together with U.S. Forest Service managers to maintain and enhance vegetation to provide forage and mast for a variety of wildlife. Traditional timber harvest is an important tool for improving habitat, but the activities proposed here are in addition to logging and often require different activities to achieve habitat improvements.

This request seeks funding to enhance 1,683 acres of habitat on public lands, primarily but not limited to, Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), Aquatic Management Areas (AMA), state forests, and county lands. Strategic and targeted work will be accomplished through the added capacity of contractors hired to conduct activities that support healthy, diverse, and resilient habitats.

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

All ages of forests require investment and management. Some sites, with heightened value to key wildlife and aquatic species, need additional efforts to maximize habitat benefits. Prescribed fire in mature forests helps clear underbrush and allows sunlight penetration to the ground to boost tree regeneration. Fire is especially important to both maintain and regenerate oak and pine forests. Oak forests are important habitat and establishing and tending young oak forests will keep oak on the landscape into the future. The proposed project would expand the use for prescribed fire on State Forest land. The reintroduction of 'good fire' on the landscape will provide needed biological legacies that enhance habitat for birds, pollinators, mammals and amphibians. The use of fire is also a tool that helps reduce the need for herbicide and mechanical treatments in forest regeneration and invasive species control efforts.

Shearing brushland helps create open lands that provide critical habitat for American woodcock, yellow rails, and sharp-tailed grouse, which are SGCN species. Shearing maintains brushlands for sharp-tailed grouse and provides small forest openings critical to many species of birds, including golden-winged warblers. Finally, planting conifers provides thermal cover for multiple wildlife species and creates shade and protects sources of ground water for native brook trout streams threatened by climate change.

Each of the practices mentioned will benefit a wide range of game and non-game species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, as well as pollinating insects.

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

Pressures on Minnesota forests are increasing. It is more effective to enhance critical habitat for wildlife species and conserve SGCN species now rather than having to restore habitat in the future. Planting trees on acres affected by large spruce budworm infestations helps to diversify forests while providing habitat for wildlife. Diversifying balsam fir forests will make them more resilient to future spruce budworm and other insect outbreaks that are predicted to increase with a warming climate. Current DNR plans provide the opportunity to address these habitat needs, and funding will accelerate implementation of these plans. Increased management of brushland habitats is a particularly urgent need. Early detection and swift control of invasive species is more cost-effective than trying to manage established and widespread invasive species populations.

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

DNR's Conservation Agenda, Wildlife Action Plan, Forest Action Plan, Fish Habitat Plan, along with specific site management plans will guide activities. These plans incorporate the best information and science to identify goals and strategies. DNR strives to base all habitat management on science. Restoring and enhancing habitat expands

corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation, and directly applies research to on the ground projects.

The habitat needs of many forest species, including mature forest species such as marten and fisher and young forest species like woodcock and golden-winged warblers, are well documented. Many wildlife species require mature forests during some point in their lives. Research conducted in Minnesota will be used to apply these funds to enhance and restore habitats in the forested areas of the state.

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

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

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

Planting additional tree species to diversify ash forests builds resiliency that allows a forested condition to be retained as EAB continues to spread and kill ash trees. Diversifying forests will make them more resilient to future spruce budworm and other insect outbreaks that are predicted to increase with a warming climate. Diversity builds resilience against both direct climate changes and the predicted increases in forest pests given changes in climate. Changes in climate are increasing invasive species in forests and degrading fish and wildlife habitat.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

Metro / Urban

Protect from long-term or permanent endangerment from invasive species

Northern Forest

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

Prairie

Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna

Southeast Forest

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

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *A number of species are tied to brushland and young aspen forests in these region,*

including elk, golden-winged warblers, and sharp-tailed grouse. Ongoing surveys and research on these species will allow the DNR to track local and regional responses to these and related efforts.

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

A forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture ~ These efforts will help manage forests in this region to benefit a range of wildlife species, both game and non-game. Ongoing surveys, especially among songbirds, will track long-term changes in bird populations in this region.

Programs in the northern forest region:

Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species ~ The DNR and partner agencies conduct a number of wildlife surveys, including moose, deer, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, woodcock, and songbird surveys.

Programs in prairie region:

Improved condition of habitat on public lands ~ These efforts will help manage forests in this region to benefit a range of wildlife species, both game and non-game. Ongoing surveys, especially among songbirds, will track long-term changes in bird populations in this region.

Programs in southeast forest region:

Large corridors and complexes of biologically diverse wildlife habitat typical of the unglaciated region are restored and protected ~ The non-game program is very active in this region with projects assessing wildlife populations. And there are the same ongoing wildlife surveys as in the other regions of the state.

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.

These funds are for additional enhance/restoration work beyond what MN DNR is already conducting, and do not supplant or substitute. This request includes funding for prescribed burns designed to improve habitat. Other funds designed to fight wildfire and reduce fuels are not eligible for habitat improvement burns.

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

We will select and implement projects to achieve high quality and enduring benefits. Projects have variable lifespans depending on project type, weather, and other environmental conditions. Many of the projects are meant to endure for decades, at which point regular forest management activity can resume. DNR staff and staff from partner agencies/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will monitor project sites to gauge habitat response and determine when additional enhancement may be needed. Work will be sustained through other DNR funds, forest management practices, and future requests from the OHF and related external funding.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027 and beyond	listed above and future OHF requests	continue monitoring	adapt results	seek additional funding
2026	listed above and future OHF requests	monitor results	document results	develop budget for additional work with internal and external funds

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

We have in the past and will continue to consult and coordinate with diverse communities and tribal partners into the project planning and work we do to enhance fish and wildlife habitats for all citizens of the state of Minnesota.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

WMA

AMA

State Forests

Other : national forest, Con-Con lands, school trust lands.

County/Municipal

Land Use

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

No

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

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
continued monitoring and follow-up management and enhancements	ongoing
implement enhancements	spring 2031

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2031

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

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

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

- (1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2030;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this section is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2034;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2031;
- (4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and
- (5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

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

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$225,000	-	-	\$225,000
Contracts	\$1,358,600	-	-	\$1,358,600
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$43,100	-	-	\$43,100
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$267,300	-	-	\$267,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,944,000	-	-	\$1,944,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
LSOHC Grant contract coord	0.33	3.0	\$192,000	-	-	\$192,000
Forestry Rx burn staff	0.25	4.0	\$33,000	-	-	\$33,000

Amount of Request: \$1,944,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$268,100

As a % of the total request: 13.79%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

We will cut projects and cut contracts for projects.

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

Fewer acres could be accomplished, the majority of these projects are scalable.

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

All costs including contracts/supplies/materials etc. for the majority of the projects can be proportionally reduced.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Contracts for restoration work to be completed.

Travel

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

No

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

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:

Yes

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

used the DNR Direct and Necessary calculator.

Federal Funds

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

No

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	0	-	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	1,827	-	1,827
Total	-	-	1,827	-	1,827

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$1,944,000	-	\$1,944,000
Total	-	-	\$1,944,000	-	\$1,944,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	0	-	-	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	252	504	4	1,067	1,827
Total	-	252	504	4	1,067	1,827

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$352,400	\$595,300	\$8,300	\$988,000	\$1,944,000
Total	-	\$352,400	\$595,300	\$8,300	\$988,000	\$1,944,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$1,064	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$1,398	\$1,181	\$2,075	\$925

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

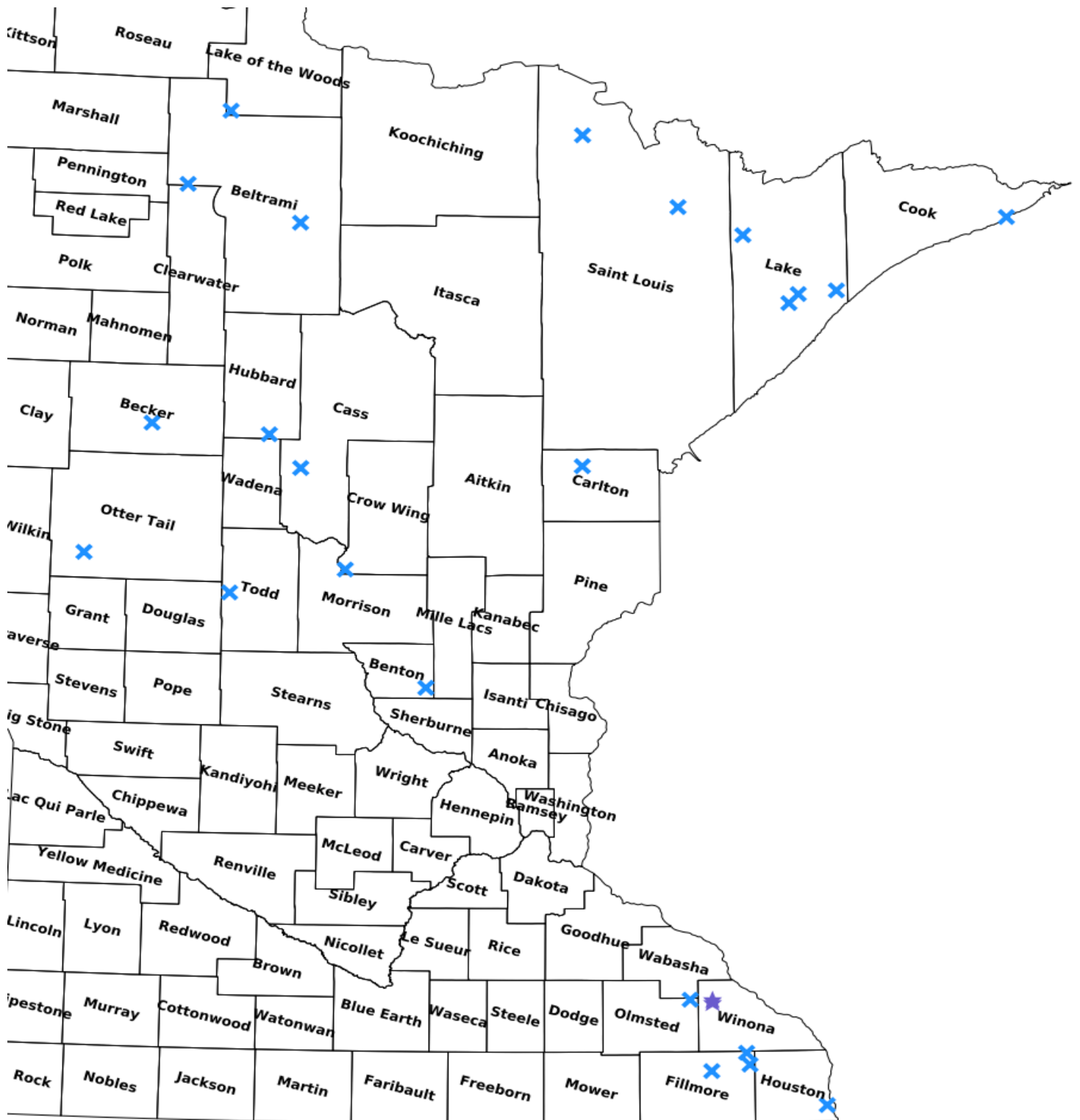
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

We evaluated forest habitat needs not funded through other sources, considering staff capacity from DNR Fish and Wildlife/Forestry divisions to implement and complete within grant timeline.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Hubbel Pond WMA	Becker	13939208	5	\$7,000	Yes	Tree Planting
Red Lake State Forest	Beltrami	15132236	131	\$56,000	Yes	Ash Diversity Enhancement
Bibles Slough WMA	Benton	03628215	11	\$16,000	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
Fond Du Lac State Forest	Carlton	04919231	40	\$10,000	Yes	Oak & Conifer Release
Foothills State Forest	Cass	13731219	120	\$300,000	Yes	Oak Tending and Release
Horeshoe Bay WMA	Cook	06204116	61	\$430,521	Yes	Tree Planting
Little Nokasippi River WMA	Crow Wing	04332226	28	\$16,200	Yes	Tree Planting
R.J. Dorer State Forest	Fillmore	10310202	118	\$39,000	Yes	Prescribed Burn
Schueller WMA	Fillmore	10408203	50	\$65,000	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
R.J. Dorer State Forest	Houston	10104202	21	\$16,800	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
Crow Wing Chain WMA	Hubbard	13933228	75	\$37,500	Yes	Brushland Mowing
Pine Island State Forest	Koochiching	15337231	50	\$25,000	Yes	Brushland Mowing
Bear Island State Forest	Lake	06111203	100	\$75,000	Yes	Tree Planting
Finland State Forest	Lake	05808216	144	\$122,100	Yes	Spruce Budworm Enhancement
Finland State Forest	Lake	05809236	65	\$55,120	Yes	Spruce Budworm Enhancement
Finland State Forest	Lake	05806209	30	\$10,000	Yes	Prescribed Burn
Red Lake WMA	Lake of the Woods	15735229	100	\$53,500	Yes	Tree Planting
Whitewater WMA	Olmsted	10711203	200	\$500,000	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
Valdine WMA	Otter Tail	13243223	4	\$8,000	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
Burntside State Forest	St. Louis	06314217	100	\$160,000	Yes	Rock Outcrop Enhancement
Kabetogama State Forest	St. Louis	06719216	87	\$65,250	Yes	Conifer Release
Burleene WMA	Todd	13035221	172	\$240,000	Yes	Invasive Species Treatment
R. J. Dorer State Forest	Winona	10408226	15	\$87,000	Yes	Prescribed Burn
Whitewater WMA	Winona	10710202	80	\$92,500	Yes	Direct Seeding Release
Whitewater WMA	Winona	10710211	20	\$10,000	Yes	Direct Seeding Release

Parcel Map



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