



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

A River of Birds in the Sky: Conserving Minnesota's Flyway

ML 2026 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/26/2025

**Proposal Title:** A River of Birds in the Sky: Conserving Minnesota's Flyway

**Funds Requested:** \$1,443,000

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$100,000

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** Yes

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Dale Gentry

**Title:** Director of Conservation

**Organization:** Audubon Upper Mississippi River

**Address:** 2355 Highway 36 West, Suite 400

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Chisago, Ramsey and Washington.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

Metro / Urban

Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

Enhance

Restore

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

Habitat

## Narrative

### **Abstract**

Audubon Upper Mississippi River is requesting \$1,443,000 to restore 18 acres and enhance 450 acres of significant wildlife habitat on public and permanently protected private lands along the Saint Croix, Minnesota, and Mississippi River valleys. This landscape serves as part of the Mississippi River flyway, which hosts the largest numbers of migratory birds of all the four major flyways in North America. Our project prioritization criteria emphasize areas that fall within Important Bird Areas (IBA) and priority areas identified by the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan in this region.

### **Design and Scope of Work**

Audubon will advance conservation in Minnesota by enhancing Minnesota's Important Bird Areas (IBA) in the Saint Croix River watershed and nearby sections of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers across the 7-county Metro Area. Our work aligns with the Outdoor Heritage Funds' legacy of restoration and enhancement of Minnesota's natural heritage, by emphasizing Minnesota's Important Bird Areas (IBAs), which are essential to maintaining healthy and diverse bird populations in the state. The Saint Croix River watershed supports over 329 bird species (170+ breeding species) including Henslow's Sparrow (state-endangered list), Red-shouldered Hawk, and Louisiana Waterthrush (both species of special concern). The watershed also supports Audubon stewardship species defined as species with more than 5% of the global population breeding in Minnesota such as the Golden-winged Warbler, American Woodcock, Veery, and Bobolink. Last but certainly not least, the area supports numerous waterfowl, raptors, and game birds like Ruffed Grouse and pheasants. Fisher, White-tailed Deer, and the American badger are among other wildlife found in the region which contains more than 150 non-avian species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) that will benefit from this project.

While enhancing habitats within IBAs is a primary goal, we recognize that some of the greatest opportunities exist conserving critical habitat in areas where a high percentage of the habitat has been transformed by human use. For example, recent research reveals that hardwood forests, particularly those near developed areas, are disproportionally important to nocturnally migratory birds who are attracted to artificial light at night. This finding invites focused conservation of the remaining natural habitats found near human communities. This project will enhance some of the best remaining habitats in a region where most of the historic habitats for breeding and migratory birds have been dramatically altered.

We will expand the available habitat for priority bird species through native seed plantings, managing brush and tree species in grasslands, controlling invasive species, planting trees, and enhancing natural regeneration of trees in forests and savannas. Projects will be selected based on a prioritization model focused on habitat quality and connectivity. Enhancement projects will feature a site assessment, analysis of habitat suitability for priority species and habitat conditions, documentation of prescribed habitat management actions (photo points), and recommended follow-up actions for future management.

We will work closely with local staff from the Belwin Conservancy, Ramsey County and Saint Paul Parks, Pine County, and MN State Parks to identify habitat needs on public and private lands in these key geographies. Audubon will write Habitat Management Action Plans, obtain necessary permits, and complete enhancement and restoration work to create improved habitats for species of concern.

These partnership efforts will deliver effective means of enhancing and restoring ecologically significant land for the benefit of birds, wildlife, and people in Minnesota.

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

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan has identified a group of wildlife species labeled as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). SGCN are rare, declining, or vulnerable to decline and are below levels desirable to ensure their long-term health and stability. In addition to population declines, many are dependent on vulnerable habitats, and/or have been recognized as priorities by various resource agencies and experts in the field. The purpose of identifying priority species is to be strategic about identifying a small number of species that should be the focus of conservation efforts in the short term to prevent further population declines. Based on our analysis, there are 49 avian Species of Greatest Conservation Need that will benefit from this grassland and woodland habitat restoration and enhancement program. A few examples include Grasshopper Sparrow, Veery, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, six species of warbler, three species of flycatcher, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo other non-avian wildlife and fish. In addition, this region contains nine bird species that are listed by the state as endangered, threatened, or special concern, and will benefit from our work: Henslow's Sparrow, Red-shouldered Hawk, Lark Sparrow, Peregrine Falcon, Louisiana Waterthrush, Acadian Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Cerulean Warbler, and Hooded Warbler.

This project will specifically highlight opportunities to enhance habitat for the following SGCN: Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden-winged Warbler, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, American Woodcock, and Wood Thrush.

For example, habitat availability for shrubland species, such as the Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, and Golden-winged Warbler, is ever changing. As patches of young forests and shrubland mature into forests or are cleared for agriculture or development, these species have seen corresponding declines in populations. We can enhance shrubland bird habitat while maintaining a resilient balance of forest, savanna, and prairie habitats, through deliberate softening and feathering of appropriate forest edges. Irregular thinning of a forest edge, planting of native shrubs, and continued cyclical mowing of old shrubland habitat can help to maintain a buffer between open lands and forest that serves as functional habitat for shrubland birds.

### **What are the elements of this proposal that are critical from a timing perspective?**

A landmark 2019 study showed North American bird populations have declined by nearly one-third; a loss of three billion birds since 1970. While many factors are driving these declines, the loss and degradation of habitat is the most significant cause. Grassland birds and forest birds that prefer young or old forests are among the bird populations with the steepest declines.

Grassland habitats, even when protected, are in danger of becoming overgrown by woody species and invaded by non-native cool-season grasses (ie. smooth brome) when there is a lack of disturbance. The same is true for woody invasives in forests. Over time, enhancement and restoration of these lands in need of disturbance become more challenging. This project presents an opportunity to enhance critical habitats in areas crucial to Minnesota's biodiversity.

### **Describe how the proposal expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:**

In an effort to protect some of the most important wildlife habitat in Minnesota, our proposal focuses on the five state, and one global, Important Bird Areas found along the Saint Croix, Minnesota, and Mississippi Rivers as they pass through the Metro Area. Audubon and project partners have identified 57 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Minnesota through a Technical Committee, comprised of bird experts and conservationists from across the state

including the MN Biological Survey. IBAs have been identified in over 170 countries that provide essential habitats for one or more breeding, wintering, and/or migrating bird species. IBAs are a proactive, voluntary, science-based program that identifies, monitors, and conserves the most essential and connected habitats for birds. In short, these IBAs are among the most important areas to direct conservation resources in order to preserve Minnesota's game and non-game avian legacy. Audubon additionally utilizes Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan, and the Minnesota Biological Survey biodiversity significance status to further refine the geographic scope of our efforts to yield the highest conservation return on investment. Minnesota County Biological Survey information, Natural Heritage Information System data, and recommendations in the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan are crucial to prioritizing parcels where enhancement work is undertaken.

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

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Projects Joint Ventures Plan

**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.**

Recommendations for climate smart forestry are similar to bird friendly forestry; therefore, management for birds creates and strengthens climate resilient landscapes. This project would support the removal of invasive species, improve forest diversity and structure, and address forest health concerns related to insect, disease, and climate-driven stressors. This strategy improves the quality and resilience of a diversity of habitats that birds rely on. As Minnesota's weather patterns continues to change, it is important to assess the species composition of the landscape and determine if climate adapted species may be a good fit for planting. Landscapes managed for birds, utilizing the most current avian and climate science, are generally healthier and more resilient to climate change.

**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)

**Northern Forest**

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

**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:**

Audubon will focus enhancement work on key habitats within the Saint Croix, Mississippi, and Minnesota river valleys in East Central Metro Area Watersheds, guided by the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, Audubon Important Bird Areas, Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Joint Venture, and the Minnesota Blueprint for Bird Conservation. These management plans collectively highlight the land bordering the Saint Croix, Mississippi, and Minnesota Rivers as critical to the well-being of Minnesota's birds and biodiversity. We collaborate with local, state, and federal governmental and non-profit conservation partners to ensure our activities are complementary to those undertaken by others in the program area and meet their program standards and best management practices. We focus on lands that are within IBAs and are part of the larger prairie/savanna/forest habitat complexes to

maximize the benefit to area-sensitive species. Audubon will prioritize properties that support species in greatest conservation need and contain sensitive habitat types as identified within the Minnesota Biological Survey. This work will build high-quality habitat complexes with better connectivity for birds. Along with Audubon Upper Mississippi River, the Belwin Conservancy, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, Minnesota State Parks, and Minnesota State Forests are deeply committed to maximizing and building off these habitat investments over time.

## 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 ~ *Outcomes can be measured by the number of acres impacted and the number of projects Audubon and partners restore or enhance. Habitat Management Action Plans will detail specific restoration or enhancement prescriptions for each project on public lands and permanent conservation easements. The quality of work and level of success of projects on State Forest and State Park lands will be monitored through various DNR monitoring protocols. All of the project work undertaken can be assessed based on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Join Venture Landbird Conservation Plan.*

### **Programs in the northern forest region:**

Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ *Outcomes can be measured by the number of acres impacted and the number of projects Audubon and partners restore or enhance. Habitat Management Action Plans will detail specific restoration or enhancement prescriptions for each project on public lands and permanent conservation easements. The quality of work and level of success of projects on State Forest and State Park lands will be monitored through various DNR monitoring protocols. All of the project work undertaken can be assessed based on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan and the Upper Mississippi/Great Lakes Join Venture Landbird Conservation Plan.*

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

Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

### **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.**

LSOHC funding is in addition to other funding sources, and does not supplant that work. Without LSOHC funding, Audubon Upper Mississippi River would not have resources to implement habitat enhancement projects and would have greater challenges in funding personnel salaries associated with this work.

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

Audubon is committed to working with our partners to ensure management recommendations are understood and implemented to the highest degree. In some cases, our enhancements (e.g. brush management) will facilitate the implementation of different and better management strategies (e.g. prescribed fire) that are not available under current vegetation conditions. Enhancement that occurs on public lands will expand and bolster the habitat work being done for the benefit of game and non-game bird species. Each public partner has successful stewardship programs that include annual property monitoring, effective records management, processes for investigating potential violations, and managing the land. Likewise, the Belwin Conservancy also monitors its landholdings closely through multiple site visits a year, habitat management prioritization models, and land management. Our enhancement work will improve habitat conditions for priority species and increase the efficiency of future actions with regard to invasive species and woody species encroachment. Any Outdoor Heritage Funds allocated will

expedite and expand the breadth of the enhancement activities on these conserved parcels.

In addition, Audubon will prepare a habitat management action plan for each property, providing ecological management recommendations for the property over time to maintain and manage the land for focal grassland and forest species.

### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026-2029	LSOHC, Belwin, DNR, Ramsey Co.	Site recon, prescription development, planning and bidding	Conduct Site Management	Maintenance
2030-2035	Belwin, DNR, Ramsey Co.	Site recon, prescription development, planning and bidding	Implement Maintenance/Management	Continued site recon and management

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

In the past, indigenous cultures managed all the lands we now call Minnesota. We seek to recognize and celebrate their cultural heritage by managing the land with similar objectives (ie. holistic ecosystem health) and methods (ie. restoring natural disturbance regimes) to the best of our ability and understanding. Today, indigenous cultures are still connected to the land and manage livestock, use prescribed fire for habitat enhancement, and harvest many native plants such as wild rice, maple sap, and many wild fruits and medicines. Our work will celebrate and complement those natural resource management activities and help to maximize the clean water and healthy land benefits, as well as preserve the cultural importance of the natural landscape, and native species, for indigenous communities.

Furthermore, this work will directly benefit BIPOC communities in some of the counties where Audubon will restore and enhance lands. The proximity of the lower Saint Croix, Mississippi, and Minnesota Rivers to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area means that improved habitats with healthier communities of wildlife will be accessible for outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing by the members of the Twin Cities Metropolitan counties which have a higher density of BIPOC people. Further, birds are excellent indicators of environmental health and ecosystem integrity. Our forest and grassland enhancements designed to benefit birds will also improve the overall health of the surrounding ecosystem and create a more diverse habitat for both game and non-game wildlife species.

### Activity Details

#### Requirements

**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?**

State Forests

Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

Other : State Parks

County/Municipal

SNA

**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 proposal either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**

No

**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	\$2,102,400	\$39,777	\$2,062,623	1.89%
2023	\$1,156,900	\$288,280	\$868,620	24.92%
2022	\$2,347,600	\$927,689	\$1,419,911	39.52%
2021	\$1,426,200	\$514,801	\$911,399	36.1%
Totals	\$7,033,100	\$1,770,547	\$5,262,553	25.17%

**Timeline**

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Implement a portion of the Habitat Management Action Plans for restoration and enhancement recommendations on private land easements and public lands to benefit targeted bird species.	June 2027
Conduct habitat restoration and enhancement of both public and permanently protected private lands.	June 2029
Complete restoration and enhancement habitat projects. Post-management summary of habitat suitability for targeted species.	June 2030



**Budget****Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$456,300	\$100,000	USFS Bird Friendly Maple	\$556,300
Contracts	\$855,000	-	-	\$855,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$8,000	-	-	\$8,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$45,700	\$115,000	Unrecovered ICR	\$160,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	\$75,000	-	-	\$75,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,443,000</b>	<b>\$215,000</b>	-	<b>\$1,658,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
St. Croix project ecologist	0.65	4.0	\$190,300	\$65,000	USFS Bird Friendly Maple	\$255,300
Grant Administrator	0.05	4.0	\$38,800	-	-	\$38,800
Conservation Director	0.15	4.0	\$93,300	\$35,000	USFS Bird Friendly Maple	\$128,300
Conservation Manager	0.25	4.0	\$133,900	-	-	\$133,900

**Amount of Request:** \$1,443,000**Amount of Leverage:** \$215,000**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 14.9%**DSS + Personnel:** \$502,000**As a % of the total request:** 34.79%**Easement Stewardship:** -**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$215,000	\$100,000	46.51%	\$115,000	53.49%



**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage is provided from Direct Source Service costs. Audubon is also leveraging state funds with private funds contributed to Audubon. These funds are used to offset un-recovered DSS. We are also leveraging a US Forest Service grant to implement the Bird Friendly Maple syrup program in Minnesota.

**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?**

This project is scalable; the number of acres could be reduced proportionally. Acres of restoration and enhancement projects would be reduced if the project received 50% of requested funding.

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

Based on our experiences with other LSOHC supported projects, personnel and dedicated support staff are important to project success and more difficult to scale down, though possible.

**If the project received 30% of the requested funding**

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

This project is scalable; the number of acres could be reduced proportionally. Acres of restoration and enhancement projects would be reduced if the project received 30% of requested funding.

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

Based on our experiences with other LSOHC supported projects, personnel and dedicated support staff are important to project success and more difficult to scale down, though possible.

**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?**

We have requested funds for all four staff members in previous requests to LSOHC.

**Contracts**

**What is included in the contracts line?**

The contract line item is directed to enhancement and restoration projects. We will use Minnesota-based contractors and CCMI for aspects of project work, including heavy equipment work, brush mowing, tree removal in prairies, selective herbicide use for invasive species and site preparation, and seedings.

**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**

Audubon Minnesota staff may rent vehicles for grant-related purposes for longer trips as needed.

**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?**

Our Direct Support Services is based on Audubon's federally negotiated indirect rate of 24.66%. In this proposal, we are requesting reimbursement of 10% of eligible costs from LSOHC and matching 14.66%. The indirect cost rate only applies to the first \$25,000 of the Contracts line item. Please see attachment for documentation.

### **Other Equipment/Tools**

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

Field gear, field guides, office supplies for fieldwork and file management, smartphone applications related to mapping or plant ID, and maps.

### **Federal Funds**

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

Yes

**Are the funds confirmed?**

Yes

Cash : \$100,000

**Is Confirmation Document attached?**

[Yes](#)

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

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	18	18
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	450	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>468</b>

**Restoration/Enhancement Acres Breakdown of Existing Protected Lands (Table 1a.2)**

	RESTORE		ENHANCE	
	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc)	-	18	-	305
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	-	-	85
Easements	-	0	0	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>450</b>

**Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$75,000	\$75,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$1,368,000	\$1,368,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$1,443,000</b>	<b>\$1,443,000</b>

**Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	18	0	0	0	0	18
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	303	0	0	0	147	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>468</b>

**Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$75,000	-	-	-	-	\$75,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$709,500	-	-	-	\$658,500	\$1,368,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$784,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$658,500</b>	<b>\$1,443,000</b>

**Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$4,166
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$3,040

**Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	\$4,166	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$2,341	-	-	-	\$4,479

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles**

## Parcels

### Sign-up Criteria?

No

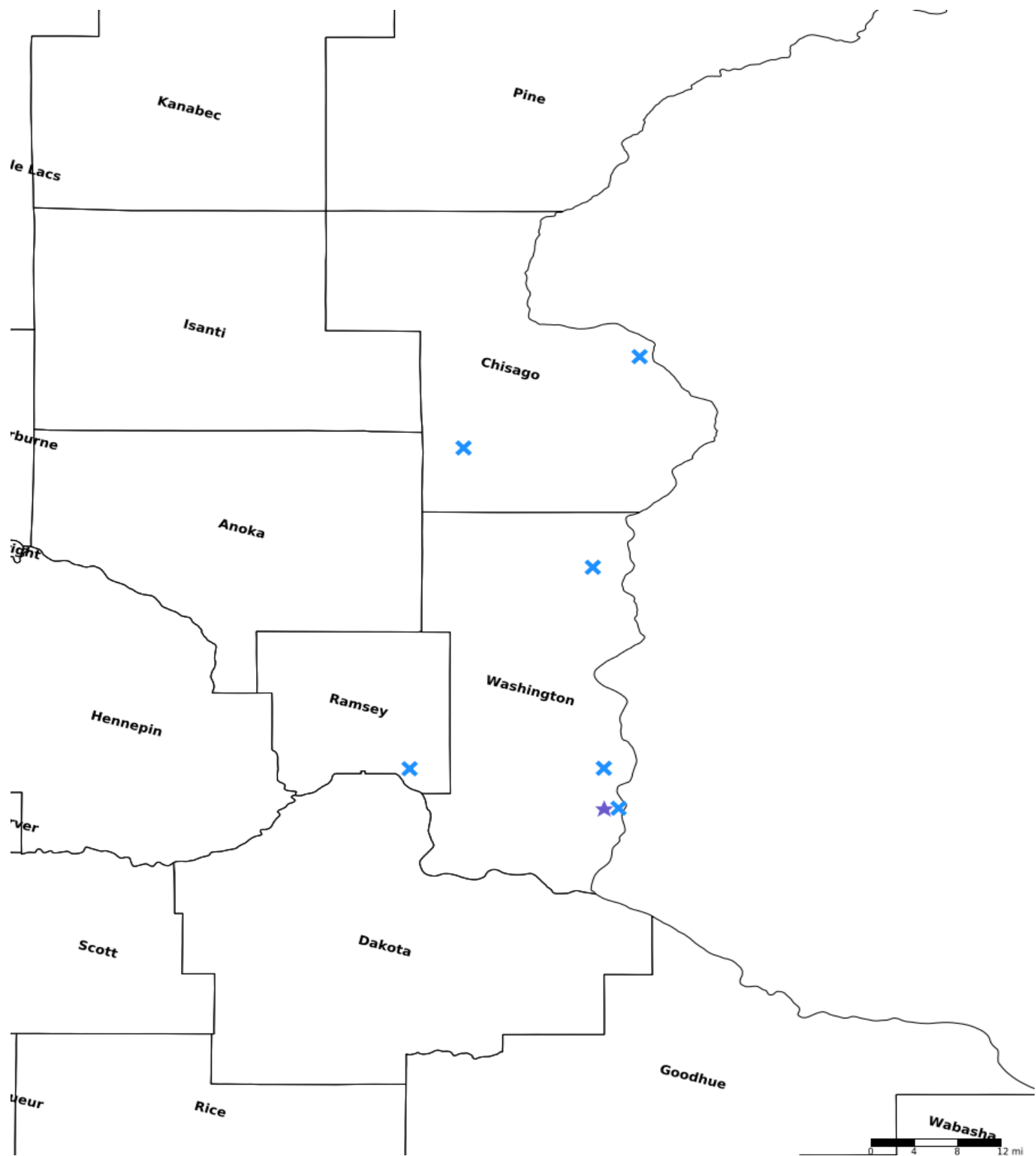
### Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Audubon collaborated with MN Department of Natural Resources divisions of forestry and parks and trails and the Belwin Conservancy to identify priority parcels for enhancement and restoration projects. Projects were targeted and selected based on a prioritization model that focuses on core habitat, geography, conservation estate, potential target species suitability, acres of remnant habitat, and current habitat condition. Additional parcels were added as specific prioritization mapping, site visits, and habitat assessments further narrow our focus.

### Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Carlos Avery	Chisago	03421233	26	\$50,000	Yes	Woody invasive removal and chemical treatment, brush saw, hand removal and some mowing
Wild River Forests	Chisago	03519217	18	\$30,000	Yes	Fuels management of dead and down trees and brush. Site prep for fire and future tree planting.
Battle Creek Bluffs	Ramsey	02822210	65	\$120,000	Yes	Woody invasives cutting/treatment and follow up foliar application, majority handwork by contractor
Afton Prairie Enhancement	Washington	02820235	37	\$75,000	Yes	Woody invasives cutting/treatment and follow up foliar application, majority handwork by contractor
Afton Prairie Restoration	Washington	02820234	58	\$100,000	Yes	Cedar/brush removal. Foxglove treatment. Boom spray. Seed
Belwin Ed Forest	Washington	02820210	47	\$90,000	Yes	Woody invasives cutting/treatment and follow up foliar application, majority handwork by contractor
William O'Brien State Park	Washington	03220235	22	\$25,000	Yes	Woody invasives cutting and follow up foliar treatment. Initial work likely done by forestry mower.

Parcel Map



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



## A Fighting Chance for a River of Birds

Photo credit Justin Meissen

Minnesota hosts about 400 million migrant birds every spring and 735 million each fall and all of them need high quality habitat as they stop to rest and refuel. With LSOHC support, Audubon will expand habitat enhancement and restoration on permanently protected land along the St. Croix, Minnesota, and Mississippi Rivers as they flow through Eastern Minnesota.

In forests, savannas, and prairies, the region contains unique and critical habitats that are home to over 320 birds and 150+ non-avian Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Projects will be targeted and selected based on a prioritization model that focuses on habitat suitability for priority bird species, landscape context, conservation state, and habitat conditions.

**Funding Request:** \$1,443,000

**Impact:** 450 Acres Enhanced, 18 Acres Restored

With five partners, Audubon will:

- Restore and enhance grasslands - good for prairie birds, pollinators, and other wildlife and fish by improving regional water quality
- Manage invasive brush and plant trees where forests need enhancement because of oak wilt and emerald ash borer
- Manage invasive shrubs in oak savannas to prepare them for future prescribed fires. Birds such as the Red-headed Woodpeckers and Eastern Whip-poor-wills will thank us!



Red-headed Woodpeckers nest in oak savannas that support local sportspeople as well as local economies (photo credit Kevin Sim).



Red-shouldered Hawks (above) and Bobolink (below) are classified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the MN DNR (credits David Held and Charli Trapani).



### Project Title:

A River of Birds in the Sky: Conserving Minnesota's Flyway

### Project Manager:

Conservation Director – Dale Gentry PhD  
[dale.gentry@audubon.org](mailto:dale.gentry@audubon.org)

### Executive Director:

Rob Schultz  
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### Audubon Upper Mississippi River

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# A Place to Land for a River of Birds

Pioneering research with Doppler weather radar found that nocturnally migrating birds (i.e., 80% of migratory birds) migrate at higher densities closer to the Mississippi River and they are drawn to urban areas by artificial light at night. This project will help ensure that migrant birds attracted to developed areas along the Mississippi River Flyway will find high quality habitat when they arrive.



The Minneapolis skyline is a magnet for migratory birds. (photo credit Tony Webster)



The 2025 State of the Birds Report identified Tipping Point Species who have lost more than 50% of their populations within the past 50 years! Our work will positively impact breeding habitat for the following Tipping Point Species:

- Eastern Towhee
- Bobolink
- Eastern Whip-poor-will
- Henslow's Sparrow
- Wood Thrush
- Field Sparrow
- Golden Winged Warbler
- Cerulean Warbler
- Chimney Swift

## Project Partners



**BELWIN**



**RAMSEY  
COUNTY**



Project areas (yellow stars) including hardwood forests, oak savannas, and grasslands in the complex of Important Bird Areas in east central Minnesota