# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project Phase 11

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

## General Information

**Date:** 10/12/2026

**Project Title:** Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project Phase 11

**Funds Recommended:** $1,855,000

**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Tim Terrill
**Title:** Executive Director
**Organization:** Mississippi Headwaters Board
**Address:** 322 Laurel St., Suite 11
**City:** Brainerd, MN 56401
**Email:** timt@mississippiheadwaters.org
**Office Number:** 218-824-1189
**Mobile Number:** 218-838-8563
**Fax Number:**
**Website:** http://www.mississippiheadwaters.org

### Partners Contact

**BWSR:** Darren Mayers - darren.mayers@state.mn.us - (218) 290-8384

**MHB:** Tim Terrill - timt@mississippiheadwaters.org - (218) 838-8563

### Location Information

**County Location(s):**

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

Forest / Prairie Transition

Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

Habitat

# Narrative

## Abstract

The Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project (MHHCP) is a partnership of the Mississippi Headwaters Board, Trust for Public Land, and BWSR. Fee-title acquisitions and conservation easements on private lands adjacent to public land create/expand permanently protected aquatic and upland wildlife habitat complexes along the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River and major tributaries. This request is only for BWSR conservation easements and MHB program management. 450 acres of critical habitat will be placed in permanent conservation easements to benefit fish, wildlife, and migratory waterfowl and reduce forest fragmentation. Additionally, public recreation and drinking water quality is enhanced.

## Design and Scope of Work

This phase of the Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project (MHHCP) will continue to provide aquatic and upland game habitat protection and food and shelter for migratory waterfowl along the first 400 miles of the Mississippi River (its headwaters) and tributaries. Work is focused on private land on or adjacent to the river or land on or near major tributaries within the 8 headwaters' counties of Clearwater, Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard, Itasca, Crow Wing, Aitkin, and Morrison. In addition to the 13,000 acres and 72 miles of shoreland already protected, this phase will permanently protect an additional 450 acres and 2+ miles of shoreland by creating and enlarging protected habitat complexes and corridors. Additionally, public recreational opportunities are enhanced for fishing, hunting, passive recreation and drinking water quality is ensured for millions downstream.

The 8-County headwaters are home to a variety of game fish and their adjacent lands are home to over 350+ species of animals and birds, including most of the endangered and threatened species in Minnesota. Development pressure along the river and its tributaries is increasing as people seek to live near water. Private land development can lead to fragmentation of forests that threaten wildlife and aquatic habitats. Public lands adjacent to developable private lands are in danger of losing habitat connectivity as private lands are increasingly developed resulting in destruction of wild rice beds, aquatic and upland habitat and fragmentation of forestlands, grasslands, and wetlands that dominate the Mississippi headwaters.

The MHHCP provides fish and wildlife habitat protection by targeting private lands adjacent to already protected public land for fee-title acquisition or conservation easements to create permanently protected habitat complexes. This proposal is only requesting funds for BWSR to complete conservation easements and for MHB project management; TPL has remaining funds available for fee-title acquisition and does not require additional funding at this time.

The MHHCP partners (MHB, BWSR, and TPL) realize there is critical conservation work to conduct yet future work needs to be strategic about where protection happens to ensure the highest rate of return on the OHF investment. A map was created to identify strategic areas for future protection using advanced GIS technology, recently updated land use information from the 8 headwaters' counties, and priorities from 1Watershed/1Plans from 6 major watersheds. The map will guide partners to priority areas for future land protection efforts and aid in

developing targeted landowner outreach.

As a partnership, The Mississippi Headwaters Board provides program administration and coordination. Trust for Public Land acquires fee-title to priority lands and conveys permanent ownership to a public entity (MN DNR or LGU). BWSR completes RIM conservation easements on private lands with local SWCD assistance. A Technical Team of project partners, 8 SWCDS and representatives from the DNR and The Nature Conservancy review and approve all projects using a ranked evaluation of habitat and biodiversity, urgency and opportunity for protection, size of the parcel, amount of shoreland and other critical habitat features. Strong local government involvement is unique to this program.

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

The Mississippi Headwaters is host to over 350 species of mammals, birds and fish, including most of Minnesota's endangered and threatened species. The MHHCP protects those species by creating permanently protected habitat complexes and corridors along the river and its major tributaries that provide upland wildlife with food, shelter, and protection from predators and clean water habitat for fish survival and spawning.

A strategic planning process recently began to identify priority aquatic and upland areas within the headwaters on which to prioritize future program activity. A qualitative analysis of the benefits of wildlife protection at a watershed scale was contracted to Peter C. Jacobsen, DNR Fisheries Scientist whose former fisheries research demonstrated that a minor watershed is considered permanently protected for water quality when a threshold of 75% land protection (public, private, and SFIA lands) is achieved. His recent research demonstrated the 75% threshold in a minor watershed also applies for upland wildlife protection. His report," Wildlife Habitat Benefits of Watershed Protection," demonstrated highly sensitive areas may need a higher threshold than 75% for adequate habitat protection.

Three wildlife assessment and prioritization data sets were used in the report: 1) Minnesota DNR Wildlife Action Network; 2) Minnesota DNR Watershed Health Assessment Framework Terrestrial Habitat Scores; and 3) The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Lands Network data. A map of wildlife land protection priorities within the 8-county headwaters was created by combining the three data sets with recent protected lands data provided by the 8 headwaters counties. The map pinpoints priority areas of high wildlife value on which to focus future landowner outreach to reach or exceed the 75% watershed protection value. (see the map on the project illustration). The priority areas correspond to a spreadsheet of landowner data in minor watersheds.

Parcels in priority areas are identified and assessed using a science-based tool (RAQ), where "R" is the riparian nature, "A" is adjacency to already protected land, and "Q" is the habitat quality established using various state and national databases. Outreach is then directed to landowners of high RAQ-value land.

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

Previously appropriated funds (ML24 and ML25) for conservation easements are spent or parcels have been approved by the Technical Committee for submission to BWSR and are in various processing stages. There are interested landowners waiting for availability of additional conservation easement funding, several with large parcels.

Because inland lakes are highly developed, there is increasing interest in developing along the river and its tributaries. There is urgency to protect high priority lands for fish and wildlife habitat protection because development pressures are threatening forest fragmentation and disturbance of shoreland and upland habitats.

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

The MHHCP focuses on creating and expanding permanently protected aquatic and upland wildlife habitat complexes/corridors by acquiring priority private land (via fee-title or easement acquisition) adjacent to already protected land (county, state, or federal land or land already under easement) to expand existing or create new habitat complexes. These large habitat corridors/complexes provide the essential elements of good upland habitat continuity for wildlife that includes food, a place to raise their young, cover from predators, and mobility for wildlife during various life stages and adaptation as needed to climate change. They also provide aquatic habitat (clean water) for fish survival and spawning and food and shelter for migratory waterfowl along the Mississippi Flyway. These complexes limit future development that could disrupt forest complexes and fragment fish and wildlife habitat.

Using the previously described map of priority habitat protection areas and the RAQ science-based parcel prioritization process, high priority private parcels are identified next to already protected lands (public or private in easement). Connecting these acquired parcels to already protected land enlarges or creates habitat protection complexes. Multiple habitat complexes along the river or its tributaries create safe corridors of protected land for wildlife to move around and/or protected and undeveloped shoreland for high quality fish habitat.

The Indian Jack WMA habitat complex featured on the project illustration is an example of the program's successful approach of using fee-title and easement acquisitions connected to already protected land to create a large habitat complex. Two fee-title acquisitions in Crow Wing County created the new 299-acre DNR Indian Jack WMA, which combined with two adjacent RIM conservation easements and other state and county land, created a habitat complex of 594+ contiguous acres, 2.5 miles of Indian Jack Lake shoreland, and 3 miles of Mississippi River shoreland, on which the DNR is adding a new public access. In addition to habitat protection for both wildlife and fisheries, this forested complex provides enhanced public recreation opportunities for fishing, hunting, bird watching and river access.

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

Mississippi River Headwaters Comprehensive Plan

Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

**Forest / Prairie Transition**

Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

**Northern Forest**

Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Rivers and streams provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west ~ *Conservation easements in this region have been funded in past appropriations. Those funded with an ML 27 appropriation will be placed on parcels on or near the main stem Mississippi River and/or along, near major Mississippi tributaries in the region, or in or around large habitat complexes. In the eastern portion of the region, parcels are mostly forested. Easement outcomes will be measured by the number of acres protected and shoreland feet and evaluated against set program criteria and goals. Easements will be evaluated into perpetuity through yearly monitoring by SWCDs in the 8 headwaters' counties.*

### Programs in the northern forest region:

Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors ~ *With permanent land protection via conservation easements forests will remain intact and less fragmented to maintain the forest integrity necessary for wildlife and fisheries habitat protection. Placement of projects will focus on private land that can connect with adjacent public or already protected private lands to create or expand habitat corridors. Outcomes will be measured by acres and shoreland miles protected and evaluated against program goals and criteria. Easements will be monitored annually into perpetuity by BWSR and the SWCD for the county in which the easement is located.*

### 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 a substitution for any previous Legacy funding used for the same purpose.

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

BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry out oversight, monitoring and inspection of conservation easements. Easements are inspected every year for the first five years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations are identified. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs are $10,000 per easement. This value is based on using SWCD staff for monitoring and preliminary enforcement. The amount includes costs of BWSR and local government unit staff time as well as costs for encouraging voluntary compliance, addressing potential violations and legal enforcement.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

| Year | Source of Funds | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2027-2031 | OHF | Work with project partners to determine fish and game habitat protection priorities; develop tools for prioritizing lands for acquisition (fee title or easement); provide outreach assistance to SWCDs: and develop/ maintain trusting relationships with local government for project support | The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB) provides project coordination among project partners and other supporting organizations, including responsibility for status reports, outreach assistance to SWCDs, developing prioritization tools for project selection, facilitation of regular meetings of the Project Technical Committee to review and approve participating landowner projects, and project representation to regional conservation collaborative efforts. MHB also promotes ongoing relationships and training as needed for the 8 Headwaters County Boards. | - |
| 2027-2031 | OHF | Work with project partners and landowners to determine interest in a fee-title acquisition and seek state or local government permanent land ownership. | The Trust for Public Land will acquire parcels for fee-title acquisition (with or without PILT) and transfer to the appropriate public entity. | Permanent public entity owners of acquired lands (state or local government) will follow the monitoring and land management policies of their organization. |
| 2027-2031 | OHF | Work with project partners and landowners to determine RIM conservation easement interest and develop long-term fish and game habitat protection priorities. | Work with BWSR and County SWCDs to conduct landowner outreach and acquire conservation easements | BWSR and SWCDs will perform ongoing onsite inspections and monitoring and enforce conditions of the recorded easement into perpetuity. |

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

MHHCP partner organizations have programs funded through different sources that focus primarily on engaging Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as well as diverse economic communities. A meeting of multiple conservation agencies and organizations was held with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) to

discuss mutual conservation goals. LLBO is invited to participate in the MMHCP Technical Team that reviews and approves all projects in an effort to be more inclusive in the program's land protection work.

Generally, RIM priority areas are focused on rural communities across the state due to the nature of the program and payment rates. Review of the Environmental Justice map produced by the MPCA shows RIM easement programs overlap with many identified environmental justice areas across the state, particularly those areas that are identified by lower than state median incomes. Lower annual income areas of the state benefit from RIM in several ways, including financial benefits for landowners through easement payments. The individual program may also require seeding and wetland restoration work by local contractors. The work by SWCD staff also includes outreach, monitoring and maintenance which helps maintain and grow rural jobs and economies.

Conservation easements benefit all Minnesotans. They help to keep our air and water clean for fish habitat, provide upland habitat protection, help to ensure high-quality drinking water downstream of the headwaters, and help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

## Activity Details

### Requirements

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

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

**Who will manage the easement?**
The Board of Water and Soil Resources will manage the easement with the assistance of the local SWCD for processing and perpetual monitoring.

**Who will be the easement holder?**
The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**
6 easements, depending on size and cost.

### Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?**
No

**Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**
No

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**
Yes

**Describe the expected public use:**
RIM easements do not require that private land is open to the public; however, this question is also

evaluated on public benefit and RIM easements do provide a significant public benefit; often expand wildlife habitat near public lands; and do not limit the potential for the land to be open to the public through other programs. SWCD partners, who work with landowners on easement application, can enroll landowners into the DNR Walk-In Access (WIA) program upon easement application. The WIA program is available in 54 counties, all of which are eligible for RIM.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved, beyond those used for maintenance and management, as a result of the proposed acquisition?**

No

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

No

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

No

**Explain how and when the restoration/enhancement work will be completed and identify the source of funding:**

No restoration or enhancement work will be done on conservation easements funded with this program.

## Timeline

| Activity Name | Estimated Completion Date |
|---|---|
| Under contract to BWSR, SWCDs do annual monitoring of acquired easements | Ongoing |
| SWCDs do landowner outreach according to established parcel priorities, works with landowner to submit easement application, assists BWSR with processing due diligence, and records the final easement. SWCD's are paid a set standard fee by BWSR for processing assistance. | 2031 |
| MHB provides project administration and coordination, assists with development of parcel prioritization tools and outreach, convenes the Technical Review Committee, and does project reporting | 2031 |
| BWSR approves and processes landowner applications that have been approved by the Project Technical Committee and is responsible for ongoing monitoring of completed easements. | 2031; stewardship ongoing |

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 10/01/2031

**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, 2031;

(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, 2035;

(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2032;

(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.*

## Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $143,800 | - | - | $143,800 |
| Contracts | $25,000 | - | - | $25,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $1,582,000 | - | - | $1,582,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | $60,000 | - | - | $60,000 |
| Travel | $3,200 | - | - | $3,200 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $31,100 | - | - | $31,100 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $4,500 | - | - | $4,500 |
| Supplies/Materials | $5,400 | - | - | $5,400 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$1,855,000** | **-** | **-** | **$1,855,000** |

## Partner: BWSR

### *Totals*

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $107,800 | - | - | $107,800 |
| Contracts | $15,000 | - | - | $15,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $1,582,000 | - | - | $1,582,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | $60,000 | - | - | $60,000 |
| Travel | $3,200 | - | - | $3,200 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $31,100 | - | - | $31,100 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $4,500 | - | - | $4,500 |
| Supplies/Materials | $1,400 | - | - | $1,400 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$1,805,000** | **-** | **-** | **$1,805,000** |

### *Personnel*

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Easement Staff | 0.2 | 4.0 | $107,800 | - | - | $107,800 |

## Partner: MHB

***Totals***

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $36,000 | - | - | $36,000 |
| Contracts | $10,000 | - | - | $10,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Stewardship | - | - | - | - |
| Travel | - | - | - | - |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | - | - | - | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | - | - | - | - |
| Supplies/Materials | $4,000 | - | - | $4,000 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$50,000** | **-** | **-** | **$50,000** |

***Personnel***

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Project Administrator | 0.2 | 4.0 | $36,000 | - | - | $36,000 |

**Amount of Request:** $1,855,000
**Amount of Leverage:** -
**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 0.0%
**DSS + Personnel:** $174,900
**As a % of the total request:** 9.43%
**Easement Stewardship:** $60,000
**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 3.79%

**How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?**
A reduction in funding would reduce outputs (acres/activities) proportionately.

**Does this project have the ability to be scalable?**
Yes

## If the project received 50% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
A reduction in funding would reduce outputs (acres/activities) proportionately.

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

Program management costs (personnel and DSS expenses) will be reduced; however not exactly proportionately as program administration, coordination, development and oversight costs remain consistent. A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation

## Personnel

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**
Yes

## Contracts

**What is included in the contracts line?**
MHB will utilize the funding to contract with professionals that can perform research or develop tools to help administer the program more effectively. BWSR contract funds are for direct SWCD assistance.

## Easement Stewardship

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**
6 easements at $10,000 per easement for stewardship. The total stewardship amount will ultimately be dependent on the cost of easements and if the proposed easement number is reached. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs are $10,000 per easement. The value is based on using SWCD staff for monitoring and preliminary enforcement. The amount includes costs of BWSR and local government unit staff time as well as costs for encouraging voluntary compliance, addressing potential violations and legal enforcement.

## Travel

**Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?**
No

**Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging**
none

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

## Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**
BWSR annually reviews and updates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done and the program staff time involved.

## Other Equipment/Tools

**Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?**
Signage for completed projects.

## Federal Funds

**Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**
No

# Output Tables

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | 450 | 450 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **450** | **450** |

## 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 | - | - | - | $1,855,000 | $1,855,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **$1,855,000** | **$1,855,000** |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | 50 | - | - | 400 | 450 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **50** | **-** | **-** | **400** | **450** |

## 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 | - | $100,000 | - | - | $1,755,000 | $1,855,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **$100,000** | **-** | **-** | **$1,755,000** | **$1,855,000** |

## 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 | - | - | - | $4,122 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - |

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

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | $2,000 | - | - | $4,387 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

2+ miles of streambank

# Parcels

## Parcel Information

**Sign-up Criteria?**
Yes - Sign up criteria is attached

**Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**
Because Trust for Public Land (TPL) is not requesting funds with this proposal, there are no fee-title parcels listed. This funding will provide for conservation easements held by BWSR. The parcels selected are submitted by the SWCDs in the 8 County headwaters and then vetted against program criteria by the Technical Committee for approval/disapproval to submit a BWSR application. The Technical Team ranking sheet is attached for a potential easement parcel evaluation When the easement is recorded it will be added to the Accomplishment Plan parcel list by BWSR.

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project Phase 11

Comparison Report

**Program Title:** ML 2027 - Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project Phase 11
**Organization:** Mississippi Headwaters Board
**Manager:** Tim Terrill

## Budget

**Requested Amount:** $5,000,000
**Appropriated Amount:** $1,855,000
**Percentage:** 37.1%

| Item | Requested Proposal | Leverage Proposal | Appropriated AP | Leverage AP | Percent of Request | Percent of Leverage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $340,500 | - | $143,800 | - | 42.23% | - |
| Contracts | $76,000 | - | $25,000 | - | 32.89% | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $4,288,500 | - | $1,582,000 | - | 36.89% | - |
| Easement Stewardship | $180,000 | - | $60,000 | - | 33.33% | - |
| Travel | $8,700 | - | $3,200 | - | 36.78% | - |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $86,200 | - | $31,100 | - | 36.08% | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $12,400 | - | $4,500 | - | 36.29% | - |
| Supplies/Materials | $7,700 | - | $5,400 | - | 70.13% | - |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$5,000,000** | **-** | **$1,855,000** | **-** | **37.1%** | **-** |

## If the project received 70% 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) proportionately.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Program management costs (personnel and DSS expenses) will be reduced; however not exactly proportionately as program administration, coordination, development and oversight costs remain consistent. A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation

## 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) proportionately.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Program management costs (personnel and DSS expenses) will be reduced; however not exactly proportionately as program administration, coordination, development and oversight costs remain consistent. A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation

# Output

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 1,375 | 450 | 32.73% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $5,000,000 | $1,855,000 | 37.1% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 1,375 | 450 | 32.73% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $5,000,000 | $1,855,000 | 37.1% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection
Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

## General Information

**Date:** 10/12/2026

**Project Title:** MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection

**Funds Recommended:** $2,541,000

**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Andy Kernan
**Title:** Forest Legacy Program Coordinator
**Organization:** MNDNR Division of Forestry
**Address:** 500 Lafayette Rd.
**City:** St. Paul, MN 55155
**Email:** andrew.kernan@state.mn.us
**Office Number:** 612-500-6315
**Mobile Number:**
**Fax Number:**
**Website:**

### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Hubbard, Isanti, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Winona, Wabasha, Fillmore, Crow Wing and Todd.

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

Southeast Forest

Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

Forest

# Narrative

## Abstract

The MN Forests for the Future Program focuses on protecting high conservation value forest lands and will acquire and steward 3,326 acres of working forest conservation easements on priority forest and riparian habitat in the SE bluffland and Northern forest regions across nine counties focused on private in-holdings and land adjacent to public land. Protecting large blocks of private forest achieves multiple benefits: conserving critical habitat, forested land cover essential for high water quality/quantity, building climate resilience and sustaining the forested landscape critical for local jobs in tourism and timber.

## Design and Scope of Work

MN Forests for the Future Ph. XI protects forest/riparian habitat in the Southeast, Central, and Northwest; strategically targeting large forest blocks threatened by conversion and fragmentation. Nearly 7.5 million acres (44%) of MN's forests are privately-owned and at risk of fragmentation or conversion. Since 2008, MN has experienced some of the highest conversion rates in the U.S., with the highest located in North Central MN. This program protects forests through acquiring permanent working forest conservation easements. Protection work achieves multiple benefits by conserving critical habitat, maintaining forested land cover essential for high water quality/quantity, building climate resilience and by sustaining the forested landscape critical for recreation and local jobs in tourism and timber. This work is crucial to conserving wildlife that require large intact forests and provides perpetual protection for fish, game and wildlife that inhabit these forested landscapes.

This proposal focuses on the SE blufflands and Northern forest areas building on existing protection and utilizing strong partnerships including local governments and citizen groups. Private in-holdings and land adjacent to publicly owned land are prioritized leveraging larger blocks of protected forest habitat, more protection against fragmentation, multiplying the effects of climate refugia and resilience, and providing habitat corridors especially important for wildlife movement. Land cover and land use directly impacts water quality/quantity; by protecting forests in key areas, this program will also protect drinking water, recharge aquifers, reduce nutrient and sediment to lakes and streams, protect floodplains, sustain fisheries and further mitigate climate change. Protection of forested land is critical for local economies including tourism, timber and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Acquisition of permanent conservation easements will protect 3,326 acres of intact high conservation value forests and keep them in private ownership. Work is strategically focused to build on existing protection, address private in-holdings, address regional conservation and management goals and meet private landowner demand.

Program guidelines have been developed and implemented for >15 years ensuring protection work is strategically located and stewardship sound and efficient. A forest management plan is included with each conservation easement and updates required regularly; the plans make the land eligible for DNR forest stewardship including technical assistance and cost-sharing for forest BMPs and many conservation easement landowners choose to participate in these programs to better conserve and manage their privately-owned forested habitat. Ongoing stewardship includes annual landowner meetings and on-site monitoring. Local government communication occurs so projects are supported and can continue to grow. Discussions/partnership with conservation organizations & citizen groups are on-going making protection efforts informed and efficient.

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

The predominant threat for wildlife Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and protected species is habitat degradation, loss and fragmentation. Maintaining intact and healthy forest habitat, especially large contiguous tracts, reduces stressors on these populations. Permanently protecting parcels in this proposal as conservation easements maintains core forested areas and connectivity, increasing the resilience to a changing climate, invasive

species and other habitat threats. The proposed project uses science-based targeting methods to leverage and expand existing habitat corridors and complexes, reduce fragmentation and protect areas identified as priorities in several plans and conservation initiatives, including the MN County Biological Survey. DNR's GIS-based Strategic Land Asset Management metrics are used by an inter-disciplinary team of experts from different Divisions to prioritize and select all acquisitions, including conservation easements. The priority tracts of forest land and habitat targeted for protection have some, if not all, of the following traits: are currently unprotected inholdings; large tracts identified by the MN County Biological Survey (including sites of high quality biodiversity significance); habitat identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as significant; presence of rare species and SGCN or the habitat that support those species; located in a strategic habitat complex and adjacent to other protected land so that complexes can be protected and management improved. In addition, we consult with local and regional watershed/landscape planning efforts: TNC's Multiple Benefit Analysis and Resilient Lands Mapping Tool, DNR's Forest Action Plan, PCA's watershed plans, One Watershed One Plans, MFRC's Regional Landscape Plans, and Landscape Stewardship Plans. Targeted habitats include: upland forests, forested/non-forested wetlands and stream and lake shoreline. Protection of these lands provides critical habitat for key forest game species including upland birds, white-tail deer, moose, black bear, fisher, pine marten and waterfowl as well as songbird and other non-game wildlife species. In total, this proposal supports habitat protection with significant value for over 200 SGCN. SE Blufflands contain 156 SGCN, most of all subsections in the state, of these 82 species are endangered/threatened/special concern; 9 are mammals which are 41% of all mammal SGCN in the state.

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

This proposal will permanently protect strategically important large forest blocks threatened by conversion and fragmentation. Since 2008, MN's forests have experienced some of the highest conversion rates in the U.S. with the highest occurring in North Central MN. Each year, more forest habitat is lost and degraded due to conversion, development, and fragmentation. There is an urgent need to permanently protect our remaining large blocks of high conservation value forest. Nearly 7.5 million acres (44%) of MN's forests are privately-owned. Our proposal is based on working with private landowners who are currently willing to protect strategic high conservation value forest with permanent conservation easements. We may not have another chance to protect these lands in the future so we must act now while we can, working with willing conservation landowners, before it is too late.

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

A serious and significant threat to MN's SE blufflands and northern forests is conversion for other uses: the MN Forest Resources Council has identified parcelization as "the single most important policy issue affecting the economic and ecological health of the state's forests". The OHF: 25 Year Framework cites that "forest land has been converted to other uses…at a rate of 3,600 acres per year". The MN Forest Vision recommends that the "forest land base is enlarged and protected through permanent conservation easements and fee title acquisition" & "contiguous forest complexes should be protected and enlarged...and there should be focus to protect areas with high game populations and high levels of biodiversity". The State Wildlife Action Plan reports that "activities that fragment or degrade habitats can independently or in conjunction with invasive species reduce biological diversity" & "Habitat degradation, loss, and fragmentation are the predominant stressors impacting SGCN populations. Habitats with higher biological diversity and that are less fragmented are expected to have greater climate change resiliency than are systems with lower biological diversity and greater fragmentation." Protection of proposed lands reduces habitat loss/fragmentation & maintains forest habitat complexes. This project would expand permanently protected habitat complexes & avoid habitat conversion/development/fragmentation/degradation. The MN Forests for the Future program provides enhanced connectivity between conservation lands by protecting privately-owned properties linking public land. A key strategy for climate change mitigation is providing corridors/connectivity between different biomes/microclimates allowing species to migrate to find suitable

habitats that replace former habitats lost as the climate changes. However, many species may not be able to migrate over developed/cultivated land; providing habitat corridors for species movement benefits their ability to relocate. The MN Statewide Conservation & Preservation Plan says "forest fragmentation reduces resiliency and habitat quality for wildlife including species such as bears and wolves which need large tracts of undeveloped land". The Plan identifies the need to increase forest ecosystem resilience by maintaining large blocks of forested land. This requires protection of forestlands against conversion to other uses, and conservation of working forestland resources through sustainable management."

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

Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans

Other : Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

### Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

**Northern Forest**

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

**Southeast Forest**

Protect forest habitat though acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties

## Outcomes

### Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *We conduct in person monitoring of the easements on as annual basis to determine if the easement is in compliance, connect with the landowner to develop relationships, and make management suggestions based on current conditions on the ground.*

### Programs in southeast forest region:

Forestlands and savannas are protected from parceliazation and fragmentation and accessible for resource management purposes ~ *We conduct in person monitoring of the easements on as annual basis to determine if the easement is in compliance, connect with the landowner to develop relationships, and make management suggestions based on current conditions on the ground.*

### 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 will fund new projects that would not otherwise be implemented but for this appropriation.

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

All land protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through set guidelines for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented for more than 15 years through the MN Forests for the Future Program and the MN Forest Legacy Program. Easement monitoring is conducted annually and stewardship is on-going; according to Department and Division policies and guidelines. Stewardship

and conservation easement enforcement is discussed bi-monthly at DNR inter-divisional stewardship team and enforcement panel meetings. Land in conservation easement is required to be covered by a DNR-certified Woodland Stewardship Plan and updated at least every 10 years. Funding for easement stewardship is included in this proposal.

### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

| Year | Source of Funds | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Annually/Perpetually | OHF-DNR easement Stewardship Account | Monitor easements annually and enforce easement terms through annual landowner contact and on-site monitoring | Annually review forest management activities and review and update Forest Stewardship Plans periodically | - |

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

This project will benefit all communities throughout the entire state of Minnesota by permanently protecting ecosystem services that provide clean drinking water, productive habitat, clean air, climate change mitigation, and sedimentation/erosion control. Specific project scoring and implementation efforts benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans of all abilities. The Environmental Protection Agency has developed an environmental justice mapping and screening tool. This tool indicates several of the proposed parcels fall within areas identified as environmental justice areas of concern. Demographic indicators used are: percent low-income, percent people of color, less than high school education, linguistic isolation, age under 5 and over 64. Protecting these lands mitigates some of the environmental justice concerns for at-risk populations. The DNR has diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that benefit all Outdoor Heritage Fund projects including: public engagement that seeks out BIPOC voices and involves diverse communities, outreach and marketing of projects has this focus as well; and partnerships are at the center of all projects.

## Activity Details

### Requirements

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

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

**Who will manage the easement?**
MN DNR Division of Forestry stewards the easement; landowner manages the land in easement.

**Who will be the easement holder?**
MN DNR Division of Forestry

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**
4-8

## Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?**
No

**Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**
No

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**
Yes

**Describe the expected public use:**
Public access may be allowed only with the approval of the landowner and will be written into the easement language.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved, beyond those used for maintenance and management, as a result of the proposed acquisition?**
No

**Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?**
No

Funds will only be used for acquisition, professional services, and direct and necessary costs.

**Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?**
No

**Explain how and when the restoration/enhancement work will be completed and identify the source of funding:**
No, if any restoration or enhancement work is done, it will be done by the landowners.

## Timeline

| Activity Name | Estimated Completion Date |
|---|---|
| Develop conservation easement monitoring plans, forest stewardship plans, dedicate easement stewardship | June 30, 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, 2031;
(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, 2035;

(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2032;
(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 | $150,000 | $50,000 | USFS Federal grant/RIM funding | $200,000 |
| Contracts | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $1,925,900 | $500,000 | variety of private/public sources | $2,425,900 |
| Easement Stewardship | $200,000 | - | - | $200,000 |
| Travel | - | - | - | - |
| Professional Services | $240,000 | - | - | $240,000 |
| Direct Support Services | $24,100 | - | - | $24,100 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | - | - | - | - |
| Supplies/Materials | $1,000 | - | - | $1,000 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$2,541,000** | **$550,000** | **-** | **$3,091,000** |

## Personnel

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forest Legacy Coordinator | 0.5 | 4.0 | $150,000 | $50,000 | USFS Federal grant/RIM funding | $200,000 |

**Amount of Request:** $2,541,000
**Amount of Leverage:** $550,000
**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 21.65%
**DSS + Personnel:** $174,100
**As a % of the total request:** 6.85%
**Easement Stewardship:** $200,000
**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 10.38%

**How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?**
We will scale down the total number of acres acquired and proceed with the projects that most fulfill our program goals with the funds available.

**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**
Our leverage comes from USFS administrative grants as well as RIM grant funding.

**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?**
Number of conservation easements acquired (and therefore acres protected) would be reduced according to priority based on highest conservation value and available funding.

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

## Personnel

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**
Yes

## Professional Services

**What is included in the Professional Services line?**

Appraisals

Other : Closing costs; Recording fees

Surveys

Title Insurance and Legal Fees

## Easement Stewardship

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**
There are nineteen conservation easements prioritized as high conservation value on our project list waiting for funding. Of these, it is too early to anticipate which will be cut because of the reduced funding. There is a wide range of geographic areas covered with this proposal with a wide range of land values. Therefore, the actual amount of stewardship funding used per easement will be determined as the projects are developed and prioritized.

## Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**
DNR Direct and Necessary Cost Calculator

# Federal Funds

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

**Are the funds confirmed?**
Yes

Cash : $50,000

# Output Tables

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | 3,326 | - | 3,326 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **3,326** | **-** | **3,326** |

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

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat | Total Funding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | $2,541,000 | - | $2,541,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **$2,541,000** | **-** | **$2,541,000** |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | 830 | - | 2,496 | 3,326 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **830** | **-** | **2,496** | **3,326** |

## 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 | - | - | $1,541,000 | - | $1,000,000 | $2,541,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **$1,541,000** | **-** | **$1,000,000** | **$2,541,000** |

## 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 | - | - | $763 | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - |

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

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | $1,856 | - | $400 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

# Parcels

## Parcel Information

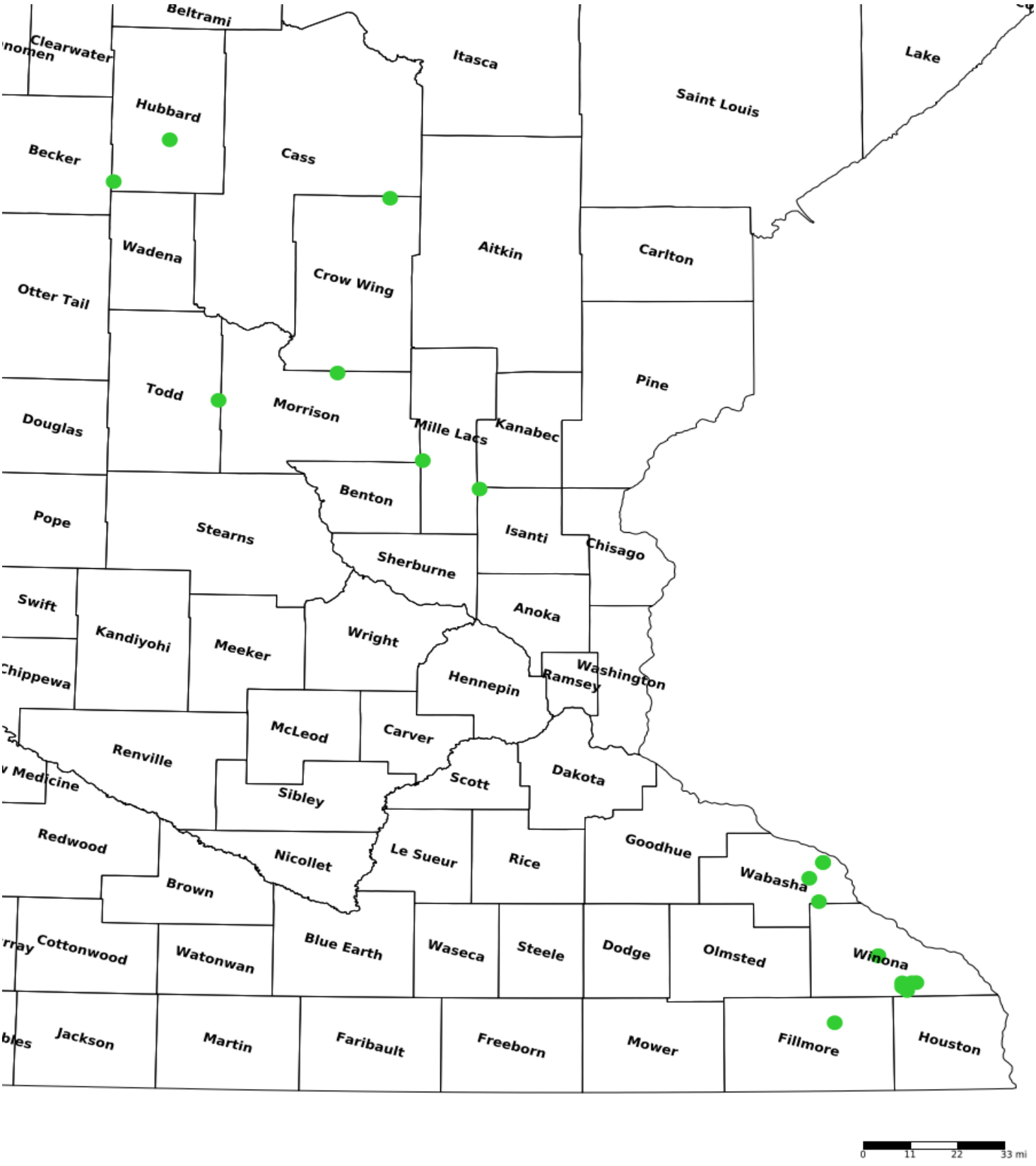
**Sign-up Criteria?**
No

**Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**
Applications to the MN Forests for the Future Program are made by interested willing landowners. The Program uses GIS analysis to expand protection of large habitat blocks and corridors. DNR's GIS-based Strategic Land Asset Management metrics are used by an inter-disciplinary team of experts from different Divisions to prioritize and select all acquisitions, including conservation easements. The tracts of forest land targeted for protection with this Program have some, if not all, of the following traits: are currently unprotected inholdings; large tracts that have been identified by the MN County Biological Survey (including identified sites of high quality biodiversity significance); corridors and habitat identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as significant; presence of rare species and Species in Conservation Need or the habitat that support those species; are located in a strategic habitat complex and are adjacent to other protected land so that complexes can be protected and management improved. In addition, we consult with local and regional watershed and landscape planning efforts such as The Nature Conservancy's Multiple Benefit Analysis and Resilient Lands Mapping Tool, DNR's Forest Action Plan and Assessment of Need, PCA's watershed planning efforts, BWSR's and local SWCD's One Watershed One Plan efforts, the MFRC's Regional Landscape Plans, and the DNR/BWSR Landscape Stewardship Plans.

## Easement Parcels

| Name | County | TRDS | Acres | Est Cost | Existing Protection |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pike | Crow Wing | 13826201 | 80 | - | - |
| Jane Peck | Fillmore | 10310201 | 55 | - | - |
| Miller | Hubbard | 14133230 | 291 | - | - |
| Weber | Hubbard | 13935219 | 150 | - | - |
| Anderson | Isanti | 03725206 | 60 | - | - |
| Roehl | Mille Lacs | 03927231 | 155 | - | - |
| Eagle Ranch | Morrison | 04230204 | 1,640 | - | - |
| Little Elk 6-Jim Parent | Todd | 13032225 | 120 | - | - |
| Arrow Head bluffs | Wabasha | 11010209 | 45 | - | - |
| Earnest Walters | Wabasha | 11011236 | 85 | - | - |
| Main street Developments | Wabasha | 11010209 | 24 | - | - |
| Mark Dittrich | Wabasha | 10910232 | 46 | - | - |
| Andrew Beebe | Winona | 10507215 | 20 | - | - |
| Gerald Mueller | Winona | 10507228 | 153 | - | - |
| High Ridge Tree Farm | Winona | 10608209 | 40 | - | - |
| Johnny Michael | Winona | 10608209 | 68 | - | - |
| Kevin O'Brian | Winona | 10507220 | 36 | - | - |
| Wiscoy Community | Winona | 10507214 | 215 | - | - |
| Zephyr Community | Winona | 10507217 | 40 | - | - |

# Parcel Map




- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- Restore
- Enhance
- Other

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection

Comparison Report

**Program Title:** ML 2027 - MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection
**Organization:** MNDNR Division of Forestry
**Manager:** Andy Kernan

## Budget

**Requested Amount:** $8,000,000
**Appropriated Amount:** $2,541,000
**Percentage:** 31.76%

| Item | Requested Proposal | Leverage Proposal | Appropriated AP | Leverage AP | Percent of Request | Percent of Leverage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $150,000 | $50,000 | $150,000 | $50,000 | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Contracts | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $6,399,900 | $500,000 | $1,925,900 | $500,000 | 30.09% | 100.0% |
| Easement Stewardship | $665,000 | - | $200,000 | - | 30.08% | - |
| Travel | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Professional Services | $760,000 | - | $240,000 | - | 31.58% | - |
| Direct Support Services | $24,100 | - | $24,100 | - | 100.0% | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Supplies/Materials | $1,000 | - | $1,000 | - | 100.0% | - |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$8,000,000** | **$550,000** | **$2,541,000** | **$550,000** | **31.76%** | **100.0%** |

## If the project received 70% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Number of conservation easements acquired (and therefore acres protected) would be reduced according to priority based on highest conservation value and available funding.

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

## If the project received 50% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Number of conservation easements acquired (and therefore acres protected) would be reduced according to priority based on highest conservation value and available funding.

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

# Output

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 3,326 | 3,326 | 100.0% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $8,000,000 | $2,541,000 | 31.76% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 3,326 | 3,326 | 100.0% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $8,000,000 | $2,541,000 | 31.76% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

## General Information

**Date:** 10/14/2026

**Project Title:** Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection

**Funds Recommended:** $1,815,000

**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Melissa Barrick
**Title:** District Manager
**Organization:** Crow Wing SWCD
**Address:** 322 Laurel St Ste 22
**City:** Brainerd, MN 56401
**Email:** melissa@cwswcd.org
**Office Number:** 2188286197
**Mobile Number:**
**Fax Number:**
**Website:** www.cwswcd.org

### Partners Contact

**BWSR:** Sharon Doucette - sharon.doucette@state.mn.us - (651) 539-2527

**Crow Wing SWCD:** Melissa Barrick - melissa@cwswcd.org - 2188286197

### Location Information

**County Location(s):**

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

Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

Wetlands

Forest

# Narrative

## Abstract

Hubbard, Crow Wing, and Cass Counties, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) will partner to protect 360 acres of high-quality private forest, wetlands, and two miles of shoreline in the Northern Forest Ecological Section under BWSR RIM easements. This project will be successful because of the parcel selection scoring process, proven outreach tactics, SWCD landowner relationships, and partnerships. Forest fragmentation seriously threatens cisco, golden-winged warbler, northern long-eared bat, Blanding's turtles, and over 125 unique, rare, endangered, and threatened species that live in these watersheds' uplands, lowlands, and mature forests (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) Rare Species).

## Design and Scope of Work

This project will build on the success of the previous Lessard Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant with the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easements on targeted private forests, wetlands, and shorelines within the Leech Lake and Pine River Major Watersheds (hydrologic unit codes (HUCs) 07010102 and 7010105). These grant funds will meet 6 percent of our remaining 6000-acre watershed protection goals.

These watersheds contain:

- 775 lakes (public waters over 10 acres for a total of 255,000 acres), which cover 400 square miles (sq mi), the same size as Benton County, MN (408 sq mi).
- 125 lakes with High (5) or Outstanding (120) Biological Significance (MN DNR).
- 306,788 acres or 6,993 parcels of private forest land over 20 acres that need protection.
- 204 wild rice lakes and 70 miles of streams.
- 29 cisco lakes.
- 17 native muskie lakes.

The MN DNR Fisheries Unit developed the 75 percent watershed protection goal as part of the 2013 MN DNR Fish Habitat Plan (Jacobson et al. 2016). The Leech Lake and Pine River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans (CWMP) adopted the 75 percent protection goal and pinpointed private woodlands as essential to preservation. The CWMPs identified issues and concerns and developed a targeted and measurable 10-year implementation plan. Both CWMPs recognized conservation easements as a critical tool for protecting priority groundwater, habitat, and surface water. The team developed a methodology for targeting specific large-tract private forested parcels. The process is called RAQ (Riparian, Adjacent, Quality); each watershed parcel is scored on a 0-10 scale for the three elements:

Riparian: parcel on a river or lake.

Adjacency: to protected lands, i.e., county, state, or federal land.

Quality: wild rice, cisco, and biodiversity (among other criteria).

The most significant risks to private forestland and lakeshore are development and fragmentation of large habitat complexes. The RAQ tool prioritizes private parcels adjacent to state or federal lands (protected lands in the model). This will create extensive, long-lasting habitat complexes. The CWMPs selected the Headwaters, Whitefish Lake, Lower Pine, Little Pine River, Woman Lake, Steamboat River, and Kabekona River Watersheds (7 of 12 minor watersheds) for habitat protection. The RAQ scores were computed on 306,788 acres and prioritized by priority minor watersheds. SWCD staff will sort RAQ scores by highest score, estimated cost, and other criteria, and

complete outreach only to specific parcels.
The total property values for priority CWMPs subwatersheds are worth over $10 billion (2025 County Assessors Data). The tourism industries within Hubbard, Cass, and Crow Wing Counties (CWC) generate over $957 million in economic impact, $93.8 million in state and local taxes, and have over $590 million in visitor spending (Explore Minnesota 2024). Cass and CWCs are the 5th- and 4th-highest in second-home values among 87 counties, totaling over $80 million. The private lands within these watersheds deserve protection strategies. This project will secure 4 easements to ensure the habitat remains intact and to protect the local tourism economy and tax base of the Leech Lake and Pine River Watersheds.

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

The MN DNR rare species guide indicated that Leech Lake and Pine River Watersheds contain over 125 rare species of fish, invertebrates, plants, reptiles, and mammals. These species depend on fringe wetlands, forested corridors, high-quality lakes, and shoreland vegetative habitats.

Blanding's Turtles require both upland and wetlands to complete their life cycle. This habitat includes calm, shallow water bodies (types 1-3 wetlands), essential amphibian and invertebrate breeding grounds, and food sources for the Blanding's turtle. The turtles nest on undeveloped land in open grassy or brushy sand.

Wild rice provides some of Minnesota's most important habitats for migrating and breeding waterfowl. More than 17 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wild rice areas as habitats for breeding, migration, and foraging. They include common loon, trumpeter swan, bald eagle, American Bittern, least bittern, red-necked grebe, sora rail, Virginia rail, yellow rail, black tern, rusty blackbird, sedge wren, lesser scaup, northern pintail, and American black duck. Wild rice grows in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes.

In 2022, the northern long-eared bat was added to the federal threatened species list due to loss of roosts. The MN DNR and the US Fish and Wildlife Service identified over 12 locations in Hubbard, Cass, and CW Counties that contain mature roost trees for the northern long-eared bat. The population size in the Pine River Watershed is estimated at 104 (MN DNR Conservation Explorer).

The MN DNR identified the golden-winged warbler as a SGCN because its population has declined by 60 percent across the United States and Canada. Minnesota's critical upland, lowland, and mature forest habitats support over 47 percent of the species' breeding population. This golden-winged warbler is a Minnesota icon and symbol of private land stewardship. These unprotected remote forests and upland habitats are a mecca for all these species. This project will protect these crucial habitats.

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

The 2024 U.S. Census data indicates that over 3.9 million people live in the Twin Cities and Fargo. These people are within two hours of the Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, from 1990 to 2024, the populations of Hubbard, Cass, and CWCs increased by 50 percent (an average of 1,211 people per year). Family-owned cabins are transforming into lake homes. The cabin footprint increased by 378 percent, from the 1940s to 1990s (700 to 3,350 square feet (WIDNR). Vegetative buffers have been converted to manicured lawns re-contoured toward the lake. These changes significantly affect bird nesting, fish spawning, frog populations, rare and endangered species, forest health, and water quality. The cost will increase, and opportunities will be fewer if we wait to protect these critical habitats. This program seeks to protect these sensitive areas before they are lost.

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

This project will utilize CWMPs minor watersheds science-based targeting to expand important habitat corridors and complexes on private lands. The goal is to protect private forest land adjacent to public land to create larger forest habitat complexes. To do that, partners utilize the RAQ methodology to score individual private, forested parcels in the following manner:

- Riparian (R) is whether the parcel is next to a priority water resource (1-3 points).
- Adjacency (A) is whether it is next to existing state, county, or federal land (1-3 points).
- Quality (Q) is aquatic and terrestrial habitat elements (4 points), i.e., trout/cisco lakes, wild rice lakes and streams, exceptional fish IBI scores, medium or high or high Wildlife Action Network scores, old growth forest, rare species, high or outstanding biodiversity, and drinking water and source water protection areas.

The CWMPs provided: 62,000 RAQ scores for all private parcels; RAQ score maps; databases; landowner outreach tables; percent of protected land; rare and unique species; species of concern; cisco and wild rice; and an easement acre goal for each subwatershed. This data targets RIM easements at the parcel level, allowing us to hand-select the best parcels for habitat value and to prevent future fragmentation across the entire watershed. The local government units will utilize CWMPs to complete the following items:

- Filter the outreach database to identify parcel RAQ scores of five or above within prioritized HUC 10 sub-watersheds adjacent to selected high-quality lakes.
- Review selected parcels and scores.
- Develop individual maps for each landowner showing the specific easement boundary and the associated price.
- Mail information on the RIM easement program and map to selected landowners.
- Rank and score RIM applications with an internal scoring sheet.
- Host an interagency committee meeting to review all applications.
- Initiate the RIM easement application process with BWSR.

The Crow Wing SWCD has utilized this process and has protected over 23 miles of shoreline and 3,800 acres of habitat through RIM easements. These acres are adjacent to public waters and land and have created or expanded larger habitat complex which prevents future forest fragmentation.

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

Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans

National Fish Habitat Action Plan

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

**Northern Forest**

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

# Outcomes

## Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *This project will measure the number of acres of forestland and wetlands enrolled in RIM easements. The number of miles of shoreline protected and the protection percentage for the individual minor watersheds. The other evaluation will include a scoring sheet for*

*each conservation easement, anecdotal information from landowners on species on their land and habitat value, and may also include cultural resource protection. This project will employ lessons learned from past easement programs, including excellent communication, clear and accurate landowner responsibility information, maps, standard payment rate, direct mailing, and quarterly partner meetings to ensure funding and work are completed.*

## 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 funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

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

BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcing RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to oversee, monitor, and inspect conservation easements. Easements are inspected every year for the first five years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are conducted every three years, and compliance checks are conducted in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations are identified. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs are $10,000 per easement. This value is based on using SWCD staff for monitoring and preliminary enforcement. The amount includes costs of BWSR and local government unit staff time as well as costs for encouraging voluntary compliance, addressing potential violations and legal enforcement.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

| Year | Source of Funds | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2027Ongoing | Stewardship Accounts | Inspections every year for the first five years; then every third year. | Corrective actions to address violations. | Enforcement action taken by MN Attorney General's office. |

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

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe tribal land contains 45 percent of the Leech Lake River Watershed area (387,132 acres). Hubbard and Cass Counties have working relationships with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. The SWCD staff meets with the tribal leaders and communicates regularly with the division of resources management. Through the BWSR One Watershed One Plan program, the SWCDs, counties, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe have worked together to have a better understanding of each other's roles within the watershed. They will keep the contacts and connections updated on this project. Wild rice, or manoomin (good seed) in Ojibwe, is reserved as a special gift from the Creator. The MN DNR identifies over 200 wild rice lakes, totaling 192,000 acres and 70 miles of wild rice streams in these watersheds and that hydrology changes, water-based recreation, and shoreline development impact the plants and its reproduction ability (MN DNR 2008 Legislative Report). On September 20, 2022, the Associated Press released an article titled “Minnesota Ojibwe harvest sacred, Climate-Imperiled Wild Rice”. The article discusses the connection of wild rice to the Ojibwe community and its importance to future generations (see link below). This project will also protect the existing wild rice on lakes and rivers within the Pine River and Leech Lake Watersheds. Wild rice is one of the quality factors in the RAQ score. All the Pine River and Leech Lake Watershed lands are part of the 1855 Land Cession Treaty Area. According to a Leech Lake News article titled “On This Day: 1855 Treaty Signed between United States and Ojibwe Bands,” the 1837 and 1854 treaties included stipulations that the Ojibwe would retain their hunting and fishing rights in the ceded territory. This project will benefit the 1855 Treaty area by maintaining wild rice and protecting fisheries, land, and aquatic habitat that are important for hunting and fishing (See attachments for 1855 Treaty Area). Website citations:https://www.leechlakenews.com/2018/02/22/day-1855-treaty-signed-united-states-ojibwe-bands/

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_wildlife/wildlife/wildrice/natural-wild-rice-in-minnesota.pdf (pages 1 and 2)
https://apnews.com/article/religion-minnesota-lakes-6caa0dd5f0842d922841cea34708e2f3tr

## Activity Details

### Requirements

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

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

**Who will manage the easement?**
The individual landowner will manage the easement lands according to the BWSR RIM Policy. A conservation plan and/or a Forest Stewardship Plan will be developed to assist the landowner in management within the easement boundaries. Communication with the landowner and SWCD is required before a landowner begins a conservation project.

**Who will be the easement holder?**
The Board of Water and Soil Resources holds the easement. The Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Resources Law of 1986, Minnesota Statutes, sections 103F.505 to 103F.531, and subsequent amendments, established the RIM conservation easement program.

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**
The partnership anticipates that we will complete 4 to 6 conservation easements depending on the acre size and price per acre.

### Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?**
No

**Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**
No

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**
Yes

**Describe the expected public use:**
RIM easements do not require that private land is open to the public; however, this question is also evaluated on public benefit and RIM easements do provide a significant public benefit; often expand wildlife habitat near public lands; and do not limit the potential for the land to be open to the public through other programs. SWCD and other partner staff who work with landowners on RIM easements are also usually the staff who enroll landowners into the DNR Walk-In Access (WIA) program. The WIA program is available in 54 counties, all of which are eligible for RIM. Conversations about WIA between the SWCDs and interested landowners occur when the landowner submits an easement application. BWSR's Conservation Easement Application includes a question for a landowner to indicate if they are interested in

enrolling in WIA if eligible.

RIM's statutory language requires the restriction of building and agricultural activities on an easement. If RIM also required public access, the landowner would retain almost no private rights to the land and would still pay property taxes. RIM easement land is still in private ownership, and the landowner still pays property taxes, which is consistent with the statutory goals of the Outdoor Heritage Fund of protection and restoration of habitat. Minnesota Statute 97A.056 states ". . .the fund must be expended to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife." and "The council shall make recommendations . . . that directly relate to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, and that prevent forest fragmentation, encourage forest consolidation, and expand restored native prairie."

Criteria in all RIM program scoresheets used to evaluate and prioritize parcels funded include proximity of the easement land to lands that are in public ownership and/or open to public hunting. Parcels immediately adjacent to public land or that would connect or expand larger existing habitat areas receive more points in the scoring and ranking process than a parcel that does not provide that benefit. Wildlife do not follow property lines; therefore protected private lands adjacent to and near public lands create complexes of public and private land that provide high quality habitat supporting wildlife, including recreationally hunted species, allowing them to thrive on and off public lands. Protected private lands also add visual and noise buffers that allow users of public land to better enjoy their experiences. Additionally, easement lands allow for an interim step before public ownership, likely making public purchase more affordable in the future.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved, beyond those used for maintenance and management, as a result of the proposed acquisition?**

Yes

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

Though uncommon, new trails may be developed if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (fire breaks, berm maintenance, forest stewardship) and are noted on the conservation plan. Narrow mowed trails for personal use are allowed for landowner access on RIM easements. Unauthorized trails are a violation of the easement

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

Under the terms of the easement, a conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement and the conservation plan. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms and the conservation plan.

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

No

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

No

**Explain how and when the restoration/enhancement work will be completed and identify the source of funding:**

If the landowner would like to make enhancements to their property, we encourage them to complete a

forest stewardship plan. Once the landowner has a forest stewardship plan, the SWCD would work with them to develop a project plan for their property. The SWCD has cost-share funds available to assist with conservation projects.

## Timeline

| Activity Name | Estimated Completion Date |
|---|---|
| Rank Score Applications/Interagency Team Meetings. | July - October 2027 |
| Work with BWSR and Landowners to complete RIM Easements | January 2028 - 2030 |
| Outreach and Mailing for specific parcels. | September 2027 |
| Prioritize RAQ scores 7-10 within a specific HUC 10 subwatershed adjacent to selected high-quality lakes. | August 2027 |

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 10/01/2031

**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, 2031;
(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, 2035;
(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2032;
(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.*

## Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $162,700 | - | - | $162,700 |
| Contracts | $55,000 | - | - | $55,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $1,500,000 | - | - | $1,500,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | $60,000 | - | - | $60,000 |
| Travel | $800 | - | - | $800 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $30,200 | - | - | $30,200 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $5,300 | - | - | $5,300 |
| Supplies/Materials | $1,000 | - | - | $1,000 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$1,815,000** | **-** | **-** | **$1,815,000** |

## Partner: BWSR

### *Totals*

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $112,700 | - | - | $112,700 |
| Contracts | $15,000 | - | - | $15,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $1,500,000 | - | - | $1,500,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | $60,000 | - | - | $60,000 |
| Travel | $500 | - | - | $500 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $30,200 | - | - | $30,200 |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $4,300 | - | - | $4,300 |
| Supplies/Materials | $1,000 | - | - | $1,000 |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$1,723,700** | **-** | **-** | **$1,723,700** |

### *Personnel*

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Easement | 0.21 | 4.0 | $112,700 | - | - | $112,700 |

## Partner: Crow Wing SWCD

***Totals***

| Item | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $50,000 | - | - | $50,000 |
| Contracts | $40,000 | - | - | $40,000 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Stewardship | - | - | - | - |
| Travel | $300 | - | - | $300 |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | - | - | - | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $1,000 | - | - | $1,000 |
| Supplies/Materials | - | - | - | - |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$91,300** | **-** | **-** | **$91,300** |

***Personnel***

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Funding Request | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adminstration | 0.06 | 4.0 | $25,000 | - | - | $25,000 |
| Outreach | 0.08 | 3.0 | $25,000 | - | - | $25,000 |

**Amount of Request:** $1,815,000
**Amount of Leverage:** -
**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 0.0%
**DSS + Personnel:** $192,900
**As a % of the total request:** 10.63%
**Easement Stewardship:** $60,000
**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 4.0%

**How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?**
The BWSR and SWCD have reduced our budgets accordingly to reflect the 42% grant reduction. Crow Wing SWCD staffing decreased because we moved $ 40,000 to contracts for Hubbard and Cass SWCD for outreach. Crow Wing SWCD will agree with BWSR and subaward the money.

**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?**
If we receive less funding, we will reduce the number of easements and the number of acres protected.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Staff time will be reduced, but it is needed to implement the program. Staff time may be reduced at a different ratio. Doing outreach and completing the RIM easement process takes time. Staff time would be based on the number of easements and the final workplan outcomes.

## Personnel

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**
No

## Contracts

**What is included in the contracts line?**
The contract line includes costs covered under the SWCD MJPA, $2,500 for staff time per easement acquisition.

## Easement Stewardship

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**
The partnership anticipates completing 4-6 conservation easements. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at $10,000 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff to monitor landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers the SWCD regular monitoring costs, BWSR oversight, and any necessary enforcement.

## Travel

**Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?**
No

**Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging**
The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs for mileage and food.

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

## Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**
BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done.

## Other Equipment/Tools

**Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?**
Signs and stakes to stake the easement boundaries. Other tools are needed to complete the easement work.

# Federal Funds

**Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**
No

# Output Tables

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 72 | - | 288 | - | 360 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **72** | **-** | **288** | **-** | **360** |

## 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 | $363,000 | - | $1,452,000 | - | $1,815,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **$363,000** | **-** | **$1,452,000** | **-** | **$1,815,000** |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Acres |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | 360 | 360 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **360** | **360** |

## 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 | - | - | - | - | $1,815,000 | $1,815,000 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Total** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **-** | **$1,815,000** | **$1,815,000** |

## 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 | $5,041 | - | $5,041 | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - |

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

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | $5,041 |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - |

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

4,435

# Parcels

## Parcel Information

**Sign-up Criteria?**
Yes - Sign up criteria is attached

**Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**
The CWMPs provided: 62,000 RAQ scores for all private parcels; RAQ score maps; databases; landowner outreach tables; percent of protected land; rare and unique species; species of concern; cisco and wild rice; and an easement acre goal for each subwatershed. The local government units will utilize CWPs to complete the following items:
Step 1: Filter the outreach database to identify parcel RAQ scores of 7-10 within prioritized HUC 10 sub-watersheds adjacent to selected high-quality lakes.
Step 2: Review selected parcels and scores.
Step 3: Develop individual maps for each landowner showing the specific easement boundary and the associated price.
Step 4: Mail information on the RIM easement program and map to selected landowners.
Step 5: Rank and score RIM applications with an internal scoring sheet.
Step 6: Host an interagency committee meeting to review all applications.
Step 7: Complete the RIM easement process with BWSR.

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection

Comparison Report

**Program Title:** ML 2027 - Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection
**Organization:** Crow Wing SWCD
**Manager:** Melissa Barrick

## Budget

**Requested Amount:** $4,290,000
**Appropriated Amount:** $1,815,000
**Percentage:** 42.31%

| Item | Requested Proposal | Leverage Proposal | Appropriated AP | Leverage AP | Percent of Request | Percent of Leverage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personnel | $446,600 | - | $162,700 | - | 36.43% | - |
| Contracts | $35,000 | - | $55,000 | - | 157.14% | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | $3,566,600 | - | $1,500,000 | - | 42.06% | - |
| Easement Stewardship | $140,000 | - | $60,000 | - | 42.86% | - |
| Travel | $9,200 | - | $800 | - | 8.7% | - |
| Professional Services | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Direct Support Services | $71,200 | - | $30,200 | - | 42.42% | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | $10,300 | - | $5,300 | - | 51.46% | - |
| Supplies/Materials | $11,100 | - | $1,000 | - | 9.01% | - |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Grand Total** | **$4,290,000** | **-** | **$1,815,000** | **-** | **42.31%** | **-** |

## If the project received 70% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
If we receive less funding, we will reduce the number of easements and the number of acres protected.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Staff time will be reduced, but staff time is needed to implement the program, so some costs will remain the same within the partnership.

## If the project received 50% of the requested funding

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
If we receive less funding, we will reduce the number of easements and the number of acres protected.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**
Staff time will be reduced, but it is needed to implement the program. Staff time may be reduced at a different ratio. Doing outreach and completing the RIM easement process takes time. Staff time would be based on the number of easements and the final workplan outcomes.

# Output

## Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 840 | 360 | 42.86% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $4,290,000 | $1,815,000 | 42.31% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | 0 | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | 840 | 360 | 42.86% |
| Enhance | 0 | - | - |

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

| Type | Total Proposed | Total in AP | Percentage of Proposed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Restore | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | $4,290,000 | $1,815,000 | 42.31% |
| Enhance | - | - | - |