



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection
ML 2027 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/24/2026

Proposal Title: Pine and Leech Watershed Phase IV Forest Habitat Protection

Funds Requested: \$4,290,000

Confirmed Leverage Funds: -

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

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@cswcd.org

Office Number: 2188286197

Mobile Number:

Fax Number:

Website: www.cswcd.org

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 840 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 14 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 14 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 proposal 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 proposal 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 proposal 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 proposal?

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

Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife:

This project will permanently protect 840 forested acres from future parcelization and fragmentation caused by development and will create larger protected habitat complexes or corridors. The SWCDs will work with landowners to enroll easements into the state program, and BWSR will hold the perpetual conservation easement. The easements will be recorded with the corresponding County, along with a recorded notice of funding restrictions. The easements will continue with the property in perpetuity. The SWCDs will work with new landowners to ensure they are notified of the program and its restrictions. A conservation plan will be developed for the acres enrolled in the program. This program is protecting private forestland from future fragmentation and parcelization. This will ensure permanent habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.

If this project/program does not have permanent outcomes, describe why it is important to undertake at this time:

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
2027 Ongoing	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 may celebrate cultural diversity or reach 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

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

Yes

Land Use

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

No

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

No

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 land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this proposal'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.

Previous OHF Appropriations

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC for this program or project in the past?

Yes

Are there any of these past appropriations still OPEN?

Yes

If needed, please include any explanation of unspent funds.

The ML 2021 will be closed as of June 30, 2026, with the final report due in fall 2026. As of April 24, 2026, the ML 2024 project had paid \$561,552, encumbered \$832,002, and committed \$250,913 towards new easement applications. The SWCD will work with BWSR to submit the new easement applications and begin the easement process with three new landowners. The grant has no more funds available for easements. The partnership has been deliberate in requesting grant funds only when needed, not on an annual basis. On the ML 2024 grant allocation, the partnership anticipates surpassing the acre goal by 117 acres based on the current committed easement applications.

Open OHF Appropriations - Data from Most Recent Status Update

Project	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
ML 2024 - Pine and Leech Watershed Phase III Targeted RIM Easement Permanent Land Protection	\$2,242,000	\$615,600	\$1,626,400	27.46%
ML 2021 - Targeted RIM Easement & Acquisition to the Parcel Level Pine & Leech Watersheds Phase II	\$1,609,000	\$1,475,200	\$133,800	91.68%
Totals	\$3,851,000	\$2,090,800	\$1,760,200	54.29%

Timeline

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

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$446,600	-	-	\$446,600
Contracts	\$35,000	-	-	\$35,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,566,600	-	-	\$3,566,600
Easement Stewardship	\$140,000	-	-	\$140,000
Travel	\$9,200	-	-	\$9,200
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$71,200	-	-	\$71,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,300	-	-	\$10,300
Supplies/Materials	\$11,100	-	-	\$11,100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,290,000	-	-	\$4,290,000

Partner: BWSR

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$266,600	-	-	\$266,600
Contracts	\$35,000	-	-	\$35,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,566,600	-	-	\$3,566,600
Easement Stewardship	\$140,000	-	-	\$140,000
Travel	\$7,200	-	-	\$7,200
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$71,200	-	-	\$71,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$10,300	-	-	\$10,300
Supplies/Materials	\$3,100	-	-	\$3,100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,100,000	-	-	\$4,100,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Easement Staff	0.49	4.0	\$266,600	-	-	\$266,600

Partner: SWCD

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$180,000	-	-	\$180,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$2,000	-	-	\$2,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$8,000	-	-	\$8,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$190,000	-	-	\$190,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Landowner Outreach	0.65	3.0	\$130,000	-	-	\$130,000
Administrative	0.1	4.0	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000

Amount of Request: \$4,290,000

Amount of Leverage: -

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%

DSS + Personnel: \$517,800

As a % of the total request: 12.07%

Easement Stewardship: \$140,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 3.93%

N/A

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

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 30% 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.

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

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

These funds will pay for staff time spent on new easements associated with this project.

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?

We anticipated completing 14 easements at \$10,000 per easement. The total stewardship amount will ultimately be depend on the cost of easements and if the proposed easement number is reached. 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.

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.

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?

Signs and stakes to mark the easement boundaries.

Federal Funds

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

No

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	168	0	672	0	840
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	168	0	672	0	840

Restoration/Enhancement Acres of OHF Acquired Lands (Table 1a.1)

	RESTORE: Lands acquired in this proposal	RESTORE: Lands acquired with previous OHF appropriations (<5yrs old)	RESTORE Total	ENHANCE: Lands acquired in this proposal	ENHANCE: Lands acquired with previous OHF appropriations (<5yrs old)	ENHANCE Total
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

	RESTORE: Lands acquired with OHF	RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc.)	-	-	-	-
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	-	-	-
Easements	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-

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	\$858,000	-	\$3,432,000	-	\$4,290,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$858,000	-	\$3,432,000	-	\$4,290,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	840	840
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	840	840

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	-	-	-	-	\$4,290,000	\$4,290,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$4,290,000	\$4,290,000

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	\$5,107	-	\$5,107	-
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	-	-	-	-	\$5,107
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

2

Parcels

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.

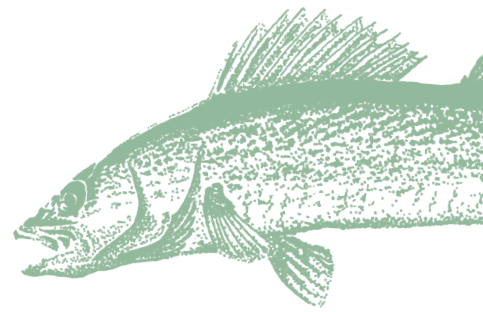
Step 4: Mail information on the RIM easement program and map to selected landowners.

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.

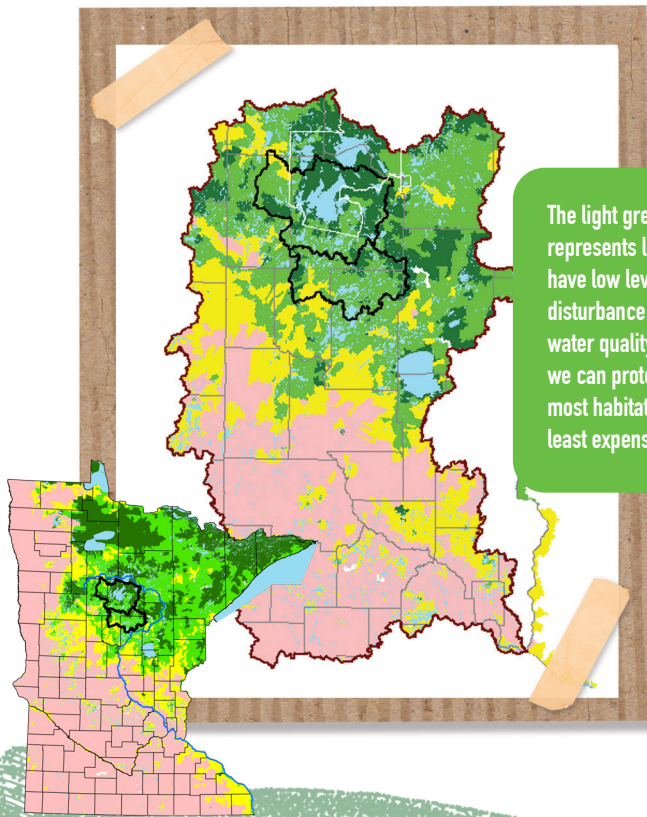
Keep the Northwoods Green



Everyone loves Minnesota's northwoods lake country. Its forests and waters create a premier vacation destination with endless opportunities for making lifelong memories.

With 800 lakes, the Pine River and Leech Lake watersheds are home to prime walleye, native muskie, and trout lakes, as well as wildlife including more than 120 other unique, rare, endangered, and threatened species.

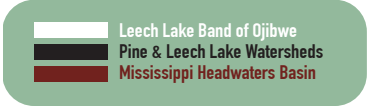
The Pine River and Leech Lake watersheds have some of the highest quality lakes and fisheries in the country. The protection of private lands within these two watersheds ensures the forest stays intact, the water quality remains high, and habitats are healthy for fish and other wildlife.



The light green area represents lakes that have low levels of disturbance & good water quality, thus we can protect the most habitat at the least expense.

- **Vigilance - More than 75% protected**
- **Needs Protection - Less than 75% protected. Low land disturbance**
- **Full Restoration Possible - Intermediate land disturbance**
- **Partial Restoration - Highly disturbed lands.**

The lands indicated by dark green on the map have already met the protection goal. But the light green zones are great candidates for increased protection. The cost to protect these wooded tracts are 10 to 15 times less expensive than to restore disturbed lands!



The Goal: 75% Protection

DNR Fisheries research shows that when more than 25% of a watershed is disturbed by over development, conversion to agriculture, or mining, water quality begins to decline. To safeguard these resources, the goal is to keep at least 75% of each watershed protected. Protection does not mean lands can not be lived on, used, or even managed for timber. Working woodlands can be productive and protected at the same time.

Gaining Ground

The Inguadona minor watershed, located within the Leech Lake major watershed, went from 63% to 68% protected between 2016 to 2026, thanks to the addition of conservation easements and newly acquired public land.

Lake Inguadona is a priority area in the watershed because it's not only home to muskie and cisco, but it's also considered a lake of outstanding biodiversity for fish, birds and other wildlife. Furthermore, lake Inguadona is a native wild rice lake.

This success highlights how conservation easements, combined with other protection strategies, create meaningful, long-term impact. Thanks to focused conservation funding in the Pine River and Leech Lake watersheds, vital natural resources will remain protected for generations to come.

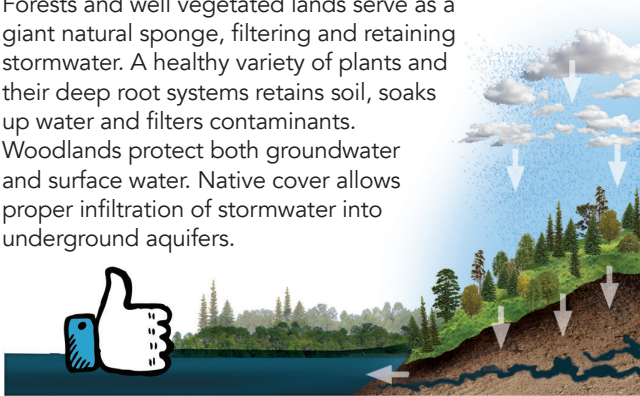


Protect forests, protect water



Forested lands retain water

Forests and well vegetated lands serve as a giant natural sponge, filtering and retaining stormwater. A healthy variety of plants and their deep root systems retains soil, soaks up water and filters contaminants. Woodlands protect both groundwater and surface water. Native cover allows proper infiltration of stormwater into underground aquifers.



Over developed lands shed water

When woodlands are converted to other uses, rain and snowmelt runoff increases. Increased runoff carries more sediment and contaminants like chemicals and excess nutrients to surface water. Infiltration and groundwater recharge is reduced. Increased flows can destabilize streams and decrease water quality and habitat.



Protected lands include public land, private wetlands, conservation easements, and Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) lands. Reaching the 75% protection threshold gives us the ability to maintain cold-water fisheries and high-quality habitat.

Currently, the Pine River and Leech Lake watersheds are 74.5% protected. We are on the verge of reaching that 75% protection goal, with only 6,000 more acres needed to get there.



Finish Strong, We Can Do This!

With the funding requested today, we estimate that we can help move the protection needle by securing 14 conservation easements, protecting at least 840 acres of forest and shoreline in the Pine River and Leech Lake watersheds.

Conservation easements will permanently protect these sought-after properties from ever being developed, safeguarding water quality and wildlife habitat—forever. Combined with public land acquisition and SFIA enrollment, conservation easements play a critical role in achieving our 75% protection goal.

We're so close, let's make it happen!

