



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 6
ML 2027 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/24/2026

Proposal Title: Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 6

Funds Requested: \$7,330,000

Confirmed Leverage Funds: -

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Annie Knight

Title: Executive Director

Organization: Northern Waters Land Trust

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Location Information

County Location(s): Cass and Crow Wing.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance represent some of the state's highest quality aquatic ecosystems, supporting critical habitat for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. However, long-term integrity of these lakes depends not only on in-lake conditions, but on the health and resilience of their surrounding watersheds. Northern Waters Land Trust will protect 750 acres of priority habitat and 0.5 miles of shoreland through fee acquisition across northern Minnesota. By prioritizing intact landscapes and habitat connectivity, this project will enhance ecosystem resilience, safeguard water quality, and engage partners and communities in conserving some of Minnesota's most irreplaceable aquatic systems.

Design and Scope of Work

Northern Minnesota contains some of the most intact and biologically important freshwater ecosystems in the state. Its forested watersheds and lake systems support high levels of habitat connectivity and sustain robust populations of fish, wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SCGN). However, these systems remain vulnerable to increasing development pressure, shoreline alteration, watershed disturbance, and climate change. Because these ecosystems remain largely intact, there is still significant opportunity, and urgency, to protect them before further degradation occurs.

Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance (LOBS) represent the highest quality examples of aquatic and shoreline habitat in the state. Classified based on exceptional conditions within aquatic plant, fish, bird, and/or amphibian communities, these lakes support high species richness, floristic quality, wild rice, exceptional sport fisheries, and colonial waterbird habitat. A significant concentration of LOBS occurs in northern Minnesota, where relatively intact landscapes continue to support these high-functioning systems.

Consistent with the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, this project applies a watershed-scale conservation approach, recognizing that lake condition is directly influenced by the surrounding landscape. Sensitive and specialized native species often decline as shorelines become fragmented or developed and are replaced by more disturbance-tolerant generalist species. Protecting forested lands within LOBS watersheds reduces fragmentation and development pressure while protecting water quality, shoreline habitat, forest cover, and wildlife corridors essential to fish, game, and wildlife species.

NWLT will permanently protect 750 acres of land through fee-title acquisition within priority LOBS watersheds. Lands acquired in fee will be conveyed to public entities for long-term management and stewardship. Lakes were prioritized based on Minnesota DNR benefit-cost analyses and alignment with County Water Plans and One Watershed One Plan priorities. Protection efforts will focus on forested uplands, shorelands, wetlands, and connected aquatic habitats that support fisheries, waterfowl, colonial nesting birds, amphibians, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. To further refine our efforts, NWLT developed a GIS-based parcel prioritization model through the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership. This tool identifies properties that fill gaps in existing protected lands, contain high-quality habitat, and provide greatest conservation value. These results guide strategic landowner outreach and ensure that investments maximize ecological impact.

NWLT collaborates with lake associations, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Tribal partners, nongovernmental organizations, and the Minnesota DNR to identify and advance protection opportunities. A Technical Advisory Committee reviews acquisition proposals, while ongoing coordination with partners strengthens implementation and ensures alignment with local and regional priorities. Northern Waters Land Trust has partnered closely with co-grantee Minnesota Land Trust throughout this program's previous five phases,

strengthening regional coordination and conservation impact across LOBS watersheds.

Expected outcomes include improved habitat for fish, waterfowl, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need; sustained water quality in priority lakes; intact native shoreline vegetation; and expanded long-term protection of shoreland and forest habitats

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

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has classified high-quality “lakes of biological significance” into three categories (outstanding, high, and moderate) based on the presence of unique plant and animal communities. This program will preserve critical shoreland and forested uplands within the watersheds of lakes in the Outstanding classification category (LOBS). These landscapes support diverse fish and wildlife populations, including walleye, northern pike, golden-winged warbler, common loon, and many other species. Previous phases of this program have protected loon nesting habitat, wild rice beds, muskie spawning areas, and diverse native plant communities.

Beyond providing direct habitat benefits, protecting forested shorelands and watersheds is also essential for maintaining the high water quality conditions these species depend upon. A growing body of research demonstrates strong links between watershed land cover, water clarity, and the long-term viability of sensitive aquatic and shoreline species. For example, a recent study (Piper et al. 2024) identified declining water quality as a likely contributor to population declines in common loons. Water clarity is strongly influenced by surrounding land use, with lakes in more heavily forested watersheds generally exhibiting higher average Secchi depths than those surrounded by agricultural or urban development (Brezonik et al. 2007). These trends are expected to intensify as heavier summer rainfall events associated with climate change increase runoff into lakes. This proposal seeks to permanently protect forested lands that safeguard water quality and sustain resilient aquatic ecosystems.

Targeted LOBS within this proposal represent some of Minnesota’s highest-quality aquatic and shoreland habitats. These lakes are characterized by exceptional game and nongame fisheries, high aquatic plant richness and floristic quality, and populations of endangered, threatened, or otherwise imperiled plant and lake bird species.

Numerous plans have identified the protection of these habitats as a conservation priority for Minnesota, including the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, DNR's Aquatic Management Area program, the State Conservation and Preservation Plan, Minnesota DNR's Strategic Conservation Agenda, and Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework. The central goal of this program is to protect high-quality habitat by securing permanent fee title acquisitions in strategic locations within watersheds of high biodiversity lakes.

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

Development and disturbance of Minnesota’s remaining high-quality shoreland habitat continues to accelerate, particularly in north-central and northeastern regions where Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance are concentrated. Strong and sustained demand for lakeshore and rural properties, coupled with rising land values, is increasing the likelihood that large, intact parcels will be subdivided or developed. Once fragmented, these shoreland and watershed systems are extremely difficult and costly to restore.

This proposal focuses on protecting remaining high-priority parcels while they are still intact and available. NWLT has identified priority lakes and parcels, developed a GIS-based targeting framework, and established strong partnerships to act quickly as opportunities arise. Maintaining this momentum is critical to securing conservation outcomes.

Timely investment will ensure protection of these systems before irreversible changes occur and will maximize the impact of prior public investments in conservation across these watersheds.

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

By utilizing fee title acquisitions and transfer to public ownership to protect lands within watersheds of LOBS, this program expands habitat corridors, connects fragmented landscapes, and improves long term ecosystem resilience. Protecting forested shorelands, streams, wetlands, and adjacent upland habitat helps maintain water quality, sustain wildlife movement, and support healthy fish and wildlife populations across entire lake ecosystems.

This proposal prioritizes lakes through analysis of the DNR's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance GIS layer for northeast and northcentral Minnesota. A parcel prioritization model we developed with a grant from the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership and informed by collaboration with fisheries and habitat experts ranks properties by desired criteria. These include the Minnesota DNR's benefit-cost analysis framework, hydrologic connectivity, acreage, presence of SGCN, adjacency to existing protected lands, and others. This strategic approach ensures that we're targeting properties that are either expanding existing habitat complexes or possess a high conservation value through other factors, therefore ensuring that conservation investments will have the greatest long-term ecological return.

Recent research continues to demonstrate that intact, forested watersheds are critical to sustaining water quality, aquatic habitat, and resilient fish populations in northern Minnesota. Studies show that increasing watershed disturbance and shoreline development are strongly associated with declining lake health and habitat quality, reinforcing the importance of proactively protecting connected landscapes before fragmentation and degradation occur.

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

Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

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

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

When many residents endorsed the Legacy Amendment, they indicated a strong interest in seeing our water resources protected. This program will create a lasting conservation legacy by permanently protecting some of northern Minnesota's most significant lakes and surrounding watershed habitats. Through fee title acquisitions, the program will protect forested shorelands, connected upland habitat, and aquatic systems that support fish, wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Lands acquired in fee will be conveyed to managing entities for long-term stewardship, ensuring these conservation benefits endure for future generations.

Minnesota's LOBS are identified based on exceptional aquatic plant, bird, fish, and amphibian communities. Because each lake's biological significance is driven by different ecological characteristics, protection strategies are tailored to the specific habitat needs of each system. For example, lakes recognized for outstanding fisheries may require broader forest protection to sustain water quality and aquatic habitat, while lakes identified for exceptional bird or aquatic plant communities may require a stronger focus on shoreland protection and intact nearshore habitat.

This program builds upon prior Outdoor Heritage Fund investments by strategically expanding complexes of permanently protected habitat across northern Minnesota. Protecting these lands now is especially important as shoreline development, forest fragmentation, and climate-related stressors increasingly threaten the integrity of these intact lake systems. By conserving key watershed lands before they are degraded, this program will provide lasting benefit for fish, game, wildlife, water quality, and Minnesota's outdoor traditions.

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

n/a

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ This outcome will be measured by the number of acres and shoreline feet permanently protected within priority Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance watersheds, and by the extent to which projects expand connected habitat complexes and reduce fragmentation risk. NWLT uses GIS analysis and conservation planning tools to evaluate adjacency to existing protected lands, watershed forest cover, and habitat connectivity. Success is further demonstrated through completion of fee title acquisitions, transfer of lands to long-term managing entities, and protection of priority habitats identified through Minnesota DNR and regional conservation planning efforts.

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.

Funding procured by NWLT through this Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal will not supplant or substitute any previous funding from a non-Legacy fund used for the same purpose.

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

Northern Waters Land Trust (NWLT) is an accredited land trust with a long history of successfully completing complex land protection projects throughout northern Minnesota. Accreditation through the Land Trust Alliance demonstrates NWLT's commitment to permanent land conservation, sound financial management, and long-term stewardship practices.

The long-term sustainability of this work is ensured through permanent fee title acquisitions that provide enduring protection for priority lands within Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance watersheds. Lands acquired in fee will be conveyed to long-term managing entities, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, county land departments, Tribal governments, or federal partners, which have the capacity and authority to manage these lands in perpetuity for conservation, habitat protection, and public benefit.

This program also builds upon existing public conservation lands and prior Outdoor Heritage Fund investments, creating larger connected habitat complexes that are more resilient and cost-effective to manage over time. By strategically protecting lands adjacent to existing protected areas, the program strengthens long-term ecological function while reducing future fragmentation and development pressure.

NWLT maintains strong partnerships with local governments, lake associations, Tribal partners, and conservation organizations to support ongoing coordination, stewardship, and community support for protected lands.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2031 and in perpetuity	managing government agency	Ongoing management in line with developed management plans	-	-

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

NWLT deeply values inclusiveness, collaboration, teamwork and diversity in all of our programs, projects, and community work. We believe that enduring conservation success depends on the active involvement of people and partners whose lives and cultures are linked to the natural systems we seek to conserve. Currently, NWLT is directly including Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in these protection efforts by engaging in regular discussions, acknowledging which lands have cultural and ecological significance, and engaging in partnership on conservation projects where possible. NWLT is focused on building relationships based on trust, listening, and mutual respect. We will listen and seek out potential authentic partnerships that can advance our goals of conserving the best of Minnesota’s remaining habitats while building relationships with and working collaboratively with diverse communities such as Tribal Nations, rural landowners, and multi-generational families. 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.

Activity Details

Requirements

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) 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

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

The land will be transferred to a public entity and will be publicly accessible for hunting and fishing.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

State of MN

County

Federal

Local Unit of Government

Tribal

NGO

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

WMA

SNA

AMA

State Forest

County Forest

Tribal

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 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:

NWLT will not be completing restoration or enhancement work through this grant, however after land is acquired and conveyed to the MN DNR, they will execute initial restoration activities as outlined in the DNR IDP plan. We have allocated the appropriate funds for this in the DNR IDP budget line.

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.

Unspent funds from prior appropriations reflect the multi-year nature of conservation acquisition projects and the variability of landowner readiness, due diligence, and transaction timelines. NWLT continues to actively implement grant objectives under existing appropriations through ongoing outreach, project development, negotiations, and closings. Remaining balances are associated with active conservation projects currently moving through the acquisition process.

Open OHF Appropriations - Data from Most Recent Status Update

Project	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
ML 2026 - Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 5	\$2,943,000	-	\$2,943,000	0.0%
ML 2025 - Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 4	\$3,137,000	\$19,900	\$3,117,100	0.63%
ML 2024 - Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 3	\$3,321,000	\$482,500	\$2,838,500	14.53%
ML 2023 - Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 2	\$3,648,000	\$2,310,600	\$1,337,400	63.34%
Totals	\$13,049,000	\$2,813,000	\$10,236,000	21.56%

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Landowner outreach for fee acquisition program	Ongoing through 2031
Protection of 750 acres via fee acquisition; conveyance to governmental agency.	June 2031

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$355,000	-	-	\$355,000
Contracts	\$60,000	-	-	\$60,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$6,000,000	\$600,000	Landowners, Lake Associations	\$6,600,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$13,000	-	-	\$13,000
Professional Services	\$492,000	-	-	\$492,000
Direct Support Services	\$95,700	-	-	\$95,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$180,000	-	-	\$180,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
DNR IDP	\$131,300	-	-	\$131,300
Grand Total	\$7,330,000	\$600,000	-	\$7,930,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
NWLT Land Protection Staff	0.88	4.0	\$355,000	-	-	\$355,000

Amount of Request: \$7,330,000

Amount of Leverage: \$600,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 8.19%

DSS + Personnel: \$450,700

As a % of the total request: 6.15%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Leverage Funding Table

	Leverage Amount Committed	Leverage Amount Confirmed (of Committed Funds)	Leverage Amount Anticipated	Total Leverage
Amount:	-	-	\$600,000	\$600,000
% of Total Leverage:	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	

N/A

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

NWLT leverages multiple funding sources to support acquisitions, including landowner donations, lake association contributions, private philanthropy, and individual donors. We anticipate \$600,000 of leverage; not confirmed. Any expenses not covered by this grant will be funded through general operating income.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

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

This proposal is true to budget and protection goals and would be most effective if funded fully. If 50% funding was received, outputs would be reduced by approximately 50-65%.

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

Personnel and DSS costs would be reduced, but less than proportionally to the reduction in acquisition funding. Certain costs, including landowner outreach, project development, grant administration, and due diligence, are necessary regardless of project size. Some projects also require substantial staff time before feasibility can be fully determined.

If the project received 30% of the requested funding

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

This proposal is true to budget and protection goals and would be most effective if funded fully. If 30% funding was received, outputs would be reduced by approximately 70-80%.

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

Personnel and DSS costs would be reduced, but less than proportionally to the reduction in acquisition funding. Certain costs, including landowner outreach, project development, grant administration, and due diligence, are necessary regardless of project size. Some projects also require substantial staff time before feasibility can be fully determined.

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?

The FTEs identified in this proposal represent estimated personnel time necessary to complete the proposed program activities and outputs. Staffing levels are coordinated across multiple years and funding sources based on active project workload, anticipated acquisition timelines, and long-term program implementation needs. Because land protection projects often span multiple years, staff may work concurrently on projects funded through different phases of the Outdoor Heritage Fund program.

NWLT tracks personnel time at the individual project and grant level to ensure accurate allocation of costs to the appropriate funding source. Staff use a timesheet-based accounting system to document grant-related activities by property and project, ensuring that only personnel time directly attributable to specific grant deliverables is charged to that award. This approach allows NWLT to effectively coordinate staffing across overlapping grant periods while maintaining clear financial accountability and avoiding duplication of expenses.

Maintaining consistent staffing across funding phases also supports program continuity, landowner relationships, partnership coordination, and efficient project implementation. This continuity is especially important for complex land protection projects, which often require multiple years of outreach, due diligence, negotiation prior to closing and conveyance to managing entities.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Funds in the contract line are for outreach services to connect with prospective landowners and for pre-conveyance site cleanup services, such as well sealing, building removal as necessary, and general contracting.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Appraisals

Other : Environmental assessments, project mapping

Surveys

Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

We anticipate completing approximately 12 fee title acquisitions with the proposed funds. Actual project costs may vary considerably depending on property characteristics, particularly the presence of lake or river frontage, which can substantially increase land values. As a result, the final number of completed acquisitions may be lower if projects involve higher-value shoreline properties, or higher if acquisitions primarily consist of forested upland parcels.

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

No anticipated expenses outside of the traditional travel costs listed.

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?

In a process annually reviewed and approved by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Grants (most recently in April 2025), NWLT determined our Direct Support Services (DSS) rate to include all allowable direct and necessary expenditures not captured in other budget line items. NWLT also provides MNDNR Grants with a copy of our annual financial audit as additional validation during the DSS approval process.

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	750	750
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	-	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	750	750

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	-	-	-	\$7,330,000	\$7,330,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	\$7,330,000	\$7,330,000

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	750	750
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	-	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	750	750

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	-	-	-	-	\$7,330,000	\$7,330,000
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$7,330,000	\$7,330,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$9,773
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
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	-	-	-	-	\$9,773
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0.5

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

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

Parcels are identified and prioritized through a science-based ranking framework designed to evaluate their conservation value for protecting forested lake watersheds, sensitive shorelines, and connected habitat complexes. The system emphasizes maintaining intact forest cover, protecting sensitive shorelines, and reducing habitat fragmentation and watershed degradation.

Initial parcel identification is guided by geographic analysis of priority LOBS lake watersheds. Parcels are screened using ecological and landscape criteria including adjacency to protected lands, shoreline characteristics, hydrologic connectivity, land cover diversity, documented rare features, Minnesota Biological Survey biodiversity rankings, and risk of conversion to urban or agricultural land uses.

For fee-title acquisitions, the framework places strong emphasis on adjacency to existing protected lands in order to expand contiguous habitat complexes, maintain intact forested shorelines, and improve long-term management efficiency. Additional priority factors include presence of LOBS shoreline, proximity to riparian areas, location within sensitive shoreland zones, hydrologic connectivity, and documented rare species or habitats.

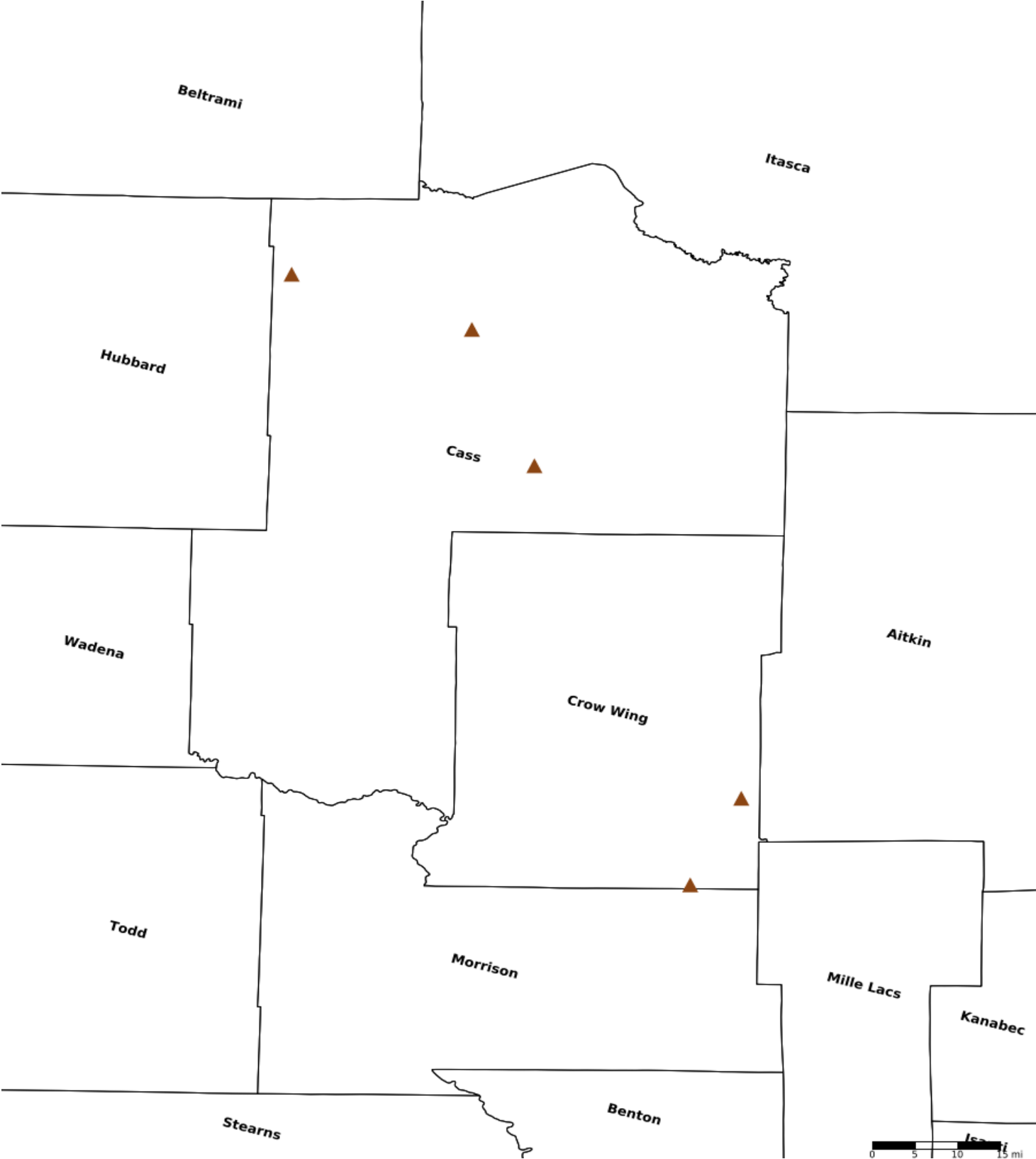
The ranking process uses a benefit index that combines parcel adjacency with ecological priority factors. Final rankings also consider project cost through a benefit-cost ratio analysis to maximize conservation return on investment and ensure strategic use of Outdoor Heritage Funds.

Parcels included in the proposal represent high-priority properties where landowners have expressed interest or engaged in direct discussions with project staff. Ongoing outreach within priority watersheds will continue throughout the grant period to expand the pipeline of willing participants and future conservation opportunities.

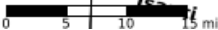
Protect in Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
NWLT - Leech Lake	Cass	14329226	38	\$0	No
NWLT - Steamboat Lake	Cass	14431220	23	\$550,000	No
NWLT - Wabedo Lake	Cass	14028222	33	\$351,900	No
NWLT - Platte Lake	Crow Wing	04328231	44	\$643,900	No
NWLT - Round Rice Mille Lacs	Crow Wing	04428202	220	\$416,000	No

Parcel Map



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



Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance

Phase 6



Northern Waters
LAND TRUST

Request **\$7,330,000**

Leverage **\$600,000**

Acres protected **750**

Shoreline miles protected **0.5**

State Goals Supported:

Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan, DNR's Aquatic Management Area program, State Conservation and Preservation Plan, MN DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda, Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework.

For more information:

northernwaterslandtrust.org; anniek@nwlt-mn.org

Northern Minnesota's **Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance (LOBS)**, the state's remaining **highest quality lakes**, comprise one of the most biologically important systems in the state for fish, game and wildlife. Development and disturbance of these systems threaten their exceptional fisheries, aquatic plant richness, and populations of endangered or threatened species.

Since 2022, Northern Waters Land Trust and Minnesota Land Trust, with the support of the Outdoor Heritage Fund, have worked to **permanently protect the watersheds of LOBS lakes** and the diverse and sensitive biological communities that rely on them. Together, the partnership has advanced strategic, watershed-scale conservation across LOBS priority systems, **safeguarding water quality, shoreline habitat, and forest cover** that underpin long-term ecological integrity.

Although Minnesota Land Trust is not included in this phase's proposal, they remain a valued partner, and the program's accomplishments are a collective effort.



1,227
Acres
protected



8.84
Miles of
shoreline
protected



\$1.164
Million in
leverage
achieved

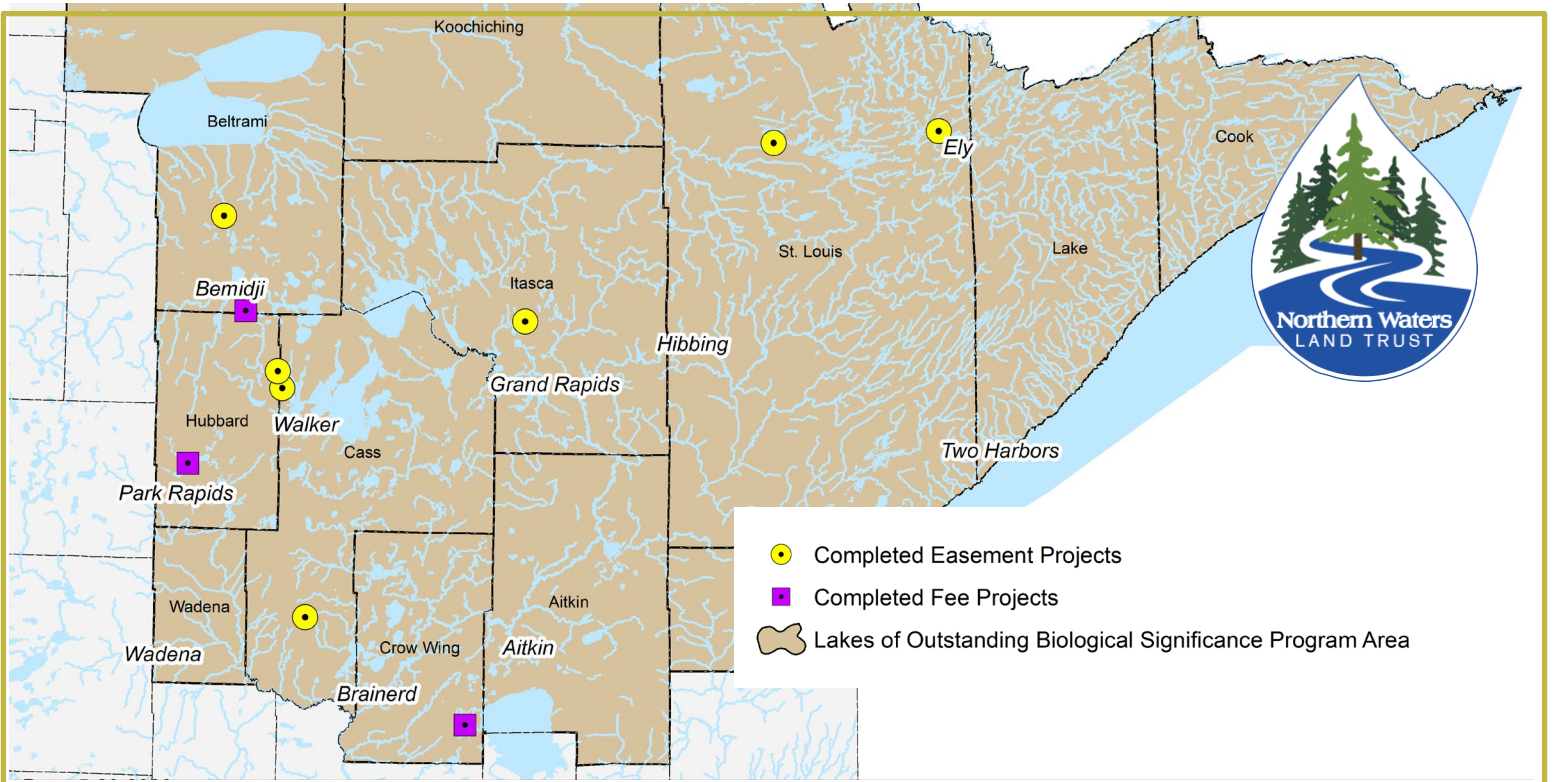


11
Projects
completed



Why it Matters

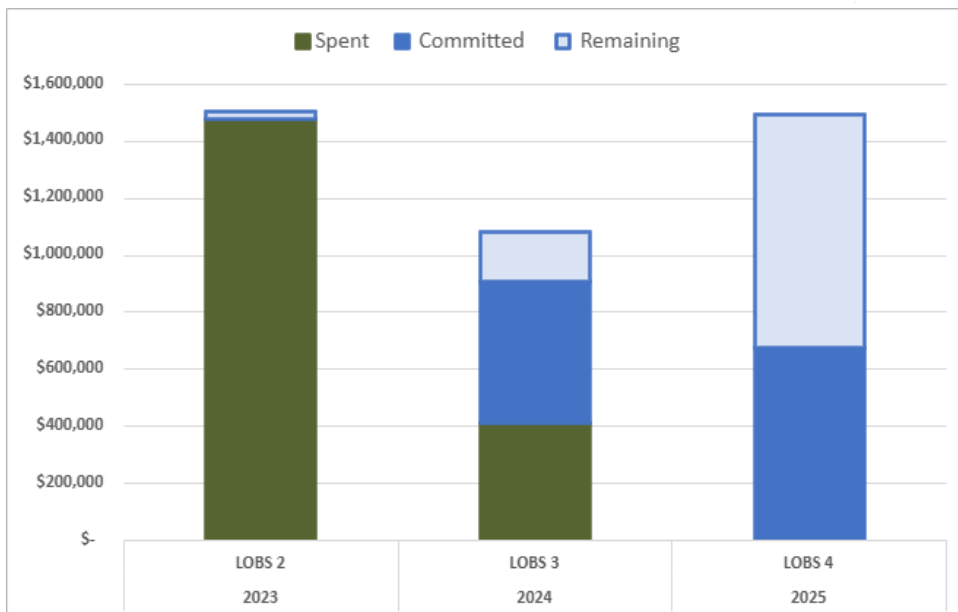
- Healthy fisheries and wildlife.
- Improved water quality and habitat connectivity of priority lake watersheds.
- Increased participation of private landowners in habitat protection projects.
- Enhancement of prior state and local investments made in habitat protection, public access, and outdoor heritage.



Project Spotlight: Barbour Lake AMA

NWLT permanently protected **96 acres and 1,400 feet of shoreline** on Barbour Lake in 2024 using Outdoor Heritage Funds and support from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Loon Program. The property will become the new Barbour Lake Aquatic Management Area, **expanding public access** for fishing and hunting while **protecting high-quality shoreline, wetlands, and forest habitat**.

Barbour Lake supports cisco (tullibee), loon habitat, and several sensitive fish species. Located within a larger complex of protected public lands, the project **strengthens habitat connectivity** and **helps sustain water quality** and fisheries populations within the Mille Lacs watershed.



*Chart reflects only NWLT funds. We have consistently exceeded acreage and leverage goals for previous phases.

Performance & Outlook

The program has **consistently exceeded** both acreage delivery targets and leverage goals, demonstrating strong implementation capacity and efficient use of public investment. For open appropriations, the majority of available funds are already committed to active projects.

As **demand continues** and **implementation opportunities grow**, additional funding is needed to maintain momentum, ensure continuity of delivery, and sustain program scale and effectiveness.