



CONSERVATION EASEMENT ACTIVITY IN MINNESOTA January 2009

In the past decade, the use of conservation easements has dramatically increased around the country as conservation agencies and non-profits have recognized that easements can be a very effective strategy to meet their missions. Until recently, however, there were no data on which public agencies or conservation entities hold conservation easements in Minnesota and the corresponding volume of conservation easement activity.

In order to address this vacuum in knowledge, the Minnesota Land Trust commissioned a study of conservation easement activity in Minnesota in 2006. Entities contacted for the study were those that the Land Trust believed might hold conservation easements. There are no doubt other entities that hold easements, particularly at the local level, that are not included here. Not all entities that knew that they held conservation easements knew how many or their acreage. Additionally, some acreage may have been counted twice when easements were co-held or where there was more than one easement on the same parcel of land.

The tables and charts on the following pages summarize the data collected in this study. All figures included here are based on 2006 survey data and are estimates only. Several entities have increased easement activity since 2006 which is not accounted for in the above charts. In addition, several other organizations such as the Conservation Fund and the Trust for Public Land help facilitate easement transactions but do not hold them long-term.

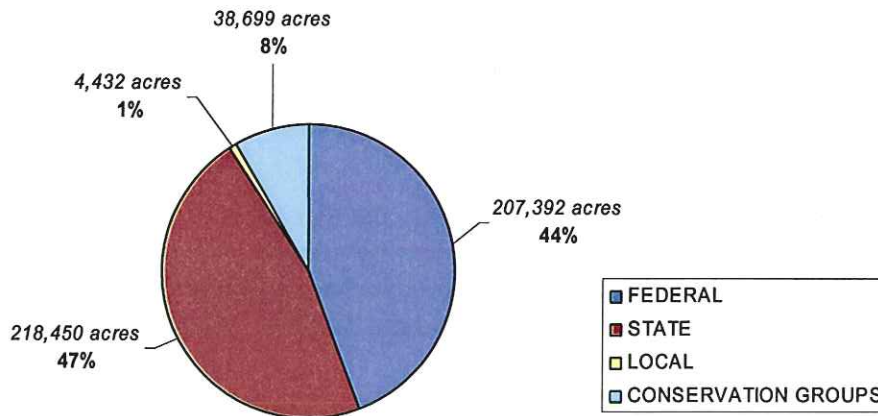
The following are a few general comments and themes gleaned from the data:

- The study uncovered a greater level of conservation easement activity than originally anticipated, positioning Minnesota as a major state in terms of numbers of conservation easements protecting the State's natural resources.
- The level of activity is even greater than indicated when more recent easements are added, including large recent working forest easements and the most recent rounds of WRP/RIM Reserve easements.
- The majority of easements are held by government agencies, with approximately one-half at the federal level and one-half at the state level.
- 97% of all conservation easements are perpetual.
- Compliance monitoring of conservation easements is not handled consistently by easement holders. Some monitor annually, some periodically and some not at all.
- Few easement holders had funding dedicated to long-term stewardship and monitoring of easements. Public agencies typically relied on annual appropriations or using other general operating dollars.
- Additional work is necessary to better understand conservation easement issues in Minnesota.

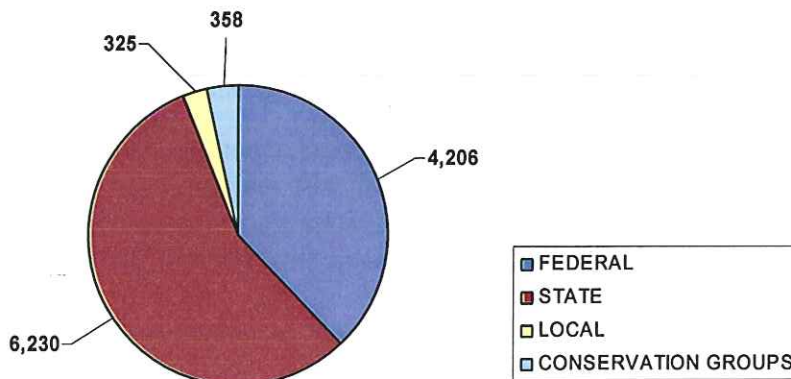
SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT ACTIVITY IN MINNESOTA
as of 2006

	NUMBER OF EASEMENTS			ACREAGE PROTECTED		
	Permanent	Term	Total	Permanent	Term	Total
FEDERAL AGENCIES	4,162	44	4,206	160,392	N/A	207,392
STATE AGENCIES	5,510	720	6,230	205,851	12,599	218,450
LOCAL UNITS OF GOVERNMENT	274	1	325	4,372	60	4,432
CONSERVATION GROUPS	358	0	358	38,699	0	38,699
TOTAL	10,304	765	11,069	456,314	12,659	468,973

CONSERVATION EASEMENT ACREAGE HELD BY ORGANIZATION TYPE
as of 2006



NUMBER OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HELD BY ORGANIZATION TYPE
as of 2006



**SUMMARY OF ENTITIES HOLDING CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN MINNESOTA
AND RELATED PROGRAMS
as of 2006**

	ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM (IF APPLICABLE)	NUMBER OF EASEMENTS	TOTAL ACRES
FEDERAL	NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service	WRP, EWRP, EWP	608	65,400
	USFWS: US Fish and Wildlife Service	Refuges, WPA	2,798	81,749
	NPS: National Park Service	St. Croix National Scenic Riverway	1,000	14,134
	USDA: US Department of Agriculture	Debt for Nature	2	47,000
STATE	BWSR: Board of Water and Soil Resources	RIM, CREP, WRP (with NRCS)	5379	193,960
	DNR: Department of Natural Resources	9 different programs	<i>known at the time: 851</i>	<i>known at the time: 24,491</i>
LOCAL (selected communities)	Dakota County	Farmland and Natural Areas Program	30	2,668
	Washington County	Land and Water Legacy Program Subdivisions	23	916
	Cass County	Wetlands and SWCD	2	219+
	Sherburne County	Subdivisions	6	192
	Minnehaha Creek Watershed District	Land Conservation Program	6	257
	Anoka County	Anoka County Conservation District	1	40
	Rice Creek Watershed District		<i>unknown</i>	<i>unknown</i>
	City of Lake Elmo		16	<i>data unavailable</i>
	City of Woodbury		1	70
	Chisago City		2	<i>data unavailable</i>
	City of Orono		20-30	<i>unknown</i>
CONSERVATION GROUPS	Minnesota Land Trust		333	29,062
	The Nature Conservancy		12	8,093
	American Farmland Trust		4	1,110
	Leech Lake Watershed Association		4	<i>data unavailable</i>
	Ducks Unlimited		3	360
	Minnesota Forestry Association		2	40
	Pheasants Forever		<i>none at this time</i>	