



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Itasca County Memorial Forest Project
ML 2025 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/03/2024

Proposal Title: Itasca County Memorial Forest Project

Funds Requested: \$2,910,400

Confirmed Leverage Funds: \$40,000

Is this proposal Scalable?: No

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Kory Cease

Title: Itasca County Land Commissioner

Organization: Itasca County Land Department

Address: 1177 LaPrairie Avenue

City: Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Email: kory.cease@co.itasca.mn.us

Office Number: 218-327-7392

Mobile Number: 218-244-8283

Fax Number: 218-327-4160

Website: <https://co.itasca.mn.us/233/Land-Department>

Location Information

County Location(s): Itasca.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

This project serves to protect 2,720 acres of forest habitats within Minnesota's public forests through fee title acquisition of private forest land surrounded by State, County and Federal forest lands. Successful efforts: 1) ensure this tract of forested land remains intact and prevents potential forest habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation; 2) greatly increase management efficiencies of surrounding public forest lands; and 3) address critical forest and recreational user access. Grant funding will provide for public management by Itasca County. Itasca County has forest management policies in place to protect this habitat in perpetuity.

Design and Scope of Work

Over the past five years, Itasca County has implemented a multi-phase land protection project with Boundary Company in Moose Park and Nore Townships. In 2019, the county secured a public easement to gain access to landlocked public and protected private forest land. A three-phase acquisition project then began with Phase 1 in 2021 through the purchase of 560 acres of Boundary Company land. Phase 2 was implemented in 2023 with the purchase of 1,148 acres of land. Phase 1 and 2 were both accomplished with county funding sources. Phase 3, would be implemented through this proposal. Itasca County proposes the strategic acquisition of the remaining 2,720 acres of Boundary Company land. These conservation lands are located within Itasca County's Memorial Forest program and are managed for sustainable natural resource management purposes based on habitat principles and professional forestry. They are located within the Loucks-Danyluk Memorial Forest, which was designated in 1946 in honor of fallen soldiers Emmet Loucks and Franklin Danyluk, who died in active service during World War II.

The proposed protection of these forest lands will expand/connect core habitats and maintain unique or rare habitats and native plant communities. Lands within the proposal include critical habitat, support climate adaptations/resiliency, protect waters, expand public access, and support local timber and recreation-based economies. Itasca County has also intentionally selected these parcels for the consolidation of and adjacency to county-managed lands, securing and improving public access, and securing and improving forest management access. Itasca County's forest management program has been third-party certified through the Forest Stewardship Council since 2005 to ensure that the lands are managed in an ecologically, socially and economically responsible manner. While sustainable forest harvesting is an important tool in managing forests, additional enhancement projects will also maximize the diversity and productivity of these habitats for both wildlife and people. Itasca County plans to develop and add the proposal area to its network of Ruffed Grouse Management Areas in partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society.

Specific habitat preserved in this proposal includes upland areas (60%) comprised of Northern Mesic Hardwood Forest communities of different age classes, which are home to an array of game and non-game wildlife species such as wolves, bobcats, fisher, martens, owls, bears, deer, grouses and woodcocks. There are also lowland areas (40%) of Forested Rich Peatland communities interspersed with shallow marshes and wetlands, open water ponds, sphagnum seepages and bogs, seasonal pools, headwater river flowages and conifer peatland swamps. These are beneficial to multiple waterfowl species, eagles, muskrats, mink, otters, beavers, frogs, turtles, and songbirds. The property contains large contiguous blocks of forest habitat with closed canopies, substantial shrub cover, snags and woody debris, as well as shrubland or young open forest habitat mixed with tall shrubs, saplings, and herbaceous cover adjacent to overstory hardwoods.

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

This proposal involves private lands that haven't been surveyed for rare species. Transitioning these lands into public ownership would allow the land to be included in the Minnesota County Biological Survey. This would promote survey for the following rare species, which have been found in Northwest Itasca County on similar forest habitat complexes of the proposal.

The trumpeter swan, a special concern species, has been observed in the proposed area. It uses the open water habitats such as the beaver ponds (84 acres) and the Popple River flowage in the project area for breeding and nesting. The goblin fern, a threatened species, requires the general habitat composition, structure, and soil conditions typical of Northern Rich Mesic/ Northern Mesic Hardwood Forest communities as found within the proposal in the thick accumulated duff layers where the soils are not waterlogged. The four-toed salamander, a special concern species, can be found in mature upland deciduous or mixed forests interspersed with sphagnum seepages and bogs, isolated shallow marshes and wetlands, vernal ponds, or other fish-free habitats. The northern goshawk, a special concern species, requires large contiguous patches of closed canopy forest habitat with substantial shrub cover, large amounts of snags and woody debris, and open flight paths between the canopy and understory layers. The golden-winged warbler, a species of greatest conservation need, relies on shrubland or young open forest habitat with a mix of tall shrubs and saplings interspersed with small areas of herbaceous cover adjacent to intermittent overstory deciduous trees. The white adder's mouth orchid, a special concern species, prefers forest rich peatland swamps, as found within the proposal. These include sphagnum seepages, bogs or mossy hummocks over coarse woody debris at the margins of stream channels or peatlands.

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

This project is supported by local governments and private landowners. However, urgency exists as localized pressure is increasing to convert the land to non-habitat uses on privately owned lands. Itasca County will begin the fair-market appraisal in fall 2024, paid for by county funds. If this proposal is funded by OHF, one bulk purchase would be completed once funding becomes available in July 2025. Itasca County has assisted or purchased 1708 acres from Boundary Company in two separate previous transactions.

In the past 10 years, over 1680 acres have already been parceled and sold to private landowners within the area of this project by the current landowner. At this time, there is a willing seller, and there will be significant savings if the land is purchased as soon as possible. This project cannot be scaled without significantly jeopardizing land availability and increasing costs.

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

The proposal lies within a 12,700-acre contiguous habitat complex in Nore and northern Moose Park Townships of Itasca County. It contains a mosaic of state, tax-forfeited, federal, and UPM Blandin (protected with conservation easements) ownership, with large contiguous blocks of other private ownership. Parcelization and fragmentation of the habitat complexes in large private ownership through the sale of smaller land parcels have already begun in the vicinity of the proposal area. This proposal would help preserve the existing habitat from further fragmentation. The proposal contains the largest contiguous block of unprotected private industrial ownership in this habitat complex and would expand the complex of protected forest and wetland habitat by approximately three miles. Critical habitat complexes in the proposal area can be maintained by preserving habitat corridors, hardwood forest complexes, riparian zones, and wetland buffers in the proposal and adjacent existing protected lands.

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

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Explain how this proposal will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.

Habitat resilience will be accomplished by preserving habitat diversity, structure, and continuity and by protecting natural wetlands, water bodies, and carbon-storing lands from development for public benefit. Maintaining biodiversity and a diversity of habitat conditions will be addressed through forest habitat composition goals that foster species biodiversity, forest, patch sizes, and age class structure. Long-term management for a diversity of successional stages, stand structures, and species assemblies will also serve to protect habitat continuity. The natural climate strategy as a part of this proposal has effectively identified one of the most critical properties in private ownership for protection. Without protection against parcelization and fragmentation, private development and land uses would threaten the unique quality and continuity of the wildlife habitat, wetlands, and waters of these proposed lands for acquisition.

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, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:

Approximately 15% of Itasca County private industrial ownership is in large contiguous blocks of working forest lands originally associated with forest products companies. The majority of these forest land habitats have been protected within the past 20 years by transitioning to public ownership or through conservation easements, with only a few large contiguous blocks of unprotected private industrial forest land ownership remaining. This proposal contains one of those remaining large, unprotected blocks (2,720 acres) of contiguous forest habitat within Itasca County. The proposed area is associated with 4,924 acres of adjacent county-managed lands and 8,573 acres of other public and protected private lands. At this time, Itasca County is uniquely positioned to finalize a multiphase process for acquiring and protecting forest land habitats with this proposal. The timeliness of this proposal provides not only a unique opportunity for significant conservation within the county but also to create a permanent conservation legacy for the public.

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *This project will permanently protect 2,720 acres of northern forest and riparian habitat, including wetlands, ponds, brushland, and streams. All northern forest parcels included in this proposal are at high risk of parcelization, fragmentation, and development. The strategic protection of these parcels will enhance forest habitat connectivity, increase access for public recreation and forest management, create forest management efficiencies, and protect shoreland*

and watershed critical habitat in the headwater flowages of the Popple River. The parcels will be acquired to provide resilient forest ecosystems for forest wildlife species.

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

- N/A

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 would fund new projects that would not be funded and implemented without this appropriation. No funds would be supplanted.

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

Fee acquisition increases management efficiency through improved access to habitat management and the consolidation of existing state and county-managed lands. The land acquired will be managed by Itasca County as part of their current forest land portfolio, increasing management efficiency. County funding will be used for the management of these lands.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
annually/perpetually	County funds	lands are managed by Itasca County per Itasca County Forest Management Plan	-	-

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

This project will benefit communities throughout the entire state of Minnesota by permanently protecting ecosystem services that provide clean drinking water, productive habitat, clean air, climate change mitigation, sedimentation and erosion control, and public recreational opportunities. The close-to-home recreational opportunities will benefit diverse communities in the area, as well as all Minnesotans.

The headwaters of the Popple River, a protected waterway, are located within the project and flow south through the Leech Lake Reservation into Round Lake. Keeping land and water systems intact protects native wild rice beds as well as water quality and quantity, which can have long-term cost benefits related to water treatment and future treatment costs in downstream communities.

The Environmental Protection Agency has developed an environmental justice mapping and screening tool. This tool indicates the proposed area falls within areas identified as environmental justice areas of concern. The tool indicates: 65% are low-income, 29% are people of color, 60% have less than high school education, and 94% are over the age of 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:

Land will be open for hunting and fishing.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- County

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- County Forest

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

Yes

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

Forest access roads and trails have been developed by previous industrial forest landowners for forest management practices. There is a primary access road running north and south through Section 14, currently only open to the current landowner and landowners to the south. All other forest access roads are used primarily for timber management access. After acquisition, these roads and trails will be maintained to provide ongoing access for forestry and wildlife management purposes on the properties. No new trails are planned on the parcels unless needed for forest management and habitat purposes. There is an established grant-in-aid trail easement corridor going through the proposed acquisition parcels. The grant-in-aid trail corridor has been identified on the attached map.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

Itasca County will be responsible for the maintenance of access roads to the extent needed for forest and habitat management. This includes annual spring (and other wet season) closures, reporting issues, and enforcement actions when necessary. Itasca County will also be responsible for monitoring and enforcing issues on properties.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF 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, when, and source of the R/E work:

No restoration or enhancement will be completed within this proposal's funding and availability.

Other OHF Appropriation Awards

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Obtain independent fair market appraisal	December 31, 2024
Execute Purchase Agreement	October 31, 2025
County acquires fee simple ownership	December 31, 2025

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$77,100	-	-	\$77,100
Contracts	\$37,800	-	-	\$37,800
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,720,000	-	-	\$2,720,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$2,000	-	-	\$2,000
Professional Services	\$70,400	\$40,000	County funds	\$110,400
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$100	-	-	\$100
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,910,400	\$40,000	-	\$2,950,400

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Wildlife Specialist	0.25	2.0	\$21,200	-	-	\$21,200
District Forester	0.25	2.0	\$21,200	-	-	\$21,200
Land Commissioner	0.15	2.0	\$13,500	-	-	\$13,500
Real Estate Specialist	0.25	2.0	\$21,200	-	-	\$21,200

Amount of Request: \$2,910,400

Amount of Leverage: \$40,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 1.37%

DSS + Personnel: \$77,100

As a % of the total request: 2.65%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$40,000	\$40,000	100.0%	-	0.0%

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

The county will pay for an appraisal prior to funding to expedite the closing. County has purchased 40% of the total project area, with county funds totaling \$1,306,063.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?

No

Please explain why this project can NOT be scaled:

Due to the time-sensitive nature of this project there are disadvantages to scaling the project. There is currently a willing seller who desires to sell the remaining acreage in one transaction. The appraisal will begin summer of 2024. Itasca County seeks to complete this project by 2025.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Contracted amount with Northern Waters Land Trust for acquisition services.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

- Appraisals
- Other : DNR Appraisal Review, Real Estate Taxes, Maps and GIS Shapefiles, Site Assessments
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

One

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

It includes traditional travel costs (mileage, food and lodging)- none other.

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

Yes

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
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	2,720	0	2,720
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	2,720	0	2,720

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	-	-	\$2,910,400	-	\$2,910,400
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$2,910,400	-	\$2,910,400

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
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	2,720	2,720
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	2,720	2,720

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	-	-	-	-	\$2,910,400	\$2,910,400
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$2,910,400	\$2,910,400

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	-	-	\$1,070	-
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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$1,070
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

3735 FEET

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

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

The parcels are part of the largest contiguous block of unprotected private industrial ownership (2,720 owned by a single landowner) of contiguous forest habitat within Itasca County.

The property will expand the complex of protected forest and wetland habitat by approximately 3 miles.

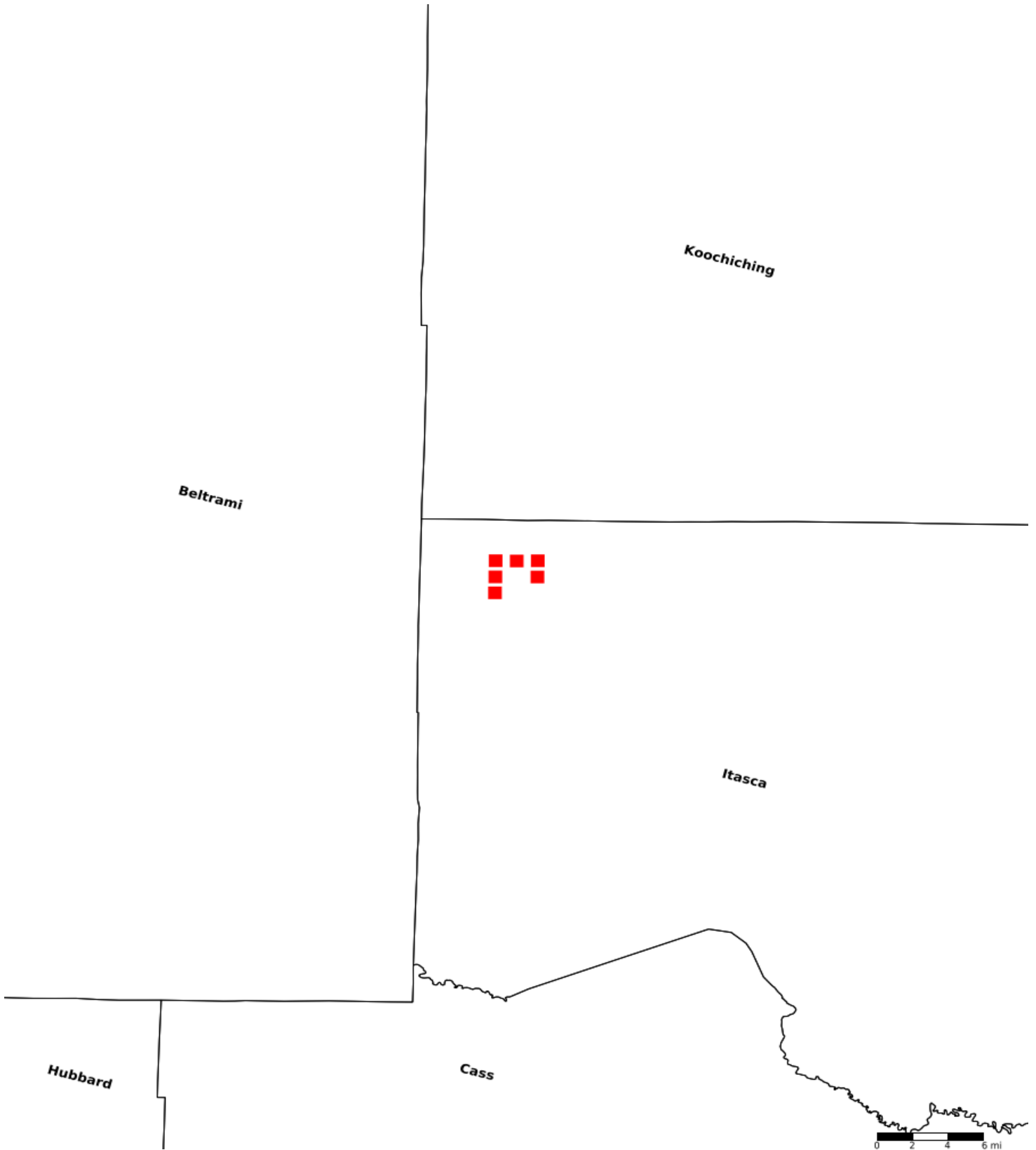
Parcels provide a unique opportunity for significant conservation and creates a permanent conservation legacy for the public.

This acquisition is "shovel ready" with a willing Seller.

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Section 24	Itasca	15029224	200	-	No
Section 27	Itasca	15029227	560	-	No
Section 22	Itasca	15029222	280	-	No
Section 15	Itasca	15029215	480	-	No
Section 14	Itasca	15029214	560	-	No
Section 13	Itasca	15029213	640	-	No

Parcel Map



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

Itasca County Memorial Forest Project

Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant Proposal



AT A GLANCE:

FUNDING REQUEST \$2,720,000.00

2,720 acres of quality habitat protected for all Minnesotans:

Wildlife habitat, forest management, water quality, public access, large & small game hunting, climate change resilience, working forests.

BACKGROUND

This project serves to protect 2,720 acres of forest habitat within Itasca County through fee title acquisition. This will permanently conserve a large block of forest land that is surrounded by over 12,700 acres of state, federal, tax-forfeited and protected private lands. These conservation lands are located within Itasca County's Memorial Forest program which are managed for sustainable natural resource purposes based on professional forestry and habitat principles.

BENEFITS TO MINNESOTANS

This project achieves multiple benefits by conserving unique habitat, maintaining forested land cover essential for water quality, and sustaining the forested landscape that is critical for local timber/tourism jobs and local economies. Transferring these forests and wetlands into public ownership permanently protects ecosystem services that provide clean drinking water, productive habitat, clean air, climate change mitigation, and public recreational opportunities that will benefit all Minnesotans.

SCALABILITY

This project cannot be scaled without significantly increasing costs and jeopardizing the availability of the land for purchase. The acquisition is "shovel ready": there is a willing seller who desires to sell the remaining acreage in one transaction and tremendous public support and cooperation. Itasca County will begin the appraisal fall of 2024 and seek to complete the project by December 2025.

What has been accomplished to date in the project?

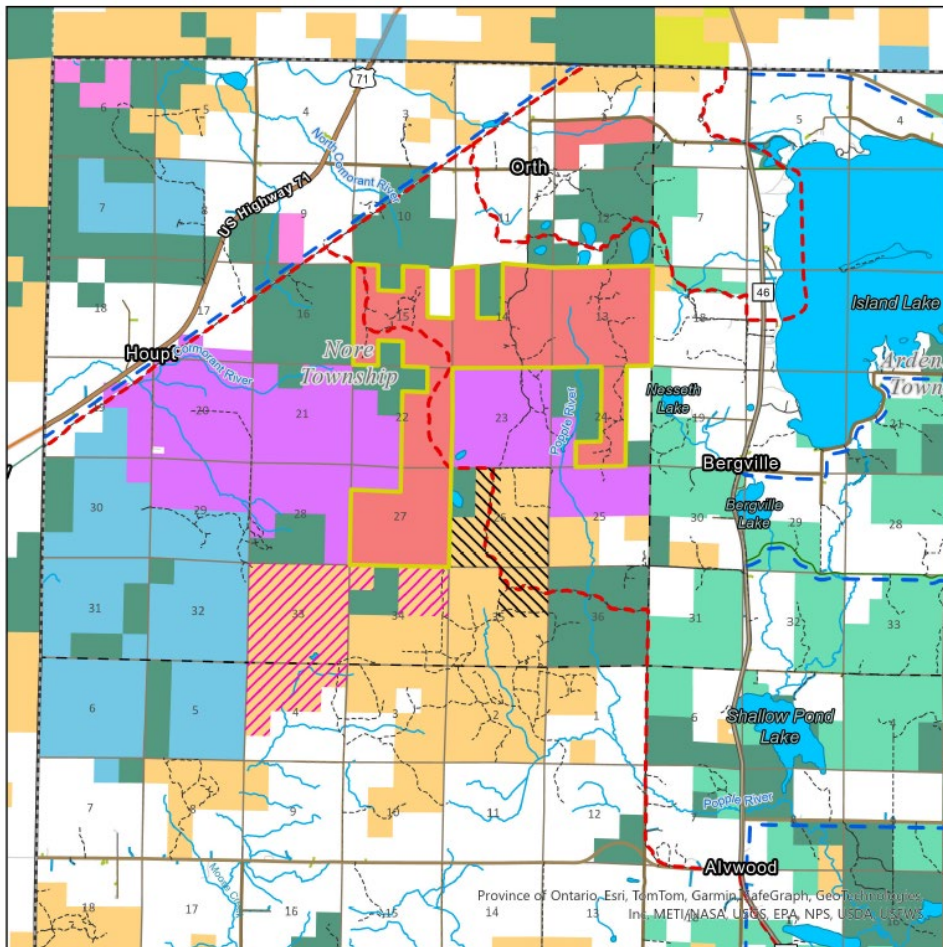
Over the past five years, Itasca County has implemented a multi-phase lands protection project to acquire and gain access to landlocked public and protected private forest land. Itasca County has acquired legal access to and purchased 40% of the total project area with County funds totaling \$1,306,063.



Phase 1, Complete: (2021) Analyze parcels against strategic objectives, Itasca County purchased 560 acres of forest land.

Phase 2, Complete: (2023) Itasca County purchased 1,148 acres of forest land.

Phase 3, OHF Proposal: (2024-2025) Complete Final Acquisition: Seeking acquisition funding. Complete appraisal and purchase agreement, confirm funding, complete title review, execute closing, take ownership of the remaining 2,720 acres.



Boundary Lands



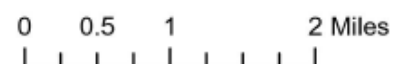
Itasca Co. Acquisition Phases

- Phase 1 (diagonal hatching)
- Phase 2 (pink diagonal hatching)
- Phase 3 (yellow outline)

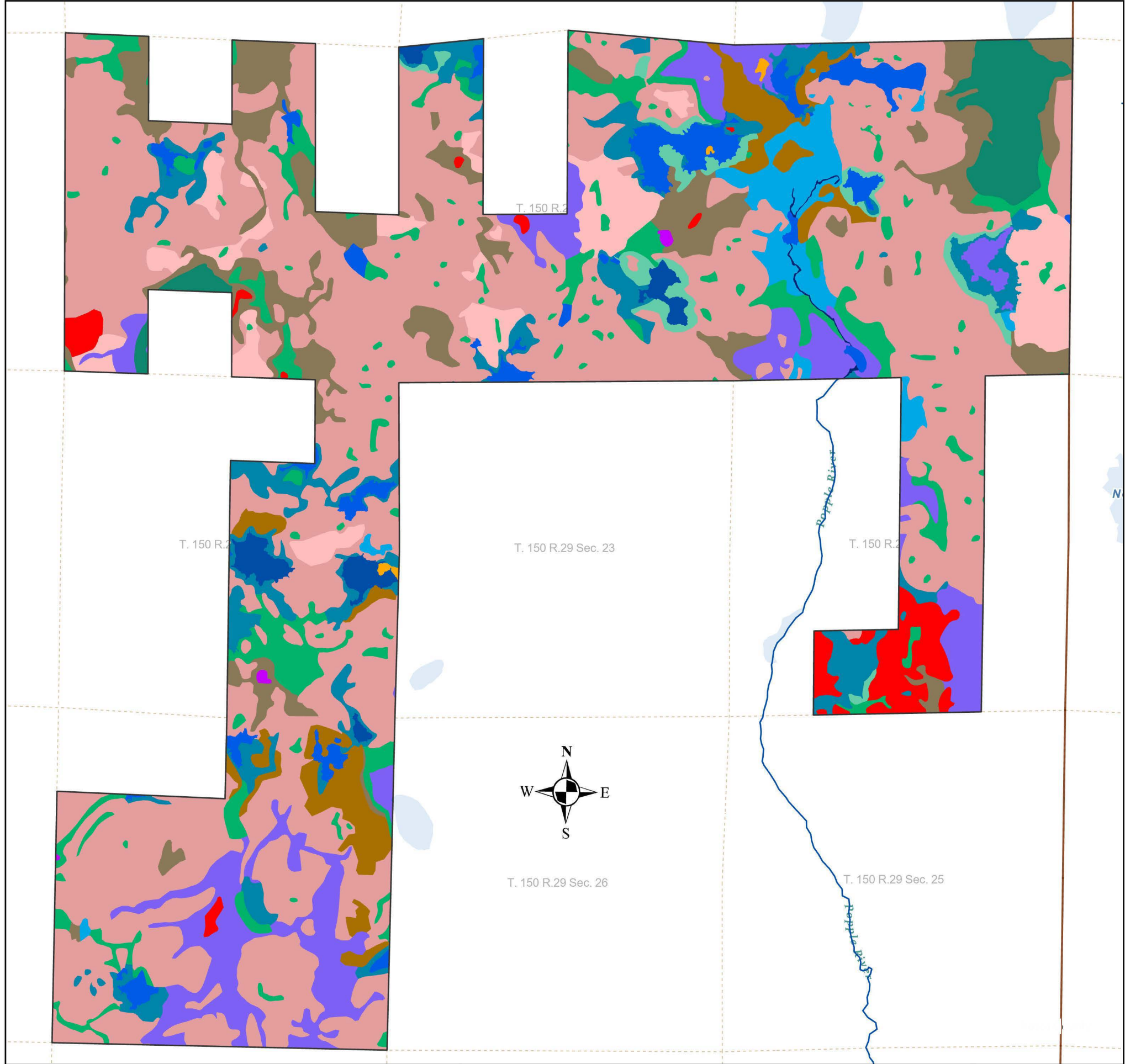
- Forest Roads / Trails (dashed line)
- Snowmobile (red dashed line)
- ATV (blue dashed line)

Ownership

- Large Block Private (purple)
- Blandin (light blue)
- Boundary (red)
- Federal (green)
- Meriwether (pink)
- State (dark green)
- Tax Forfeit (orange)



**CoverTypes on Boundary Lands
in
NW Itasca County**



Cover Type	Acres
Mixed Aspen/ Hardwoods	1535
Spruce/ Fir	2
Northern Hardwoods	91
Upland Brush	38
Lowland Hardwoods	225
Mixed Lowland Conifer	72
Bog	222
Deep Marsh	29
Shallow Marsh	171
Shallow Open Water/ River	86
Shrub Swamp	184
Wet Meadow	66
Total	2721

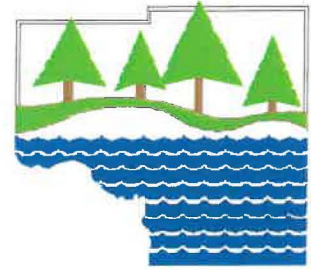


Data source disclaimer: The Wetland types are from the National Wetlands Inventory Update. Forest covertypes were interpreted from aerial imagery by Itasca County Land Department resource managers.



ITASCA COUNTY

Courthouse
Administrative Services
123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-2600
Office (218) 327-7363 Fax (218) 327-2848



May 14, 2024

Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Itasca County Memorial Forest, Phase 3- Outdoor Heritage Grant Proposal

Dear Council Members,

This is to confirm the Itasca County Board of Commissioners supports the Itasca County Land Department's proposal to pursue Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council grant funds to acquire 2,720 acres currently owned by Boundary Company in Nore Township located in northwestern Itasca County. The acquisition will meet the Itasca County strategic land management goals of improving public access to county-managed and other public lands in the area and of consolidating ownership for habitat and for more efficient management of these lands.

Itasca County understands that a representative will notify Itasca County once a formal option agreement has been signed and they may request a formal County Board Resolution if it is required by law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Johnson', is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

John Johnson
Chair, Itasca County Board of Commissioners

Equal Opportunity Employer



May 14, 2024

Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage
Council 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr. Blvd. Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Itasca County Memorial Forest, Phase 3- Outdoor Heritage Grant

Proposal Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Ruffed Grouse Society and American Woodcock Society (RGS/AWS), please accept this letter of support for the Itasca County Land Department's proposal to pursue Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council grant funds to acquire 2,720 acres currently owned by Boundary Company in Nore Township located in northwestern Itasca County. The acquisition will meet the Itasca County strategic land management goals of improving public access to county-managed and other public lands in the area and of consolidating ownership for habitat and for more efficient management of these lands.

This project offers a great opportunity to further sustainable and multiple objective forest management. It will ensure the conservation of critical wildlife habitat, while allowing access for forest management and many great public recreational opportunities. This landscape provides some of the best ruffed grouse and American woodcock habitat in the nation and this project will allow that to continue. RGS/AWS look forward to partnering on the multiple objective management of this area and wholeheartedly support this project.

Sincerely,

Scott Johnson

Scot Johnson
Forest Conservation Coordinator- Minnesota
Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE
WES LIBBEY NORTHERN LAKES CHAPTER

On the web: www.izaa.org/grandrapids/weslibbey
Grand Rapids, Minnesota
----since 1925----

May 19, 2024

Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Itasca County Memorial Forest, Phase 3- Outdoor Heritage Grant Proposal

Dear Council Members:

The Wes Libbey Northern Lakes Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America supports Itasca County's proposal to acquire 2,720 acres of forest land from the Boundary Company. Retaining these lands for County forest management will ensure that these lands will continue to provide timber for our timber industry and wildlife for hunters, fisherman, and other recreationists who support our recreation industry. Forested lands also help maintain our high water quality.

These lands will maintain a large, contiguous tract of forest land in that area. Such tracts provide habitat for wildlife species that do not tolerate human development. Contiguous public tracts of land also greatly facilitate location of recreation trails, which seem to be less welcome across private lands today.

A less fragmented forest also reduces conflicts between natural resource use and human habitation. Development within large, forested areas often create the following problems:

1. Free-roaming pets impact ground nesting birds and become prey to forest dwelling predators.
2. Natural predators that are not usually present within large, unfragmented forested tracts, and are associated with development, such as skunks, raccoons, and crows, and are harmful to bird and mammal species not adapted to their presence, become established near development.
3. Deer and other wildlife are more likely to depredate crops and yard vegetation.
4. Timber wolves often start preying on livestock.
5. Timber harvest and gravel extraction are often opposed near residential development.
6. Hunting and trapping near residences can cause safety concerns.
7. When access to residences includes forest roads, conflicts as to who must maintain the road and the level of maintenance are common.
8. Construction of powerlines and additional roads for residences can reduce wildlife habitat quality in the surrounding area.

This acquisition will reduce such conflicts in addition to reducing the cost to provide public services to remote residences; such as ambulance service, fire protection, school bus service, police protection, and road access.

The Izaak Walton League of America is a conservation organization whose goal is to protect our nation's soil, air, woods, waters and wildlife. We are also strong supporters of the shooting sports, fishing, and other outdoor recreation. Wes Libbey Northern Lakes chapter members live in the Itasca County area in northern Minnesota. Acquisition of these lands by Itasca County is very much in line with our goals. We ask that you to approve this proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert Scheierl".

Robert Scheierl, President
Wes Libbey Northern Lakes Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
1109 NE 5th Avenue
Grand Rapids, MN 55744



MINNESOTA DEER HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

460 Peterson Road, Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Fax: 218-327-1349 / Phone: 1-800-450-DEER

www.mndeerhunters.com



BUILDING OUR HUNTING AND CONSERVATION LEGACY THROUGH HABITAT, EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

May 13, 2024

Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Itasca County Memorial Forest, Phase 3- Outdoor Heritage Grant Proposal

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA), please accept this letter of support for the Itasca County Land Department's proposal to pursue Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council grant funds to acquire 2,720 acres currently owned by Boundary Company in Nore Township located in northwestern Itasca County. The acquisition will meet the Itasca County strategic land management goals of improving public access to county-managed and other public lands in the area and of consolidating ownership for habitat and for more efficient management of these lands.

This project will ensure the conservation of critical wildlife habitat, while allowing access for Minnesota's residents for a number of recreational purposes. MDHA wholeheartedly supports this project and thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jared J. Mazurek

Jared J. Mazurek
Executive Director
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

May 13, 2024

Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Itasca County Memorial Forest, Phase 3- Outdoor Heritage Grant Proposal

Dear Council Members,

On behalf of Audubon Upper Mississippi River (UMR), please accept this letter of support for the Itasca County Land Department's proposal to pursue Lessard-Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council grant funds to acquire 2,720 acres currently owned by Boundary Company in Nore Township located in northwestern Itasca County. The acquisition falls within the Chippewa Plains Important Bird Area, an area rich with bird diversity, including species and habitats unique to only a few areas of Minnesota. Additionally, the habitat in this region will meet the Itasca County strategic land management goals of improving public access to county-managed and other public lands in the area and of consolidating ownership for habitat and for more efficient management of these lands.

This project will ensure the conservation of critical wildlife habitat, while allowing access for Minnesota's residents for numerous recreational purposes. Audubon UMR enthusiastically supports this project and thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rob Schultz, Vice President
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
National Audubon Society



Dale Gentry, Director of Conservation
Audubon Upper Mississippi River Region
National Audubon Society