



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase X  
ML 2025 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 06/04/2024

**Proposal Title:** Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase X

**Funds Requested:** \$13,988,700

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$2,025,000

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** Yes

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Christine Ostern

**Title:** Forest Legacy Program Coordinator

**Organization:** MN DNR

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Isanti, Todd, Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Morrison, Cook and St. Louis.

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

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest
- Habitat
- Wetlands

## Narrative

### **Abstract**

The MN Forests for the Future Program focuses on protecting high conservation value forest lands and will acquire and steward 12,000 acres of working forest conservation easements on priority forest and riparian habitat in the northern forest and forest/prairie transition regions across eight counties focused on private in-holdings and land adjacent to public land. Protecting large blocks of private forest achieves multiple benefits: conserving critical habitat, forested land cover essential for high water quality/quantity, building climate resilience and sustaining the forested landscape critical for local jobs in tourism and timber.

### **Design and Scope of Work**

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

This proposal focuses on northern forests and forest/prairie areas building on existing protection and utilizing strong partnerships including local governments and citizen groups. Private in-holdings and land adjacent to publicly owned land are prioritized leveraging larger blocks of protected forest habitat, more protection against fragmentation, multiplying the effects of climate refugia and resilience, and providing habitat corridors especially important for wildlife movement. Land cover and land use directly impacts water quality/quantity; by protecting forests in key areas, this program will also protect drinking water, recharge aquifers, reduce nutrient and sediment to lakes and streams, protect floodplains, sustain fisheries and further mitigate climate change. Protection of forested land is critical for local economies including tourism, timber and outdoor recreation opportunities. Acquisition of permanent conservation easements will protect 12,000 acres of intact high conservation value forests and keep them in private ownership. Work is strategically focused to build on existing protection, address private in-holdings, address regional conservation and management goals and meet private landowner demand: 6 of 19 parcels are >1,000 ac. in size for a total of 9,775 ac. (of 12,000 total proposed); 5 of 19 are adjacent to conservation easements purchased within the last 5 years for a total of 3,400 acres (of 12,000 total proposed) with nearly all remaining adjacent to publicly owned land; public access will be protected in perpetuity on 3 of the largest tracts for a total of 5,100 ac.

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

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

The predominant threat for wildlife Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and protected species is habitat degradation, loss and fragmentation. Maintaining intact and healthy forest habitat, especially large contiguous tracts, reduces stressors on these populations. Permanently protecting parcels in this proposal as permanent conservation easements maintains core forested areas and connectivity and increases the resilience of these areas to a changing climate, invasive species and other habitat threats. The proposed project uses science-based targeting methods to leverage and expand existing habitat corridors and complexes, reduce fragmentation and protect areas identified as priorities in several plans and conservation initiatives, including the MN County Biological Survey. DNR's GIS-based Strategic Land Asset Management metrics are used by an inter-disciplinary team of experts from different Divisions to prioritize and select all acquisitions, including conservation easements. The priority tracts of forest land and habitat targeted for protection have some, if not all, of the following traits: are currently unprotected inholdings; large tracts identified by the MN County Biological Survey (including sites of high quality biodiversity significance); habitat identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as significant; presence of rare species and Species in Conservation Need or the habitat that support those species; located in a strategic habitat complex and adjacent to other protected land so that complexes can be protected and management improved. In addition, we consult with local and regional watershed/landscape planning efforts: TNC's Multiple Benefit Analysis and Resilient Lands Mapping Tool, DNR's Forest Action Plan, PCA's watershed plans, One Watershed One Plans, MFRC's Regional Landscape Plans, and Landscape Stewardship Plans.

Targeted habitats of our proposal include: upland forests, forested wetlands, non-forested wetlands and stream and lake shoreline. Protection of these lands provides critical habitat for key forest game species including upland birds, white-tail deer, moose, black bear, fisher, pine marten and waterfowl as well as songbird and other non-game wildlife species. In total, this proposal supports habitat protection with significant value for nearly 200 Species in Greatest Conservation Need.

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

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

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

A serious and significant threat to MN's northern forests is conversion for other uses: the MN Forest Resources Council has identified parcelization as "the single most important policy issue affecting the economic and ecological health of the state's forests". The OHF: 25 Year Framework cites that "forest land has been converted to other uses...at a rate of 3,600 acres per year". The MN Forest Vision recommends that the "forest land base is enlarged and protected through permanent conservation easements and fee title acquisition" & "contiguous forest complexes should be protected and enlarged...and there should be focus to protect areas with high game populations and high levels of biodiversity". The State Wildlife Action Plan reports that "activities that fragment or degrade habitats can independently or in conjunction with invasive species reduce biological diversity" & "Habitat degradation, loss, and fragmentation are the predominant stressors impacting SGCN populations. Habitats with

higher biological diversity and that are less fragmented are expected to have greater climate change resiliency than are systems with lower biological diversity and greater fragmentation.” Protection of proposed lands reduces habitat loss/fragmentation & maintains forest habitat complexes. This project would expand permanently protected habitat complexes & avoid habitat conversion/development/fragmentation/degradation. The MN Forests for the Future program provides enhanced connectivity between conservation lands by protecting privately-owned properties linking public land. A key strategy for climate change mitigation is providing corridors/connectivity between different biomes/microclimates allowing species to migrate to find suitable habitats that replace former habitats lost as the climate changes. However, many species may not be able to migrate over developed/cultivated land; providing habitat corridors for species movement benefits their ability to relocate. The MN Statewide Conservation & Preservation Plan says "forest fragmentation reduces resiliency and habitat quality for wildlife including species such as bears and wolves which need large tracts of undeveloped land". The Plan identifies the critical need “to increase forest ecosystem resilience through maintenance of large blocks of forested land and forest resource health. This requires protection of forestlands against conversion to other uses, and conservation of working forestland resources through sustainable management."

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

- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- 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.**

The project enhances habitat resiliency to climate change by incorporating resources & tools developed by the State, land conservation organizations, forest ecologists, aquatic biologists, environmental analysts, climate experts & engaged community members. By prioritizing areas for conservation, this proposal protects & enhances habitats crucial to the resilience of game, fish & wildlife species. The project includes areas that score highly in the DNR’s Strategic Land Asset Management matrix, indicating an elevated need for habitat protection. The permanent protection of forest land will contribute to the protection of habitat by expanding protected core areas & corridors of forested habitat directly benefiting the SGCN in the project areas & maintaining essential migratory habitat for species dependent on intact high biodiversity.

**Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?**

**Forest / Prairie Transition**

- Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

**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:**

This project will permanently protect 12,000 acres of forest and riparian habitat including wetlands, streams, shoreland, small lakes and ponds with permanent working forest conservation easements. All parcels in this proposal are at high risk of forest habitat fragmentation and conversion to non-forest uses. Forest protection activities will be assessed, management planning required and documented, and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried and tracked and wildlife populations will be monitored. All land protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through set guidelines for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented for more than 15 years through the MN Forests for the Future Program and the MN Forest Legacy Program. Easement stewardship incorporates annual landowner meetings, annual on-site monitoring of all properties, records management, responding to landowner inquiries, tracking ownership changes and addressing and resolving easement violations. Landowners of land in conservation easement are required to obtain, follow and regularly update a certified Woodland Stewardship Plan.

**Outcomes**

**Programs in forest-prairie transition region:**

- Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *This project will permanently protect 1,270 acres of forest-prairie transition habitat through acquisition of conservation easements of forest and riparian areas including many wetlands, shallow lakes, ponds, shoreline and other types of riparian areas. This proposal will protect land which provides biologically diverse wildlife habitat for desirable game species and endangered, threatened, special concern species and SGCN; providing multiple conservation benefits to help mitigate the effects of climate change, invasive species and other major stressors. Forest Protection activities will be assessed, management planning required and documented and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried. Wildlife populations will be monitored.*

**Programs in the northern forest region:**

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *This project will permanently protect 10,730 acres of northern forest and riparian areas including wetlands, streams, shoreland, small lakes and ponds. All northern forest parcels included in this proposal are at high risk of conversion and fragmentation. Forest protection activities will be assessed, management planning required/documented and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried; wildlife populations will be monitored.*

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

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

All land protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through set guidelines for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented for more than 15 years through

the MN Forests for the Future Program and the MN Forest Legacy Program. Easement monitoring is conducted annually and stewardship is on-going; according to Department and Division policies and guidelines. Stewardship and conservation easement enforcement is discussed bi-monthly at DNR inter-divisional stewardship team and enforcement panel meetings. Land in conservation easement is required to be covered by a DNR-certified Woodland Stewardship Plan and updated at least every 10 years. Funding for easement stewardship is included in this proposal.

**Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes**

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

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

This project will benefit all communities throughout the entire state of Minnesota by permanently protecting ecosystem services that provide clean drinking water, productive habitat, clean air, climate change mitigation, sedimentation/erosion control, and public recreational opportunities. Specific project scoring and implementation efforts benefit BIPOC and diverse communities through recreational opportunities that are close-to-home, culturally responsive and accessible to Minnesotans of all abilities.

The Environmental Protection Agency has developed an environmental justice mapping and screening tool. This tool indicates several of the proposed parcels fall within areas identified as environmental justice areas of concern. Demographic indicators used are: percent low-income, percent people of color, less than high school education, linguistic isolation, age under 5 and over 64. Protecting these lands mitigates some of the environmental justice concerns for at-risk populations. The DNR has diversity, equity and inclusion strategies that benefit all Outdoor Heritage Fund projects including: public engagement that seeks out BIPOC voices and involves diverse communities, outreach and marketing of projects has this focus as well; and partnerships are at the center of all projects.

**Activity Details**

**Requirements**

**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:**

Some of the parcels will be open to the public for recreational use.

**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 to aid in forest management and habitat management practices. These roads will be maintained to provide ongoing access for forestry, fisheries and wildlife management activities on the properties.

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

Yes

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

Maintenance of forest access roads and trails will be the responsibility of the landowner (private landowners). Monitoring of roads and trails will be conducted as part of the annual easement monitoring of the eased properties. The DNR has a monitoring and reporting plan in place that involves the Divisions of Forestry, Parks and Trails and Enforcement. This includes annual spring (and other wet season) closures, reporting issues and enforcement actions when necessary.

**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, if any restoration or enhancement work is done, it will be done by the landowners.

**Other OHF Appropriation Awards**

**Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?**

Yes

**Are any of these past appropriations still OPEN?**

Yes

Approp Year	Funding Amount Received	Amount Spent to Date	Funding Remaining	% Spent to Date
2022	\$2,501,000	\$1,157,200	\$1,343,800	46.27%
2021	\$2,971,000	\$2,966,000	\$5,000	99.83%
2019	\$4,573,000	\$3,660,130	\$912,870	80.04%
Totals	\$10,045,000	\$7,783,330	\$2,261,670	77.48%

**Timeline**

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Acquire working forest conservation easements	December 31, 2027
Develop conservation easement monitoring plans, forest stewardship plans, dedicate easement stewardship	December 31, 2027

**Budget**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$75,000	\$25,000	USFS	\$100,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$12,900,000	\$2,000,000	variety of private/public sources	\$14,900,000
Easement Stewardship	\$400,000	-	-	\$400,000
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$600,000	-	-	\$600,000
Direct Support Services	\$12,700	-	-	\$12,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$13,988,700</b>	<b>\$2,025,000</b>	-	<b>\$16,013,700</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Forest Legacy Coordinator	0.25	4.0	\$75,000	\$25,000	USFS	\$100,000

**Amount of Request:** \$13,988,700

**Amount of Leverage:** \$2,025,000

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 14.48%

**DSS + Personnel:** \$87,700

**As a % of the total request:** 0.63%

**Easement Stewardship:** \$400,000

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 3.1%

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$2,025,000	\$2,025,000	100.0%	-	0.0%

**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**

Leverage is from a variety of public and private sources provided over the life of the program including USFS administrative grant funds and RIM Critical Habitat Match credits generated by previous private donations to the program.

**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?**

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

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

DSS expenses would be proportionately reduced; personnel expenses are already very low and would not be adjusted.

### **If the project received 30% of the requested funding**

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

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

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

DSS expenses would be proportionately reduced; personnel expenses would be reduced.

### **Personnel**

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

Yes

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

There has been a past gap and reduction in staff and so there is no overlap. Time codes specific to appropriations and projects are utilized in order to track staff time for each project and appropriation.

### **Professional Services**

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

- Appraisals
- Other : closing costs, recording fees
- Surveys
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

### **Easement Stewardship**

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**

There are nineteen conservation easements anticipated. The DNR easement stewardship calculator is used to estimate stewardship costs with a range of \$20,000 to \$25,000 per easement.

### **Direct Support Services**

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

DNR Direct and Necessary Cost Calculator (additive)

**Federal Funds**

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

Yes

**Are the funds confirmed?**

Yes

- Cash : \$25,000

**Is Confirmation Document attached?**

[Yes](#)

**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	-	0	12,000	-	12,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,000</b>

**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	-	-	\$13,988,700	-	\$13,988,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$13,988,700</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$13,988,700</b>

**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	1,270	0	0	10,730	12,000
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,270</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,730</b>	<b>12,000</b>

**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	-	\$2,174,000	-	-	\$11,814,700	\$13,988,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$2,174,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$11,814,700</b>	<b>\$13,988,700</b>

**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	-	-	\$1,165	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

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

<b>Type</b>	<b>Metro/Urban</b>	<b>Forest/Prairie</b>	<b>SE Forest</b>	<b>Prairie</b>	<b>N. Forest</b>
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	\$1,711	-	-	\$1,101
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles**

Parcels

**Sign-up Criteria?**

No

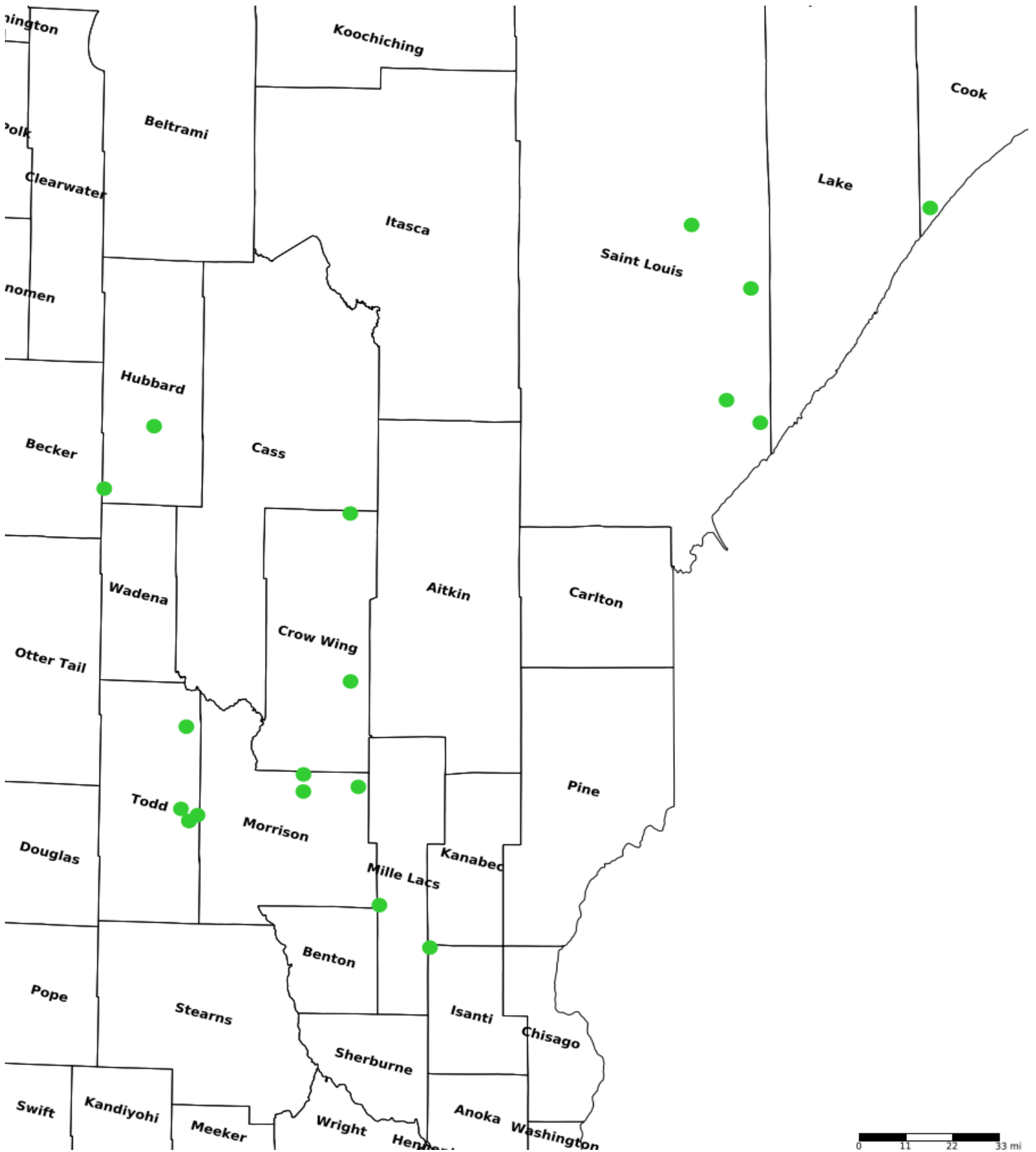
**Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**

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

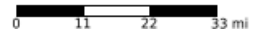
**Protect Parcels**

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
RWF - Lake/Cook	Cook	05805204	2,360	-	No
Clearwater Forest Camp 2	Crow Wing	04528217	167	-	No
Pike	Crow Wing	13826201	80	-	No
Miller	Hubbard	14133230	291	-	No
Weber	Hubbard	13935219	150	-	No
Anderson	Isanti	03725206	60	-	No
Roehl	Mille Lacs	03927231	155	-	No
Envision	Morrison	04230221	1,320	-	No
Richardson	Morrison	04228215	1,700	-	No
Eagle Ranch	Morrison	04230204	1,640	-	No
Hodnick	St. Louis	05815213	1,155	-	No
Brimson	St. Louis	05612208	200	-	No
Clover Valley 2	St. Louis	05212203	82	-	No
RWF - Alden Lake	St. Louis	05313217	1,600	-	No
Little Elk 5 - Lake Beauty	Todd	13032234	420	-	No
Wochnick	Todd	13232209	480	-	No
Little Elk Forest 3	Todd	13032234	90	-	No
Little Elk 6 - Parent	Todd	13032225	120	-	No
Little Elk Forest 4	Todd	13032220	700	-	No

### Parcel Map



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



# MN FORESTS FOR THE FUTURE



## Funding Request:

\$13,988,700

## Proposed Protection:

12,000 acres high conservation value working forest conservation easements in northern and central MN (19 parcels)

## Impact:

Strategically focused to build on existing protection, address private in-holdings and address regional conservation/management goals:

- \* 6 of 19 parcels >1,000 ac
- \* 5 of 19 adjacent to conservation easements purchased within last 5 years
- \* Nearly all remaining parcels adjacent to public land
- \* Public access protected in perpetuity >5,000 ac

## Program

### Accomplishments:

- 365,000+ acres in easement
- 9,000+ acres fee land acquired

**Minnesota Forests for the Future** is a voluntary conservation easement program administered by the DNR Division of Forestry focused on protecting and conserving high conservation value private forest habitat lands from conversion and fragmentation throughout Minnesota, achieving multiple benefits including:

- Conserving critical habitat;
- Building climate resilience, sequestering carbon, mitigating climate change;
- Protecting forests essential for high water quality & quantity ;
- Reducing nutrient and sediment to lakes and streams;
- Ensuring continued public access; and
- Sustaining forested landscape critical for recreation, tourism & timber economies.

**Threats:** Minnesota experiences one of the highest forest conversion rates in the U.S. Forty-four percent (or 7.5 million acres) are at risk of fragmentation or conversion to non-forest uses. Forest land is converted to other uses at a rate of 3,600 acres per year (*OHF: 25 Year Framework*). The highest conversion rates in the state occur in the north central area. The MN Forest Resources Council identifies parcelization as “the single most important policy issue affecting the economic and ecological health of the state’s forests”.

**Public Benefits:** Lands enrolled in the program protect critical habitat for wildlife and rare species, protect watershed health including drinking water and sustaining fisheries, ensure continued public access, mitigate climate change and increase climate resiliency, and protect forested land critical for local economies including tourism, timber and outdoor recreation.





St. Louis County Easement



Itasca County Easement

**How it Works:** Strategic high conservation value forest lands are identified using science-based targeting methods to expand existing forest habitat complexes, reduce fragmentation and protect areas identified in conservation plans and initiatives. DNR’s GIS-based Strategic Land Asset Management metrics are used by an inter-disciplinary team of experts to prioritize and select all acquisitions, including conservation easements. Private in-holdings and land adjacent to publicly owned land are prioritized leveraging larger blocks of protected forest habitat, providing more protection against fragmentation, and multiplying the effects of climate resilience. Lands protected by these conservation easements stay in private ownership and landowners continue to pay property taxes. Lands can be used and managed but forest conversion to industrial, commercial or residential uses or development/subdivision is prohibited. Landowners work with DNR to establish a Forest Stewardship Plan and keep it updated; conservation easement stewardship is ongoing including annual landowner meetings and on-site monitoring.

**Matching Investments:**

DNR’s MN Forests for the Future pairs funding from the **federal Forest Legacy Program** to leverage State investments that advance working forest land protection.

**Non-profit organizations** have helped leverage funds in key geographies by matching State investments.

Multiple external partners provide support with landowner outreach and partnership coordination including **NGOs, County SWCDs, BWSR staff and citizen groups.**

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