



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program

ML 2025 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/03/2024

Proposal Title: Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program

Funds Requested: \$10,955,000

Confirmed Leverage Funds: -

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Brad Gordon

Title: Associate Conservation Director

Organization: Great River Greening

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Location Information

County Location(s): Nicollet, Redwood, Brown and Le Sueur.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban
- Prairie

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Prairie

Narrative**Abstract**

Funding for conservation in the Minnesota River watershed has been applied unevenly to date, with some priorities receiving significant funding resulting in enormous conservation outcomes; others far less. The Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program brings a holistic approach to conservation action within the watershed, targeting resources/actions where they are needed most – priorities insufficiently funded. Great River Greening and Minnesota Land Trust will target action within priority areas identified in Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Network, emphasizing Species in Greatest Conservation Need, protecting 910 acres through conservation easements and in fee, and restoring/enhancing 1,007 acres of priority habitat.

Design and Scope of Work

The Minnesota River watershed covers 20% of the state’s land area, stretching from the South Dakota and Iowa borders to the Twin Cities Metro area. Historically, the watershed traversed a great variety of ecosystems ranging from prairies and prairie pothole regions of western and southern portions to Big Woods and oak savanna in the east. Scattered throughout these major systems were over three million acres of wetlands and lakes.

That historic natural landscape is greatly diminished. While prairie once covered one-third of Minnesota, only 1% remains. Over 90% of wetlands have been drained, 80-85% of the historic Big Woods are lost, and rock outcrops in the region were targeted for mineral extraction. This loss of habitat has had profound impacts on Minnesota’s native species. More than 140 Species in Greatest Conservation Need are known or expected to occur within the watershed.

Protecting these habitats, improving the condition of what remains, and rebuilding connectivity between remnants is key for ensuring the long-term viability of these systems and Minnesota’s SGCN. This is the goal of our program.

To date, significant investment through the Outdoor Heritage Fund has been delivered to portions of the Minnesota River watershed. The Metro Big Rivers partnership has achieved significant outcomes in the lower reaches of the Minnesota River near the Twin Cities. A variety of funded programs – led by Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Land Trust and others – have been successful in delivering conservation in the western portions of the watershed. Program partners Great River Greening (GRG) and Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) will bring their respective expertise to bear in elevating conservation impact across the watershed, but focusing primarily in the central portion of the watershed where conservation investment through the Outdoor Heritage Fund (and other sources) has been minor relative to upstream and downstream areas, and overall insufficient relative to the need.

Greening will work with the DNR, counties, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to undertake targeted habitat improvement projects on existing protected lands. Greening was approached by state and county land managers to address the greatest present threats to protected lands within the watershed - cedar and invasives encroachment and a lack of diversity to support SGCN. Greening will restore 148 acres and enhance 859 acres on 11 state Wildlife Management Areas, 2 county parks, and 3

permanent conservation easements in Le Sueur, Brown, Redwood, and Nicollet counties.

The Land Trust will protect 880 acres of wetlands, rock outcrops, riparian forest, prairies, prairie streams and associated upland habitat through conservation easements, and 30 acres through fee acquisition. Using MLT's uniquely flexible conservation easement, priority parcels within Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Network or that build off prior conservation investments. The Land Trust will use its market-based approach to conservation easements that incentivizes landowner contributions of easement value as leverage to funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

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

The Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program directly benefits SGCN and other important game and non-game species by minimizing the potential threats to their habitat caused by agricultural practices, residential or commercial development, mining, and other land management activities. Habitat complexes targeted through this proposal will include prairies, wetlands, woodlands, and rock outcrops. Priority projects will include high- or outstanding-quality habitat as identified in Minnesota Biological Survey data or otherwise located within priority areas of Minnesota's Wildlife Action Network. We will seek to build off prior conservation investments, prioritizing projects located near other protected lands to create larger habitat complexes to the benefit of SGCN.

The vast majority of this landscape is in private ownership. For that reason, working with private landowners on land protection strategies is key to successful conservation in this region. We will work closely with conservation partners in the region to identify those habitat complexes where private land protection can make a significant contribution to existing conservation investments.

We will work to improve lower-quality habitats on state, county, and permanent easement parcels to the benefit of SGCN. Some examples:

- While protected, some public lands are in need of cedar or buckthorn control, and lack the diversity of vegetation needed for SGCNs, including skipper butterflies, grasshopper and Henslow's sparrow, western meadowlarks, and more.
- Reintroductions of regal fritillary are underway on state lands, but the supporting vegetation must be reestablished for these efforts to succeed. Great River Greening will plant 8,000 prairie violets on an 89-acre Wildlife Management Area (WMA) along with tree removal and prairie plantings on adjacent permanent easements in preparation for reintroduction by the DNR.
- Near the Lower Minnesota River Valley Conservation Focus Area, two county parcels and a wildlife management area will receive buckthorn removal and understory enhancement of big woods habitat. These restoration efforts will aid a Kentucky coffee tree stand struggling with natural regeneration while providing enhanced habitat for species like the Acadian flycatcher, cerulean warbler, hooded warbler, prothonotary warbler, wood thrush, Blanchard's cricket frog, and others.

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

Land prices have skyrocketed in recent years, and along with that an increasing demand for agricultural land, mineral deposits, and housing sites. With natural habitat within the Minnesota River watershed already minimized through historic land uses, these demands are placing an inordinate pressure on those that remain. It is more important than ever to protect what remains of the prairies, wetlands, savannas, and forests in the Minnesota River watershed. A short window of opportunity exists to permanently protect previously unavailable parcels as current land ownership is transitioning from one generation to the next.

Insufficient financial investment into some priority areas for restoration and enhancement is also having an

impact. Cedar coverage is increasing by 200-300% in just ten years on many rock outcrops and prairies with costs to remove them correlating with the coverage; their expansion continues to reduce habitat quality for SGCNs.

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

This program is focused on procuring conservation easements and restoring prairie, woodland, rock outcrop, and wetland habitats within priority complexes of habitat as guided by Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Plan and Prairie Plan.

The Land Trust's protection work will build upon past conservation investments in the program area, expand the footprint of existing protected areas (WMAs, WPAs, etc.), facilitate the protection of habitat corridors, and reduce the potential for fragmentation of existing habitats by providing landowners with alternatives to land uses that degrade or destroy habitat. Specific parcels available for easement acquisition are evaluated relative to each other, with priorities given to those that are adjacent or in close proximity to existing protected lands (among other factors).

Many of the remaining native prairies, forests, and wetlands of the watershed where GRG will perform restoration and enhancement activities are concentrated around unique landforms and steep slopes in the river valleys such as on rock outcrops and ridges making these habitats priority protection and enhancement areas within an existing corridor. Fragmentation created by invasive and woody species like reed canary grass and red cedar further leads to an urgent need for enhancement and natural disturbance management to restore those corridors. Great River Greening also utilizes the Wildlife Action Network and Minnesota County Biological Survey data and proximity to known populations of SGCN to identify priorities for enhancement and restoration work. Within the watershed are 6 of the 36 Conservation Focus Areas identified by Minnesota's Wildlife Action Network in Minnesota, and 6 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) identified by Audubon. Activities on the prioritized sites will improve and expand high-value habitat.

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

- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan
- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

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.

We work in climate-resilient areas, prioritize lands that increase connectivity and build habitat complexes, and select vegetation for plantings taking into account current climate adaptation models. This approach provides the best opportunities to reverse the decline in biodiversity caused by habitat loss and degradation, maintain biodiversity over the long-term, and provide high-quality natural areas that support the ability of wildlife to move and adapt to stressors, including those accelerated by a changing climate.

On applicable tree removal sites, GRG will utilize biochar kilns to dispose of woody material. These kilns store 50% of carbon for centuries on the site rather than releasing that carbon. Following the removal of woody material, GRG will ensure the ground is covered with diverse native communities adapted to the local climate based on current and emerging climate models.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Metro / Urban

- Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna

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 program will protect, restore, and enhance high-quality habitat and corridors that will improve resiliency and prevent degradation of prairies, forests, and wetlands throughout the watershed.

Restoration and enhancement activities will improve the experience of those who hunt, fish, or hike through these natural spaces. The program is built on partnerships with county, state, and federal agencies that will continue beyond this phase of work. Greening is committed to seeing these habitats maintained in the future through consultations, matching funds, and education. Volunteers will be invited to participate in some of the activities and be part of the conservation legacy while learning how to perform similar activities on their own lands. On easements, partners will work with landowners to share resources and best practices for maintaining high-quality habitat.

The Land Trust will focus its protection work on key wetland, prairie, riparian forest, granite outcrops and other habitats within the program area, guided by the Minnesota Prairie Plan and State Wildlife Action Plan. High-quality lands will be protected through acquisition of perpetual conservation easements. We work in partnership with local, state and federal agency and non-profit conservation partners to ensure our activities are complementary across the program area. By doing this, we are building complexes of high-quality protected habitat, reducing fragmentation concerns, and providing connectivity between core habitat areas that will stand the test of time and enable species to move freely.

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *Success will be determined based on the acreage of lands protected, restored, and enhanced.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *Parcels are prioritized relative to their benefit to SGCN (among other factors). Success will be determined based on the acreage of lands protected, restored, and enhanced.*

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 is not supplanting or substituting for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

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

Land protected through MLT conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget.

In addition, MLT will assist landowners in the development of comprehensive habitat management plans to help ensure that the land will be managed for its wildlife and water quality benefits. MLT (as easement holder) will work with landowners on an ongoing basis to provide habitat restoration plans, resources and technical expertise to undertake restoration, enhancement and ongoing management of these properties.

For Restoration and Enhancement (R/E) on protected land, site-specific resource management plans will be developed/adopted to guide effective long-term management. All land managers benefitting from R/E must commit to the long-term maintenance of these sites. A principal goal for each site is to elevate its ecological condition so that on-going management is financially feasible after a grant closes. For the sites and programs that use volunteers, community volunteer engagement promotes an increase in community stakeholders.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026	GRG-OHF	Perform site evaluation and assessment in collaboration with DNR	Develop R/E plan for property. Begin monitoring	Initiate site preparation from R/E work. Continue monitoring
2027	GRG - OHF	Initiate R/E work	Continue R/E depending on appropriate methods and time of year	Continue R/E and begin stewardship as needed using appropriate methods and dependent on time of year
2028	GRG - OHF	Continue R/E and begin stewardship. Target actions to maintain habitat.	Restorative action to correct damage as needed	Evaluate progress and determine if additional actions are needed
2030 and in perpetuity	MLT Long-Term Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-

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

Protecting, restoring, and enhancing diverse and resilient habitat benefits all Minnesotans. It keeps our air and water cleaner, mitigates the impacts of climate change, and conserves the biological diversity that belongs to everyone. Public land provides an opportunity for recreation and health to those who do not have access to private natural lands, whether that be for hunting, fishing, hiking, or other outdoor pursuits.

Great River Greening involves, engages, and seeks to benefit diverse communities through focused events that leverage Outdoor Heritage Funds in their programs. Our partners actively encourage residents who live near habitat restoration sites and create programs specifically for people from diverse backgrounds opening up opportunities such as GRG's Engaging a Diverse Population Program.

One of the MLT's core public values is a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have been engaged in a multi-year-long process to assess how the conservation community—and the Minnesota Land Trust in particular—can better address these issues. To date, we have demonstrated this commitment, when possible, given the funding parameters and our unique role in working with private landowners, including numerous projects to protect the camps and nature centers that serve a diversity of Minnesota youth and a long-term partnership with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa on wild rice restoration. Recently, we responded to a request from the Yankton Sioux Tribe and the National Park Service to assist with providing increased protection to Pipestone National Monument, and its unparalleled natural and sacred features. We will explore and seek opportunities

Going forward, GRG and MLT intend to build on this engagement using diversity, equity, and inclusion as a lens to seek out new partnerships, listening to those partners, and collaborating on actions that advance the goals of conserving the best of Minnesota's remaining habitats. We are eager to expand this important work in a way that more directly, and authentically, engages diverse communities and partners in an equitable and just manner.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

No

Describe any measures to inform local governments of land acquisition under their jurisdiction:

We will follow the county/township board notification processes as directed by current statutory language.

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

Yes

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

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- WMA
- Permanently Protected Conservation Easements
- County/Municipal

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?

Yes

Explain what will be planted and include the maximum percentage of any acquired parcel that would be planted into foodplots by the proposer or the end owner of the property:

The purpose of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easements is to protect and restore/enhance existing high quality natural habitat and to preserve opportunities for future restoration. We restrict agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases where there are agricultural lands associated with the larger property, we will either exclude the agricultural area from the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may target agricultural lands for restoration purposes. In these limited cases, crops may be planted to prepare for restoration activities.

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:

No variation from state regulations.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- County

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA
- AMA
- County Forest

Will the eased land be open for public use?

No

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

Yes

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

Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads, and trails located on them. Often, the conservation easement permits the continued usage of established trails and roads so long as their use does not significantly impact the conservation values of the property. Creation of new roads/trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

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

Yes

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

Existing trails and roads are identified in the project baseline report and will be monitored annually as part of the MLT's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails in accordance with the terms of the easement will be the responsibility of the landowner.

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:

The Land Trust will assess the R/E needs of each parcel protected through this appropriation. Should R/E needs exist, funding for those projects will be built into a forthcoming proposal.

Other OHF Appropriation Awards

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Finalize restoration and enhancement plans	June 30, 2026
Conservation easements completed	June 30, 2029
Restoration and enhancement completed	June 30, 2030

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$1,075,000	-	-	\$1,075,000
Contracts	\$3,907,000	-	-	\$3,907,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
Easement Acquisition	\$4,000,000	\$400,000	Landowners	\$4,400,000
Easement Stewardship	\$364,000	-	-	\$364,000
Travel	\$101,000	-	-	\$101,000
Professional Services	\$371,000	-	-	\$371,000
Direct Support Services	\$231,000	\$357,000	-, Private	\$588,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Supplies/Materials	\$581,000	-	-	\$581,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$10,955,000	\$757,000	-	\$11,712,000

Partner: Minnesota Land Trust

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
Contracts	\$104,000	-	-	\$104,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000
Easement Acquisition	\$4,000,000	\$400,000	Landowners	\$4,400,000
Easement Stewardship	\$364,000	-	-	\$364,000
Travel	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000
Professional Services	\$371,000	-	-	\$371,000
Direct Support Services	\$81,000	-	-	\$81,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$3,000	-	-	\$3,000
Supplies/Materials	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$5,544,000	\$400,000	-	\$5,944,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Protection Staff	0.75	4.0	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000

Partner: Great River Greening

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$775,000	-	-	\$775,000
Contracts	\$3,803,000	-	-	\$3,803,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$81,000	-	-	\$81,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$150,000	\$357,000	Private	\$507,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$22,000	-	-	\$22,000
Supplies/Materials	\$580,000	-	-	\$580,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$5,411,000	\$357,000	-	\$5,768,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
GRG Personnel	1.48	5.0	\$775,000	-	-	\$775,000

Amount of Request: \$10,955,000

Amount of Leverage: \$757,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 6.91%

DSS + Personnel: \$1,306,000

As a % of the total request: 11.92%

Easement Stewardship: \$364,000

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 9.1%

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$757,000	-	0.0%	\$757,000	100.0%

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

The Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements to the program. The leverage amount is a conservative estimate of value we expect to see donated by landowners. Great River Greening leverage is not yet confirmed but is projected and will be sourced privately.

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?

Acres scaling will be reduced moderately greater than proportional due to fixed costs and other factors.

Activities will be curtailed, but greater than proportional, as some activities are fixed and necessary for program success.

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled, but moderately less than proportional. Some costs are fixed (landowner recruitment; grant management) and must occur regardless of grant amount. Projects can fail midstream after investment of time. Donation of easement value (high in this program) can inflate the number of projects pursued/completed.

If the project received 30% of the requested funding

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

Acre scaling will be moderately greater than proportional due to fixed costs and other factors. Activities will be curtailed, but greater than proportional, as some activities are fixed and necessary for program success.

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

Personnel and DSS will be scaled, but moderately less than proportional. Some costs are fixed (landowner recruitment; grant management) and must occur regardless of grant amount. Projects can fail midstream after investment of time. Donation of easement value (high in this program) can inflate the number of projects pursued/completed.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

GRG - Restoration / enhancement contracts with service providers.
MLT - Habitat management plan preparation, landowner outreach.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

- Appraisals
- Other : Phase 1 Environmental Assessments, Mapping, Mineral Reports, etc.
- Surveys
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

Up to 1 transaction.

Easement Stewardship

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

Minnesota Land Trust's budget is based on the closing of 8-13 conservation easements, depending on project cost and size. The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$28,000, although under extraordinary circumstances additional funds may be warranted. This figure is derived from MLT's detailed stewardship funding "cost analysis" which is consistent with Land Trust Accreditation standards. MLT shares periodic updates to this cost analysis with LSOHC staff.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?

Yes

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging

Land Trust and Greening staff regularly rent vehicles for grant-related purposes, which can be a significant cost savings over use of personal vehicles.

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?

GRG - DSS rate has been approved by the DNR in September 2019, GRG's DSS rate includes the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. A portion, not exceeding 50%, of these costs are requested from the grant and the balance is contributed as leverage.

MLT - In a process approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, MLT's DSS rate includes the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. This is similar to the MLT's proposed federal indirect rate. MLT will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?

Hand tools, saws, brush cutters, GPS devices, safety gear and other necessary equipment to complete restoration and enhancement activities.

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	136	12	0	148
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	30	30
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	880	880
Enhance	0	682	177	0	859
Total	0	818	189	910	1,917

How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	12
Total	12

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	\$653,000	\$63,000	-	\$716,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$300,000	\$300,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$5,244,000	\$5,244,000
Enhance	-	\$3,244,000	\$1,451,000	-	\$4,695,000
Total	-	\$3,897,000	\$1,514,000	\$5,544,000	\$10,955,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	148	0	148
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	30	0	30
Protect in Easement	200	0	0	680	0	880
Enhance	0	0	0	859	0	859
Total	200	0	0	1,717	0	1,917

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$716,000	-	\$716,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$300,000	-	\$300,000
Protect in Easement	\$1,244,000	-	-	\$4,000,000	-	\$5,244,000
Enhance	-	-	-	\$4,695,000	-	\$4,695,000
Total	\$1,244,000	-	-	\$9,711,000	-	\$10,955,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	\$4,801	\$5,250	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$10,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	\$5,959
Enhance	-	\$4,756	\$8,197	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$4,837	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$10,000	-
Protect in Easement	\$6,220	-	-	\$5,882	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$5,465	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

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

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

Great River Greening works with land owning entities (public and protected private) and interested stakeholders to identify parcels where there is a need for restoration or enhancement of lands and water resources. Parcels are selected using the following criteria: permanently protected status (WMA, AMA, SNA, Forestry, County Conservation, etc.), ecological and habitat value and potential (biodiversity, SGCN, size, and location), congruence with existing plans and priority areas, willing and committed landowners (demonstrated through leveraged match), and leveraging opportunities. The following table includes state WMA, county, and easement parcels.

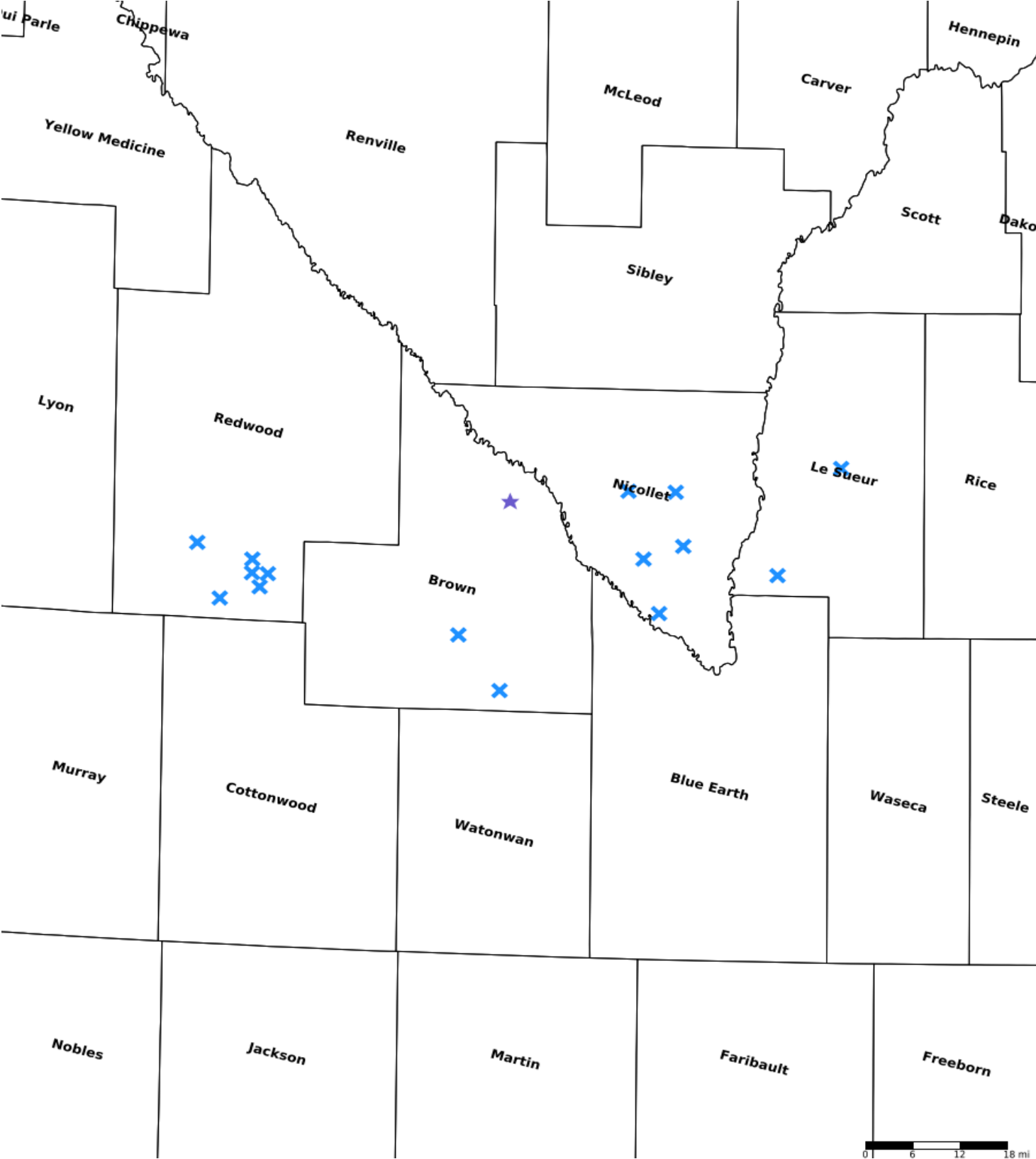
The Land Trust uses a competitive, market-based approach through an RFP process to identify interested landowners and prioritize parcels for conservation easement acquisition. All proposals submitted by landowners are evaluated and ranked relative to their ecological significance based on three primary factors: 1) size of habitat on the parcel; 2) condition of habitat on the parcel; and 3) the context (both in terms of amount/quality of remaining habitat and protected areas) within which the parcel lies. We also ask the landowner to consider contributing all or a portion of fair market value to enable our funds to make a larger conservation impact (see attached sign-up criteria).

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Southeast Hanska WMA	Brown	10831230	65	\$368,000	Yes	Cedar, Siberian elm, and other woody species removal on 61 acres of prairie; buckthorn removal and control in 4 acres of forest
Rosenau-Lambrecht WMA	Brown	11031217	34	\$84,000	Yes	34 acres of prairie restoration
William A Groebner WMA	Brown	10832205	73	\$386,000	Yes	Buckthorn removal in 9 acres of forest; tree and woody removal across 64 acres of prairie
Bradshaw Woods	Le Sueur	11124232	24	\$265,000	Yes	Buckthorn removal and control in 24 acres of forest
Lake Washington Regional Park	Le Sueur	10926212	77	\$592,000	Yes	77 acres of buckthorn clearing and control and enhancement of native communities
Swan Lake WMA - North Star	Nicollet	10928228	182	\$1,077,000	Yes	Tree, shrub, and invasives removal across 182 acres of forest/oak savanna including cedar and Siberian elm removal, a small prescribed hillside burn, and reseeding; Hillside clearing and burn

Swan Lake WMA - Nicollet Bay	Nicollet	10928206	23	\$149,000	Yes	14 acres of prairie restoration; enhancement of 9 acres of forest/savanna through invasives removal and shrub plantings
Swan Lake WMA - Peterson Lake	Nicollet	11029211	27	\$215,000	Yes	27 acres of tree thinning, invasives removal and oak release in forest/oak savanna
Swan Lake WMA - Little Lake	Nicollet	11028236	8	\$78,000	Yes	Prairie restoration on 8 acres
Swan Lake WMA - Duck Lake N	Nicollet	11028211	29	\$153,000	Yes	Restore 12 acres of prairie through tree removal and seeding; plant shrubs and clear undesirable woody vegetation on 17 acres of oak savanna
Lamberton WMA	Redwood	10937213	137	\$474,000	Yes	Planting 8,000 prairie violets and other diversity enhancement to prepare for regal fritillary on 89 acres; scattered tree removal and prairie seeding on 48 acres
Gora Prairie WMA	Redwood	10937229	48	\$288,000	Yes	Siberian elm and other woody species removal on 48 acres of prairie
Thram	Redwood	10936217	17	\$130,000	Yes	Prairie restoration and diversity improvement on 17 acres of CREP easement in preparation for regal fritillary reintroduction on nearby Lamberton WMA
Riley	Redwood	10937212	77	\$361,000	Yes	Prairie restoration and diversity improvement on 77 acres of CREP easement in preparation for regal fritillary reintroduction on nearby Lamberton WMA
Batzlaff	Redwood	10936219	142	\$560,000	Yes	Tree removal and diversity improvement (including prairie violet) on 142 acres of RIM/WRP easement in preparation for regal fritillary reintroduction on nearby Lamberton WMA
Two Rivers WMA	Redwood	10938202	44	\$231,000	Yes	Scattered tree removal of 44 acres of prairie

Parcel Map



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

Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program

Phase 1



The 14,800 square mile Minnesota River watershed was once covered by prairies, Big Woods forest, oak savanna, three million acres of wetlands and lakes, and the unique ecosystem associated with the ancient rock outcrops in the Minnesota River valley. Only a small portion remains of that historic natural landscape. This loss of habitat has had profound impacts on the more than 140 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that are known or expected to occur within the watershed. Improving the condition of what remains, and rebuilding connectivity between remnants with permanent protection is key for ensuring the long-term viability of these systems and SGCN.

How Does the Program Support State Goals?

This program is focused on restoring, enhancing, and protecting priority habitats within the Minnesota River Watershed as guided by the State Wildlife Action Plan and the Minnesota Biological Survey. The program serves to build upon past conservation investments in the program area

Request \$10,955,000

Leverage \$757,000

Acres protected 910

Conservation easements 880

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability 30

Acres restored 1,007

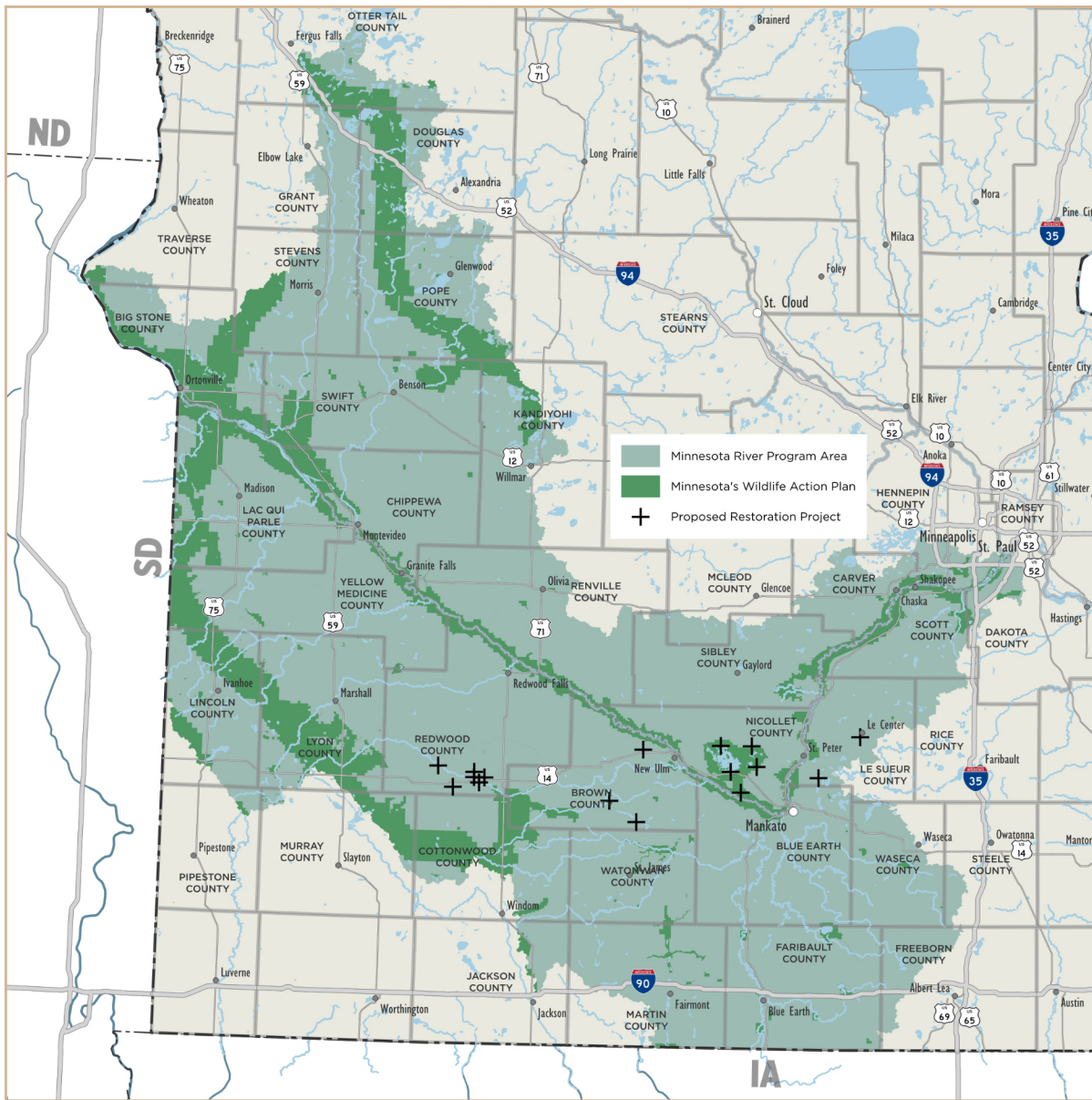
For more information:

Brad Gordon, PhD
Associate Conservation Director
Great River Greening

bgordon@greatrivergreening.org
(765) 667-3999

What Are the Outcomes?

- Protect rock outcrops through permanent easements.
- Plant 8,000 prairie violets to prepare for regal fritillary introduction.
- Land protection, restoration, and enhancement to directly benefit Species in Greatest Conservation Need.



GREAT RIVER GREENING

For over 25 years, GRG has worked to restore land and water resources throughout Minnesota. With the help of local volunteers, GRG has restored degraded forests and prairies and improved outdoor recreation experiences, our economy, and our drinking water.



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

Mission

The Minnesota Land Trust protects and restores Minnesota's most vital natural lands in order to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences, and scenic beauty for generations to come.

Great River Greening and Minnesota Land Trust will bring their respective expertise to bear in elevating conservation impact across the Minnesota River watershed, but focusing primarily on the central portion of the watershed where conservation investment has been insufficient relative to the need.

Great River Greening will undertake targeted habitat improvement projects on existing protected lands, and the Minnesota Land Trust will seek proposals from landowners for permanent conservation easements within the Wildlife Action Network or that build off prior conservation easements.

The Land Trust will use its market-based approach to conservation easements that incentivizes landowner contributions of easement value as leverage to funding through the Outdoor Heritage Fund.



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

A Decision Support Tool for Prioritizing Conservation Easement Opportunities

The Minnesota Land Trust often employs within its conservation program areas an RFP (Request for Proposals) model to both identify high-quality projects and introduce a level of competition into the easement acquisition process. Below, we briefly discuss how the system works and the framework put in place to sort the varied opportunities that come before us.

How the Ranking System Works

The parcel ranking framework employed through the Minnesota Land Trust's RFP process is intended as a **decision support tool** to aid in identifying, among the slate of landowners submitting bids for conservation easements, the most ecologically significant opportunities for the price. Using this framework, the Land Trust and its partners use an array of weighted data sets tailored to the specific circumstances inherent in a program area to identify those worthy of consideration.

It is important to note that this parcel ranking framework enables the Land Trust to rank projects *relative* to one another. That's important to do, but it's also important to understand how a project (or suite of projects) relates to the ideal situation (i.e., a project that is of exceptional size, condition and superb landscape context). If, for example, an RFP generated 20 proposals in a program area, the framework would effectively sift among them and identify the relatively good from those relatively bad. However, this information alone would not determine whether any of those parcels were of sufficient quality to pursue for protection (all may be of insufficient quality to warrant expenditure of funds). To solve this problem and make sure ranked projects are high priorities for conservation, we step back and evaluate them relative to the ideal - i.e., is each project among the best opportunities for conservation we can expect to find in the program area?

As part of its proposals to LSOHC, the Land Trust included easement sign-up criteria that laid out at a general level the framework utilized by the organization. Below is a more detailed description of the process the Land Trust utilizes in ranking potential parcels relative to one another, and identifying those with which a conservation easement will be pursued. We also include a ranking form illustrating the representative weighting applied to each criteria. These weightings will be refined as we move forward in applying this approach in each program area.

The Framework

We evaluate potential projects based on two primary factors: ecological significance and cost. Both are assessed independent of one another.

Factor 1: Ecological Significance

The Ecological Significance score is determined by looking at 3 subfactors, each weighted equally (as a default). Each of these constitutes 1/3 of the total ecological significance score.

Subfactors:

- **Size or Quantity** – the area of the parcel to be protected (how big is it?), length of shoreline, etc. The bigger the better.
- **Condition or Quality** – the condition of the natural communities and/or target species found on a parcel. The higher quality the better.
- **Landscape Context** – what’s around the parcel, both ecologically and from a protected status standpoint. The more ecologically intact the surrounding landscape the better; the extent to which a parcel builds off of other protected lands to form complexes or corridors, the better.

Note that we have the ability to emphasize one subfactor over another if the specific circumstances warrant it, but we begin with a default standard at the onset. At present, all of our geographies are using the default standard, however because of the amount of hydrological alteration present across southwest Minnesota emphasis on restorable wetlands that provide multiple benefits will be a prominent component of the condition subfactor.

Indicators:

A suite of weighted indicators is used to score each parcel relative to each of the above subfactors. Indicators are selected based on their ability to effectively inform the scoring of parcels relative to each of the respective subfactors. Weightings for each criterion are assessed and vetted to ensure that a set of indicators for each subfactor produces meaningful results, then applied across each of the proposed parcels. Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Data sets used for this purpose must offer wall-to-wall coverage across the program area to ensure that bias for or against parcels does not creep into the equation. Where gaps in such coverages exist, we attempt to fill them in to the extent feasible (via field inventory, etc.). Finally, we vet and make improvements to the scoring matrix when we identify issues or circumstances where results seem erroneous.

Factor 2: Cost

Cost is a second major factor used in our consideration of parcels. Although ecological significance is *the* primary factor in determining the merits of a project, our RFP programs also strive to make the greatest conservation impact with the most efficient use of State funds. As such, we look at the overall cost of each project relative to its ecological significance; we also ask landowners to consider donating all or some of their easement value to the cause and to better position their proposals. Many landowners participate in that fashion.

Cost, as a primary factor, is assessed independently of the ecological factors. Given equal ecological significance, a project of lower cost will be elevated over those of higher cost in the ranking. That said, exceptionally high quality projects are likely to be pursued even if no or modest landowner donation is put forward. Alternatively, there are projects offered as full donations that are not moved forward because their ecological significance is not acceptable. The degree to which cost factors into the ranking of parcels relative to one another is made on a case-by-case basis.

MN RIVER PROTECTION PROGRAM ConservationEasement Selection Worksheet		SITE 1	SITE 2	SITE 3	SITE 4	SITE 5	SITE 6	SITE 7	SITE 8	SITE 9	SITE 10	SITE 11	SITE 12	Notes
COUNTY														
100 Pts	ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE													
Weighting Factor	Size/Abundance of Habitat (33 points)													
	a) Size (33 pts): Acres of Parcel to be Protected by an Easement													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Weighting Factor	Quality of Natural Resources Protected by the Easement (33 points)													
	a) Habitat Quality (28 pts): Quality of Existing Ecological Systems (Terrestrial & Aquatic, as appropriate)													
	b) Imperiled Species (5 pts): Occurrences of Documented Rare Species on Parcel													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Weighting Factor	Landscape Context (34 points)													
	Current Status (30 points)													
	a) Protection Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Protected Lands													
	ii. Amount of Protected Lands within 3 miles of Property													
	: Protected Land within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Protected Land 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	b) Ecological Context (15 points)													
	i. Size of Contiguous Ecological Habitat													
	ii. Amount of Ecological Habitat within 3 miles of Property													
	: Ecological Habitat within 0.5 miles of Property (4 pts)													
	: Ecological Habitat 0.5-3 miles from Property (3 pts)													
	Future Potential (4 points)													
	a) Conservation Plan Context (2 pts)													
	b) Amount of Existing Activity (2 pts)													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	COST													
	i. Bid amount (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	ii. Estimated donative value (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
	TOTAL ACQUISITION COST (\$)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out

MN RIVER PROTECTION PROGRAM

Conservation Easement Selection Worksheet – Scoring and Criteria

Three primary factors when taken together provide a good estimate of long-term viability for biodiversity: 1) **Size** of the occurrence (species population or example of natural community), 2) **Condition** of the occurrence, and 3) its **Landscape context**. This framework is used widely across the world by a large number of conservation organizations and agencies and here in Minnesota by the Minnesota DNR, USFWS, The Nature Conservancy and others. The Minnesota Land Trust has adopted this practice as well.

In this summary document, we provide an overview of the framework used by the Land Trust in assessing and prioritizing land protection opportunities before the organization.

- 1. Habitat Size (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on acres of habitat to be protected through the easement relative to the largest parcels available for protection in the program area. Although size can pertain to species populations, the size of such populations is often constrained by available habitat. In addition, very little information pertaining to the size of species populations on a given property typically exists, making any determination suspect. Habitat size is a valid indicator in these circumstances.

Scoring: Parcels are scored by how they fall relative to twelve size classes of habitat:

0 pt	≤40 acres
3 pts	41-50 acres
6 pts	51-75 acres
9 pts	76-108 acres
12 pts	109-152 acres
15 pts	153-224 acres
18 pts	225-320 acres
21 pts	321-460 acres
27 pts	661-960 acres
30 pts	961-1300 acres
33 pts	>1300 acres

- 2. Quality of Natural Resources (33 points):** Parcels are scored based on the quality or condition of occurrences of ecological communities (habitat) and imperiled species if known. As with Habitat Size above, population data for imperiled species is often minimal on private lands. As such, the condition of score is heavily influenced by the condition of natural communities on a property. However, we do allocate a modest level of points to the presence of imperiled species if they have been documented on a property.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on the condition of focal ecological community targets – both terrestrial and freshwater – and presence of imperiled species on the property, as such:

- a) Habitat Quality (28 points) –** The Minnesota Biological Survey natural community element occurrence ranking framework (for terrestrial systems) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency fish and insect indices of biotic integrity are used to score habitat quality on parcels, as such:

- 0 pts Absence of natural communities; fish/insect IBI = 0-10.
- 4 pts Natural communities averaging D rank; fish/insect IBI = 10-20.
- 8 pts Natural communities averaging CD rank; fish/insect IBI = 20-40.
- 12 pts Natural communities averaging C rank; fish/insect IBI = 50-59.
- 16 pts Natural communities averaging BC rank; fish/insect IBI = 60-69.
- 20 pts Natural communities averaging B rank; fish/insect IBI = 70-79.
- 24 pts Natural communities averaging AB rank; IBI = 80-89.
- 28 pts Natural communities averaging A rank; IBI > 90.

b) Imperiled Species (5 points) – Scoring of the parcel is based on species abundance, as follows:

- 1 pt 1 occurrence
- 3 pts 3

3. Landscape Context (34 points): Parcels are scored based current ecological context of the property and protected lands surrounding it; in addition, points are also allocated based on the likelihood that lands around a parcel will be protected going forward based on the identification of these adjacent lands in respective conservation lands.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based as follows:

a) Protection Context (15 points) – Is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous protected land (if any) and amount of protected land within 3 miles of the property. Here, we look at two subfactors:

i) Amount of protected land (acres) contiguous with the parcel. Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of protected land contiguous to the parcel (8 points), as follows:

- 1 pt ≤40 acres of contiguous protected lands
- 2 pts 41-60 acres
- 3 pts 61-100 acres
- 4 pts 101-160 acres
- 5 pts 161-240 acres
- 6 pts 241-400 acres
- 7 pts 401-640 acres
- 8 pts >640 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby but not contiguous can also play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight protected lands within ½ mile of the parcel higher than those farther removed, and score them separately.

(a) Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt ≤640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

b) Ecological Context (15 points) – As with Protection context, ecological context is calculated based on two subfactors, including size of contiguous ecological habitat (if any) and amount of ecological habitat within 3 miles of the property.

i) Amount of ecological habitat (acres) contiguous with the parcel, providing species with direct access to larger blocks of permanent habitat (8 points). Scoring of the parcel is based on the amount of natural ecological habitat contiguous to the parcel, as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of contiguous habitat
- 2 pts 81-320 acres
- 3 pts 321-640 acres
- 4 pts 641-960 acres
- 5 pts 961-1920 acres
- 6 pts 1921-3840 acres
- 7 pts 3841-7680 acres
- 8 pts >7680 acres

ii) Amount of protected lands within a 3-mile radius of the parcel, whether contiguous or not (7 points). Blocks of habitat nearby, whether contiguous or not play a very significant role in the maintenance of biodiversity over the long term. In this assessment, we weight ecological habitat within ½ mile of the parcel higher than that farther removed, and score them separately.

Amount (acres) of protected land within ½ mile of protected property (4 points) – The amount of protected land within ½ mile of the parcel, scored as follows:

- 1 pt ≤80 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 81-360 acres
- 3 pts 361-640 acres
- 4 pts >640 acres

Amount (acres) of protected land ½-3 miles of the protected property (3 points) –

- 1 pt ≤640 acres of protected land
- 2 pts 641-2560 acres
- 3 pts >2561 acres

c) Future Potential (4 points) – The degree to which the area within which a parcel lies has been identified as a priority for conservation action and the degree to which action is being implemented in that area is a direct indicator of the long-term potential for maintenance of biodiversity associated with a parcel. Lands affiliated with priority areas are more likely to be complemented with additional levels of nearby protected lands than those outside of priority areas. In areas experiencing high levels of development, this factor may carry a significant amount of weight in setting protection priorities.

Scoring: Parcels are scored based on two subfactors: 1) their position relative to priority areas identified in statewide or local planning efforts, and 2) the degree to which action is being implemented within a priority area.

- 0 pts Parcel not within priority area
- 1 pt Parcel within priority area; minimal activity occurring
- 2 pts Parcel within priority area; modest activity occurring
- 3 pts Parcel within priority area; good levels of activity occurring
- 4 pts Parcel within priority area; high levels of activity occurring



Parks Department

Mailing Address (Le Sueur County Government Center):

88 South Park Avenue, Le Center, MN 56057

Office Location (Le Sueur County Highway Department):

515 South Maple Avenue, Le Center, MN 56057

507-357-8201

www.lesueurcounty.gov

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
State Office Building, Room 95
Saint Paul, MN 55155

May 21, 2024

RE: Letter of Support – Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program,

This letter is to serve as our support for Great River Greening, as a member of the Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program, as they seek funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund as created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment for the implementation of habitat restoration, protection, and enhancement of the native ecosystems of Minnesota, in addition to expanding access of those resources to the communities in which they are located.

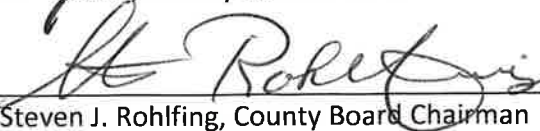
We support this request for assistance on the Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program proposal as it will expand the environmentally conscious opportunities for land management and natural resource preservation. We also support Great River Greening's efforts to demonstrate the conservation and stewardship that everyday individuals can participate in these public projects, as well as gain understanding of practices outlined within the Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan that will continue to maintain the quality of Minnesota's natural areas.

Great River Greening's effort to inspire and lead local communities in restoring and conserving the land and water that enrich our lives will be exemplified through the work outlined in this proposal, and our organization would like to partner with that effort to work on forest enhancement of 29 acres of Le Sueur County Parks Bradshaw Woods and 85 acres of Lake Washington Regional Park.

Sincerely,



Joe Martin, County Administrator



Steven J. Rohlfs, County Board Chairman



Tyler Luethje, Parks Director