

**Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council  
FY 2011 Recommendation  
Accomplishment Plan**

**Date:** December 18, 2009

**Project or Program Title:** Critical Shoreline Habitat Protection Program

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Funds Recommended (\$000s)	Council Recommendation Funding	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Outdoor Heritage Fund	<b>\$816</b>	\$407	\$409	0

**Appropriation Language**

**Abstract**

The natural shoreline around Minnesota's celebrated lakes and rivers comprises one of the most biologically important systems in the state for fish, game and wildlife. It is also one of its most threatened. In order to preserve this important component of Minnesota's natural heritage, the Minnesota Land Trust proposes to implement a Critical Shoreline Habitat Protection Program to protect essential lakeshore and stream-side habitat. This project will help fulfill the goals of the DNR's Aquatic Management Area program, the State Conservation and Preservation Plan and many others.

In this phase of the program, the Minnesota Land Trust will strategically concentrate its activity on important aquatic resources within northeast Minnesota's Arrowhead region, including DNR-designated high priority trout streams and lakes. The Land Trust will protect more than 50,000 feet of threatened shoreline habitat by acquiring 9-12 conservation easements which will permanently protect a rich mosaic of naturally vegetated shoreline, forest habitat and wetlands on more than 1,000 acres. The program will target projects which will help fill the gaps in existing public ownership, contain the highest-quality habitat, and provide the greatest leverage to the state. The Arrowhead region is prioritized in this phase of the program because it has immensely important shoreline habitat and aquatic resources for fish, game and wildlife (including the highest concentration of trout streams in the state) and because it has a high concentration of landowners interested in placing conservation easements on their properties.

## **Narrative**

The *problem* being addressed by this program is one identified in most state and local conservation plans, including the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan: the development and disturbance of the state's remaining sensitive shoreline habitat. Science conducted by the DNR and others indicate that the shoreline zone—from high ground through the water's edge and into the shallow submerged areas—is one of the most biologically diverse and important habitat types for a variety of wildlife species, including fish and waterfowl. Because so much shoreline habitat is on private land, it is also one of Minnesota's most threatened landscapes due to the intensity of lakeshore development.

This *opportunity* being addressed is one of having multiple landowners in the Arrowhead region who are ready and willing to grant conservation easements on exceptional shoreline habitat, thus providing high-leverage, immediately-tangible protection on these diminishing habitat types. The lull in the real-estate market has given many landowners an opportunity to reflect on the future of their lands, thus providing a narrow window of time to invest in these shoreline protection projects at a fraction of the cost of full fair market acquisition.

In addition, another benefit of this project is that while it is focused on the habitat benefits of the shoreline, more than 1,000 acres of family forest and substantial acres of wetlands will be protected, thus providing additional conservation benefits for the state's modest investment.

These conservation easements secured under this program will be perpetual and drafted to further prevent the fragmentation and destruction of existing habitat. These easements will ensure that the sensitive shoreline habitat under easement will remain ecologically viable and productive for fish, game and wildlife. The conservation easements acquired will prohibit land uses or development that negatively impacts the important habitat values and will require habitat management plans to ensure that long-term management will maximize the benefits of the shoreline and associated forested uplands. Furthermore, the Land Trust will seek opportunities to work with the landowners and other organizations to conduct restoration activities and secure angler access if appropriate.

The budget outlined below covers expenses necessary to complete the goals of the program, including funding for personnel to negotiate and manage the conservation easement transactions; funding for a limited number of easement acquisitions; project-related expenses such as title work, mapping and appraisals; conservation easement stewardship funding for monitoring and defending the easements, and a very small amount of funding for travel. It is anticipated that this funding will be very highly leveraged through the landowner donations of conservation easements and the Minnesota Land Trusts' own fundraising efforts.

To date more than 40 families have confirmed their desire to work with the Land Trust on protecting their properties and related shoreline habitat within the target areas. These 40+ potential properties represent more than 130,000 linear feet (25 miles) of shoreline habitat and more than 4,600 acres of forest land. These projects include the following targeted lakes and rivers: 1) 2 properties on DNR high-priority trout lakes, including Kemo and Moosehorn lakes; 2) 25 properties on signature Border Lakes, including Lake Vermilion, Burntside Lake and Rainy Lake; 3) 8 on North Shore trout streams such as the Knife, French, Flute Reed and Stewart Rivers; 4) 3 on Lake Superior; and 5) the remainder on other important water bodies in the region.

Under this program, the Land Trust will prioritize these existing potential projects and seek additional opportunities for the protection of high-quality shoreline habitat. It is anticipated that the projects will be completed in FY 2011 and FY 2012, with the highest priority projects moving forward as soon as possible upon funding. Finally, with the assistance of stewardship funding, the Land Trust will monitor its easements annually and enforce them as necessary into the future.

As part of its long-term stewardship obligations, the Land Trust will work to educate the landowners to use best management practices for their shoreline and connect the landowners with other partners such as the DNR, Trout Unlimited or others who may be able to improve the habitat quality. The Minnesota Land Trust will also work with these partners in identifying other potential projects which would have multiple public benefits.

**Relationship to *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and other published resource management plans.**

The Critical Shoreline Habitat Protection Program directly addresses several recommendations outlined in the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and other published conservation and/or management plans as described above. Most directly, Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan’s Recommendation H2 (pp 64-67) is titled “Protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes”. It goes on to recommend “Increase private land protection” using a variety of tools including conservation easements and “target shallow wildlife lakes, natural environment lakes, shallow bays of deep lakes, cold-water/designated trout streams, shoreline associated with critical habitat of warm-water streams”. In addition, Recommendation H6 includes “work with private landowners on protection and restoration”, “restore natural features of lakeshore habitats – woody habitat, emergent and floating vegetation, and “address negative effects of docks and surface water use on sensitive shoreline habitats.”

In summary, there is a direct relationship between this proposal and the State of Minnesota’s goals and recommendations for conservation and preservation. This program also addresses goals for shoreline protection outlined in the State’s Aquatic Management Area Acquisition Plan, the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan and the Minnesota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. As stated above, several of the projects are adjacent to or in close proximity to the State Aquatic Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, State Parks or other protected properties. Thus this program will help protect these existing investments in Minnesota’s conservation network.

**Project Design and Evaluation**

<b>Project Scope</b>	<b>Wetlands and Wetland Systems</b>	<b>Prairies and Prairie Systems</b>	<b>Forests and Forest Systems</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>				
<b>Protect</b>	<i>See footnote</i>		<i>See footnote</i>	<i>50,000 feet of shoreline and 1,000 acres forests, wetlands and riparian habitat.</i>
<b>Enhance</b>				

*Please note: While the Minnesota Land Trust anticipates protecting approximately 1,000 acres of forests, wetlands and riparian habitat, this acreage is included in the overall goal for protecting habitat for fish, game and wildlife.*

<b>Counties in which activities will take place</b>	<b>Wetlands and Wetland Systems</b>	<b>Prairies and Prairie Systems</b>	<b>Forests and Forest Systems</b>	<b>Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife</b>
<b>Restore</b>				
<b>Protect</b>	<i>St. Louis, Lake, Cook and Koochiching</i>		<i>St. Louis, Lake, Cook and Koochiching</i>	<i>St. Louis, Lake, Cook and Koochiching</i>
<b>Enhance</b>				

Acres Within Each Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					
Protect					50,000 feet of shoreline on 1,000 acres
Enhance					

Funding Per Ecological Section	Metropolitan-Urbanizing Area	Forest-Prairie Transition	Southeast Forest	Prairie Region	Northern Forest
Restore					
Protect					\$816,000
Enhance					

Funding Resource Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore				
Protect				\$816,000
Enhance				

Acquisition and Tax Data	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability				
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
Permanent Easement				50,000 feet of shoreline on 1,000 acres with \$816,000

## Budget

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
<b>Personnel</b>	60,000	60,000	
<b>Easement Acquisition</b> (Including all costs and professional fees associated with securing the conservation easements)	235,000	270,000	
<b>Easement Stewardship</b>	85,000	102,000	
<b>Travel</b>	2,000	2,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	382,000	434,000	

## Relationship to Current Budget

This funding represents approximately 10% of the Minnesota Land Trust's current annual operating budget, exclusive of stewardship and acquisition expenditures. Thanks to this program, the Land Trust anticipates it will increase its annual budget in fiscal years 2011 and 2012; as such, this funding will help supplement the Land Trust's existing programs. While we have not yet developed a complete organizational plan for FY2011, it is anticipated that due to geographic efficiency, our current Northern Region Director based in Ely will be re-assigned to handle the majority of transactions outlined above with the aid of other staff. As such, the Northern Region Director's current responsibilities outside of the Arrowhead region will be shifted to other new or existing staff.

## Personnel

Position	Name	Amount
<i>Northern Region Director</i>		\$80,000 (\$40,000/yr)
<i>Staff Attorney</i>		\$24,000 (\$12,000/yr)
<i>Conservation/Support Staff</i>		\$16,000 (\$8,000/yr)

## Leverage

SOURCE	FY 11		FY 12		FY 13	
	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated	In hand	Anticipated
<b>State</b>						
<b>Non state</b>						
Landowner easement donation		2,500,000		3,000,000		
Land Trust funding	40,000			70,000		
<b>In-kind/Volunteer</b>						
<b>TOTAL</b>	40,000	2,500,000		3,070,000		

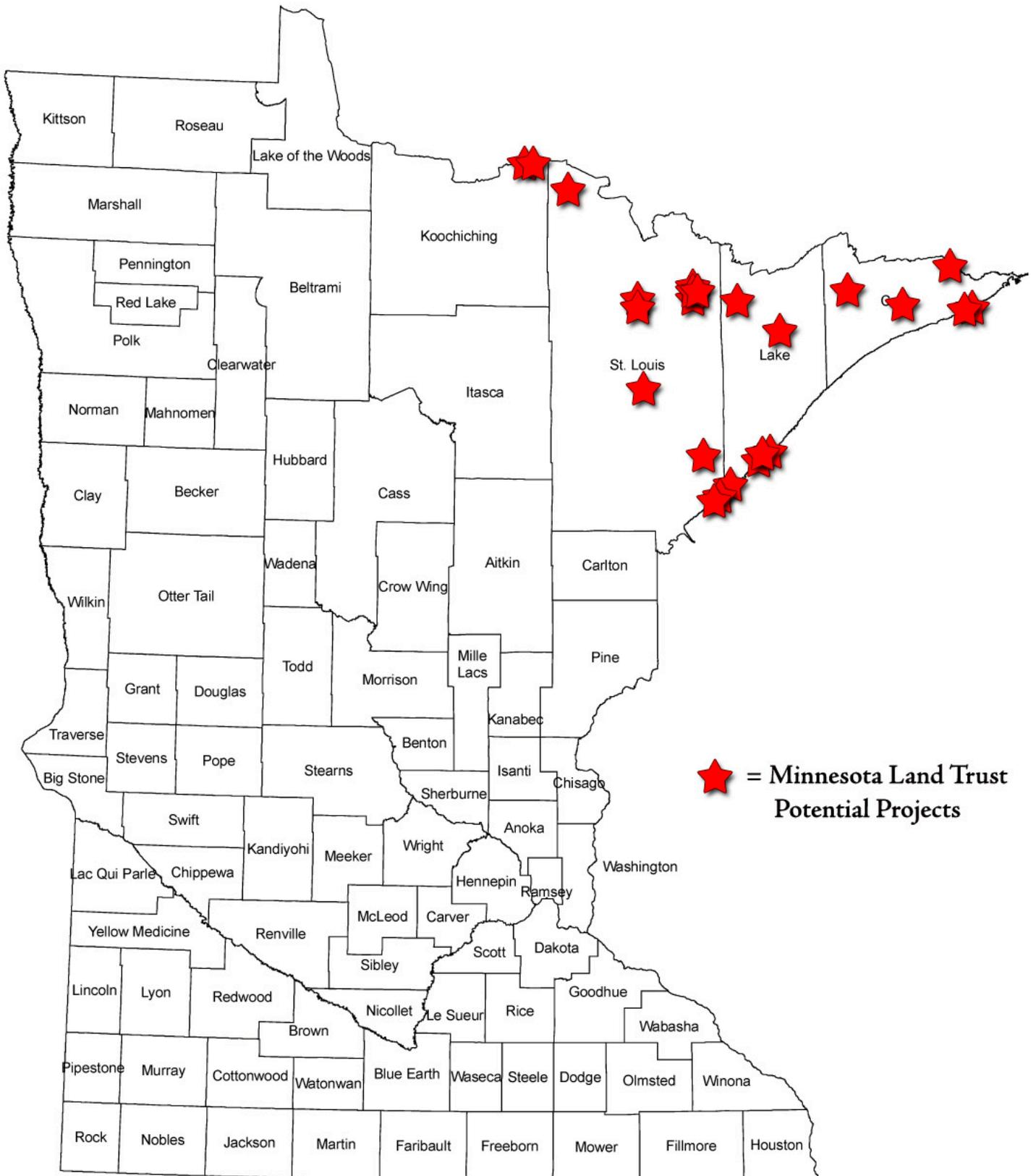
Leverage	State				Non-State			
	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife	Wetlands and Wetland Systems	Prairies and Prairie Systems	Forests and Forest Systems	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore								
Protect								5,610,000
Enhance								

### Accomplishment Timeline

Milestones	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	Budgetary Expenditure
Acquire conservation easements	Secure up 500 acres and 25,000 feet of shoreline with up to 6 conservation easements			297,000
Acquire conservation easements		Secure up 500 acres and 25,000 feet of shoreline with up to 6 conservation easements		332,000
Monitor and defend conservation easements	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	187,000

### Maintenance and Sustainability

The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through the best standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. Funding for easement stewardship is included in the budget outlined above. When accepting a conservation easement, the Minnesota Land Trust is committed to annually monitoring and defending the conservation values of the protected property. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful track record of monitoring and defending its conservation easements. It has a goal of monitoring 100% of its conservation easements annually and has established a Stewardship Fund specifically to manage the long-term needs of its conservation easement stewardship program.



★ = Minnesota Land Trust Potential Projects

