



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V
Laws of Minnesota 2015 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/10/2023

Project Title: Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V

Funds Recommended: \$4,544,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(f)

Appropriation Language: \$4,544,000 in the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements to protect and enhance habitat by expanding the clean water fund riparian buffer program for at least equal wildlife benefits from buffers on private land. Up to \$728,000 (from \$72,500 amend in ML 2017) is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Additional Legislative Changes: M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 10. Carryforwards (b) The availability of the appropriation in Laws 2015, First Special Session chapter 2, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (f), Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V, is extended to June 30, 2024. This subdivision is effective the day following final enactment.

In ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 7: Laws 2015, First Special Session chapter 2, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, as amended by Laws 2016, chapter 172, article 1, section 5, is amended to read: 2(f) Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V

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In ML 2016 Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 10. RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water Restorations

The following appropriations to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for the RIM buffers for wildlife and water program may be used for restoration of lands acquired by conservation easement with the appropriations:

- (1) Laws 2015, First Special Session chapter 2, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (f);
- (2) Laws 2014, chapter 256, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (f);
- (3) Laws 2013, chapter 137, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (e);

(4) Laws 2012, chapter 264, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (a); and
(5) Laws 2011, First Special Session chapter 6, article 1, section 2, subdivision 2, paragraph (c).

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Dusty Van Thuyne

Title:

Organization: BWSR

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Location Information

County Location(s): Nicollet, Yellow Medicine, Sibley, Nobles, Redwood, Brown, Clay, Renville, Meeker, Le Sueur, Rock, Wilkin, Martin, Stearns, Lac qui Parle, Jackson, Dodge and Mower.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Prairie

Narrative

Abstract

Utilizing the new CREP partnership to secure permanent conservation easements, this Phase V continuation of the RIM Buffers Program will protect and restore riparian buffer areas, totaling 2,072 acres on approximately 78 easements. This Program will continue to utilize a science-based ranking and selection process and be implemented locally, working with SWCD, NRCS, and FSA staff in the 54 county CREP area. It is estimated that \$1 of OHF will be leveraged with \$1 of Clean Water Funds and at least \$2 of Federal funds through CREP.

Design and Scope of Work

The project area will consist of the 54 County CREP area and the expected results are a total of 2,072 acres of expanded habitat buffers on approximately 78 easements through this request. RIM Buffers uniquely leverages the Clean Water Fund with the Outdoor Heritage Fund to expand basic water quality buffers into high quality wildlife

habitat. Outdoor Heritage Funds will double the size of Clean Water Fund (CWF) easements to provide additional wildlife benefits on areas that are not required by law or rule to have buffers, enhancing protection values from a water quality focus to a multi-benefit habitat-oriented corridor.

Due to the unique nature of the State's CWF/OHF match, each dollar of OHF is leveraged 3:1, with two Federal and one CWF dollar leveraged for each OHF dollar. OHF funded buffers, when linked to CWF buffers, will yield a total of 2,072 acres of buffers. Due to guidance from LSOHC, only the acres (1,036) and funding (\$4,544,000) from OHF have been displayed in the Output Tables.

Minnesota continues to see a net loss of grasslands and CRP acres each year. This exodus is being driven by high land prices, increased pressure for alternative uses, and declining federal budgets for conservation programs. Minnesota's primary strategy to mitigate the loss of CRP is to target expiring contracts for enrollment into Continuous CRP practices (like buffers) and permanent easements.

RIM Buffer easements will be secured via Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) permanent easement acquisition, utilizing both a 15 year CRP contract and permanent RIM easement. This will be Minnesota's third CREP, and is able to offer a large-scale impact due to the unique opportunity to utilize a substantial federal match. Over the five year CREP period, we look to enroll permanently protected buffers using a combination of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Program.

RIM Buffers is a partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and at the State level by BWSR. In addition, the CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies.

BWSR staff will coordinate with federal partners on the overall CREP process and program oversight and will be responsible for easement acquisition. Local staff will promote CRP contracts and RIM easements, assist with easement processing and provide key essential technical assistance and project management services. Due to the reliance on local staff for implementation, the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) is included as a component in the RIM Buffers Program. There is increased local workload expected with CREP signup and implementation, as a significantly increased number of easements will be secured within the CREP area throughout the CREP timeframe.

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories?

Buffers are commonly viewed as simply a water quality practice, but buffers have notable positive impacts on wildlife due their unique upland and riverine habitat interaction. This is especially true for expanded width buffers enrolled through this Program. Not only are upland grasslands protected or restored, detrimental impacts to stream-reliant biota is reduced. Many species of amphibians, such as southern MN's Northern Cricket Frog (endangered) rely on aquatic habitat during the breeding season and then spend most of their lives in upland habitat. In Southeastern MN, reptiles such as the Blanding's Turtle (endangered) rely on meandering streams, rivers, and adjacent lands.

The Sedge wren, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) most commonly associated with grassland habitat, is encountered in buffer areas. Bird use is influenced by buffer width, with greater widths experiencing greater abundance and diversity of birds and grassland species. However, bird use is negatively associated by the amount of edge exposure. As an effort to limit this exposure through this Program's scoring and ranking process, sites which may serve as corridors or expand current complexes are most desirable.

Diverse vegetation, access to a water resource, and protection from pesticides are important to Minnesota's native pollinator species. BWSR's native vegetation guidelines and pollinator initiative have outlined the RIM Program's commitment to protecting native pollinators. Targeted pollinator species include the Monarch Butterfly and solitary bee species including Leafcutter Bees, Mason Bees, and Yellow-faced Bees.

Of the nearly 1200 known wildlife species in Minnesota, 292 species, or approximately one-fourth, are at risk because they are rare; their populations are declining due to loss of habitat. SGCN in the RIM Buffers area include the Five-lined Skink, Two-spotted Skipper, Northern Pintail, American Black Duck, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Western Grebe. In addition to the SGCN, the threatened or endangered species targeted in this proposal include the Dakota Skipper and Poweshiek Skipperling.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Through a combination of targeted outreach, eligibility screening, and a scoring and ranking process, each site is considered on its benefits to the surrounding landscape, as well as the site-specific features which highlight the benefits of selection for permanent protection.

During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size is conducted to indicate a site's usefulness as a corridor or extension to an existing habitat complex. In addition, other examples of the science-based targeting used include: drainage to shallow lakes, buffering along lakeshore, planned vegetative diversity, and proximity to land open to public hunting.

The Farm Service Agency and BWSR are currently formulating the signup criteria and scoring process, which will be finalized in the summer of 2016. However, with CREP we will utilize similar science-based considerations that have been historically used by the RIM Buffers Program. The Site Evaluation Form from the most recent RIM Buffers signup has been attached to this proposal for reference.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Metro / Urban

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

Prairie

- Protect expiring CRP lands

Southeast Forest

- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

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 ~ *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels.*

Programs in prairie region:

- Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels.*

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat ~ *Riparian corridors are a key link in connecting existing core habitat parcels.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2011	Clean Water Fund	-
2012	Clean Water Fund	-
2013	Clean Water Fund	-
2014	Clean Water Fund	-

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

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring into perpetuity. The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted and partners' staff document findings. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2017-Ongoing	LSOHC-BWSR Stewardship Account	Compliance Checks first 5 years then every 3rd year.	Corrective actions of any violations	Enforcement action taken by MN Attorney General office
2017-Ongoing	Landowner Obligation	Maintain compliance with easement terms	-	-

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

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?

- Other : RIM Easements

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?

Yes

Explain what will be planted:

In certain circumstances food plots for wildlife are an allowable use on RIM easements and must be part of an approved Conservation Plan. Food plots on narrow buffers, steep slopes and wet areas are not allowed.

RIM policy limits food plots to 10% of the total easement area or 5 acres whichever is smaller. There is no cost share for establishment of food plots and upon termination the landowners must reestablish the vegetation as prescribed in the Conservation Expense at their own expense. Food plots are a rarely selected option by landowners, to date only 2.2% of RIM Buffers have food plots.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated?

False

Will the eased land be open for public use?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30, 2022
Allocations to specific parcels made	July 31, 2022
Easements closed	June 30, 2024

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2024

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$406,200	\$406,200	Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund, Clean Water Fund	\$812,400
Contracts	\$205,800	\$205,800	Clean Water Fund	\$411,600
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,605,900	\$12,692,800	Clean Water Fund, USDA-FSA-CRP	\$16,298,700
Easement Stewardship	\$253,500	\$253,500	Clean Water Fund	\$507,000
Travel	\$7,900	\$7,900	Clean Water Fund	\$15,800
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$50,000	\$50,000	Clean Water Fund	\$100,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$11,300	\$11,300	Clean Water Fund	\$22,600
Supplies/Materials	\$3,400	\$3,400	Clean Water Fund	\$6,800
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,544,000	\$13,630,900	-	\$18,174,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	5.0	\$68,800	\$68,800	Clean Water Fund	\$137,600
Easement Processing	2.87	3.0	\$301,500	\$301,500	Clean Water Fund	\$603,000
Eco and Engineering Services	0.24	3.0	\$35,900	\$35,900	Clean Water Fund	\$71,800

Amount of Request: \$4,544,000

Amount of Leverage: \$13,630,900

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 299.98%

DSS + Personnel: \$456,200

As a % of the total request: 10.04%

Easement Stewardship: \$253,500

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 7.03%

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

The acreage and number of easements enrolled as well as budget items have been adjusted downward proportionately to the awarded amount.

Direct Support Services

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

BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done.

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

Yes

Is Confirmation Document attached?

Yes

- Cash : \$9,086,900

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	1,036	0	0	1,036
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1,036	0	0	1,036

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	-	\$4,544,000	-	-	\$4,544,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	\$4,544,000	-	-	\$4,544,000

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	103	103	103	727	0	1,036
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	103	103	103	727	0	1,036

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	\$451,700	\$451,700	\$451,700	\$3,188,900	-	\$4,544,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$451,700	\$451,700	\$451,700	\$3,188,900	-	\$4,544,000

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	-	\$4,386	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,385	\$4,385	\$4,385	\$4,386	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

34 miles

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

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

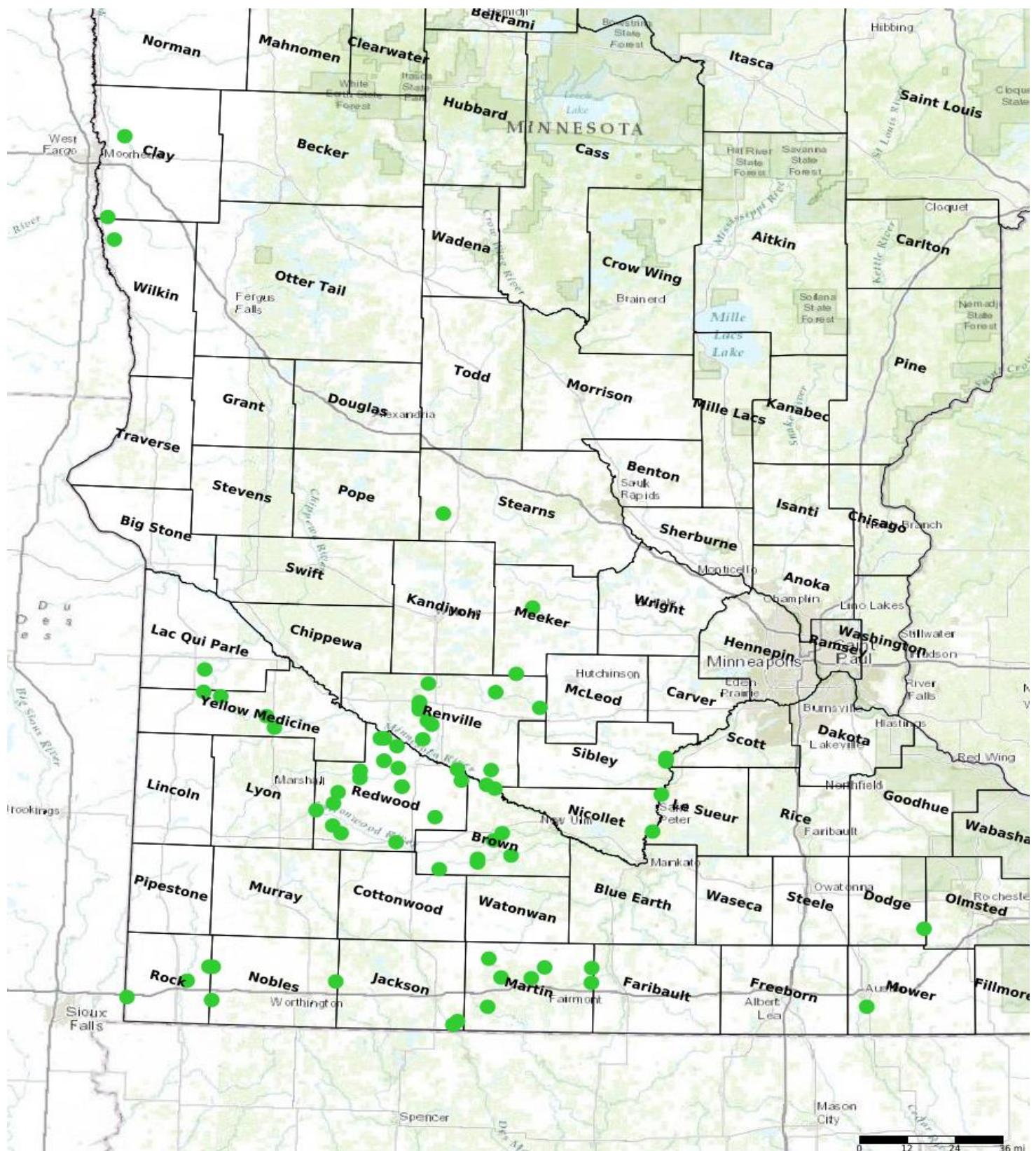
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
08-01-22-01--	Brown	10833216	38	\$125,571	No
08-05-19-01--	Brown	10832202	6	\$21,100	No
08-07-19-01--	Brown	10932204	10	\$33,300	No
08-04-19-01--	Brown	10835225	6	\$26,600	No
08-02-19-01--	Brown	10833209	20	\$68,100	No
08-06-19-01--	Brown	10932218	20	\$65,000	No
14-01-21-01--	Clay	13748234	10	\$19,289	No
14-01-18-01--	Clay	14047207	6	\$11,100	No
20-01-19-01--	Dodge	10516212	40	\$120,000	No
32-01-17-01--	Jackson	10134223	2	\$5,300	No
32-13-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	6	\$25,500	No
32-02-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	5	\$27,500	No
32-12-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	4	\$13,800	No
37-02-20-01--	Lac qui Parle	11644203	11	\$17,300	No
40-02-21-01--	Le Sueur	11026232	46	\$111,670	No
46-13-19-01--	Martin	10332221	12	\$55,000	No
46-01-17-01--	Martin	10433225	1	\$3,400	No
46-01-18-01--	Martin	10233236	4	\$18,900	No
46-07-19-01--	Martin	10329225	5	\$22,700	No
46-01-19-01--	Martin	10330206	17	\$63,700	No
46-02-19-01--	Martin	10331222	29	\$88,100	No
46-03-19-01--	Martin	10329201	44	\$170,800	No
47-01-17-01--	Meeker	11732236	4	\$21,300	No
47-01-21-01--	Meeker	12031233	11	\$7,070	No
50-02-17-01--	Mower	10218226	3	\$4,400	No
52-05-21-01--	Nicollet	11132206	4	\$8,739	No
52-01-22-01--	Nicollet	11126210	6	\$18,100	No
53-01-17-01--	Nobles	10339236	8	\$22,100	No
53-01-21-01--	Nobles	10343218	26	\$57,693	No
53-01-19-01--	Nobles	10243231	105	\$476,700	No
64-04-17-01--	Redwood	11234226	1	\$3,200	No
64-01-21-01--	Redwood	10936220	10	\$22,726	No
64-13-18-01--	Redwood	11236208	25	\$106,300	No
64-01-19-01--	Redwood	11039207	70	\$216,900	No
64-21-17-01--	Redwood	10938207	1	\$3,500	No
64-20-17-01--	Redwood	11238226	1	\$1,200	No
64-19-17-01--	Redwood	11139213	1	\$1,600	No

64-18-17-01--	Redwood	11139235	2	\$5,100	No
64-17-17-01--	Redwood	11437234	8	\$12,000	No
64-15-17-01--	Redwood	11437235	4	\$6,000	No
64-10-17-01--	Redwood	11337235	4	\$7,700	No
64-09-17-01--	Redwood	11337235	4	\$7,900	No
64-08-17-01--	Redwood	11039235	3	\$7,500	No
64-07-17-01--	Redwood	11136204	1	\$900	No
64-06-17-01--	Redwood	11136204	1	\$1,100	No
64-05-17-01--	Redwood	11035214	1	\$3,800	No
64-03-17-01--	Redwood	11336208	2	\$1,800	No
64-02-18-01--	Redwood	11238214	2	\$5,000	No
65-02-18-01--	Renville	11233212	3	\$5,400	No
65-01-18-01--	Renville	11435204	1	\$3,500	No
65-03-21-01--	Renville	11632230	2	\$6,014	No
65-05-18-01--	Renville	11535218	3	\$17,000	No
65-04-18-01--	Renville	11535219	13	\$65,500	No
65-02-19-01--	Renville	11234210	100	\$258,900	No
65-09-18-01--	Renville	11435232	1	\$2,500	No
65-02-20-01--	Renville	11435210	39	\$130,500	No
65-03-20-01--	Renville	11531214	24	\$84,300	No
65-01-17-01--	Renville	11233235	4	\$6,900	No
65-10-17-01--	Renville	11635216	1	\$3,800	No
65-03-18-01--	Renville	11535207	4	\$14,700	No
67-04-21-01--	Rock	10344213	27	\$68,525	No
67-05-17-01--	Rock	10244206	8	\$33,800	No
67-01-19-01--	Rock	10247235	26	\$112,500	No
72-01-21-01--	Sibley	11326223	50	\$83,171	No
72-02-19-01	Sibley	11326226	2	\$3,700	No
73-01-20-01--	Stearns	12435225	37	\$84,300	No
84-03-20-01--	Wilkin	13648235	12	\$19,200	No
87-02-22-01--	Yellow Medicine	11441206	16	\$60,900	No
87-01-19-01--	Yellow Medicine	11441221	3	\$10,000	No
87-10-19-01--	Yellow Medicine	11544203	12	\$35,000	No
87-01-22-01--	Yellow Medicine	11543208	16	\$33,420	No

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✖ Enhance
- ✚ Other