



# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Laws of Minnesota 2016 Accomplishment Plan

**Date:** October 15, 2015

**Program or Project Title:** Wetland Habitat Protection Program – Phase 2

**Funds Recommended:** \$ 1,629,000

**Manager's Name:** Kris Larson  
**Title:** Executive Director  
**Organization:** Minnesota Land Trust  
**Address:** 2356 University Ave. W.  
**City:** St. Paul, MN 55114  
**Office Number:** 651-647-9590  
**Email:** klarson@mnland.org  
**Website:** www.mnland.org

**Legislative Citation:**

**Appropriation Language:**

**County Locations:** Kandiyohi, Otter Tail, Pope, and Stearns.

**Regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Habitat
- Prairie
- Wetlands

### Abstract:

Protect 750 acres of high priority wetland habitat complexes in Minnesota's Prairie/Forest-Prairie areas by securing permanent conservation easements within scientifically prioritized complexes using an innovative project ranking and payment system to maximize conservation benefit and financial leverage.

### Design and scope of work:

Of all of Minnesota's wildlife habitat types, wetlands and shallow lakes provide the essential backbone for the survival of waterfowl and other important wildlife species. In fact, more than 50% of the amphibians and birds listed in Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy as species in greatest conservation need (SGCN) use wetlands during their life cycle. Most of the plans developed to protect Minnesota's wildlife—including Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, and the Long Range Duck Recovery Plan—cite the protection and restoration of the state's remaining wetlands as one of the top priorities to achieve the State's conservation goals. Moreover, these plans cite the use of conservation easements on private lands as one of the primary strategies to protect important wetland and shallow lake habitat.

This project encompasses three of Minnesota's Ecological Classification System subsections: the Hardwood Hills, Red River Prairie and Minnesota River Prairie. Before European settlement, the predominant land cover in the Minnesota River and Red River Prairie

subsections was tallgrass prairie and wetlands. Today, row-crop agriculture is the primary land use, and the ditching and draining of small wetlands is a concern for wildlife habitat and water quality. Within these subsections, 116 SGCN and 83 SGCN are known or predicted to occur, respectively. Shallow lakes and wetlands both are identified as “key habitats” in Minnesota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, with 58 SGCN using those habitats. The Hardwood Hills subsection originally was characterized by maple-basswood forest interspersed with oak savanna, oak forest and tall grass prairie. The subsection also contains numerous lakes, wetlands, and prairie potholes. Similar to the Minnesota River Prairie subsection, the predominant land use today is agriculture, and wetland loss is a primary conservation concern. Eighty-five SGCN are known or predicted to occur within this subsection. And, as with the Minnesota River Prairie subsection, shallow lakes and wetlands are identified as “key habitats” within the Hardwood Hills, with 55 SGCN using those habitats.

In this Phase 2 of our successful Wetlands Habitat Protection Program, the Land Trust proposes to complete 8-10 new conservation easements protecting a minimum of 750 acres of important wetland and associated habitat within its Edge of the Prairie Critical Landscape. This landscape, which extends from Meeker County northwest to Becker County, is located at the edge of the once vast prairies of western Minnesota as they transition to the woods and forests that dominate the eastern portion of the State. The prairie pothole lakes and associated wetlands within this landscape form the backbone of one of the continent’s most important flyways for migratory waterfowl.

Phase 2 of this program will build on the accomplishments of the Land Trust’s very successful first round of the Wetland Habitat Protection Program. In Phase I, the Land Trust is on track to significantly exceed our acreage deliverables. At the time of drafting this proposal, Phase 1 of the Wetland Habitat Protection Program has already protected approximately 300 acres of significant wetland complexes with conservation easements, and eight other easement projects are in various stages of completion. Phase I also saw the successful implementation of the reverse-bid system for easement ranking and payment, thereby advancing a new model for project selection and easement valuation.

MLT will continue to implement this criteria-based ranking system and market approach for purchasing conservation easements, which was originally developed through our work with St. John’s University in the Avon Hills. Under this system, potential parcels for easement purchase are prioritized based on their value to wetland protection, proximity to other protected parcels, MCBS data and other appropriate criteria while allowing targeted landowners to bid their desired price to protect their property with an easement. Those properties with the best ratio of environmental benefits to easement cost become the highest priority for acquisition. Several landowners fully donated easements in Phase I with several others accepting approximately 50% of the easement’s value (thereby leveraging the other 50%). The attached project list includes parcels where we have had interested landowners in the past. The list will be revised as we initiate this round of bidding and will be continually evaluated to ensure the selection of high-quality projects.

Although the Land Trust has been active in this landscape for more than 15 years, we now have a unique window of time to deepen our commitment and conservation impact to protect important wetland complexes. With an aging landowner population and organizational momentum, the time is now to implement a robust wetland protection and restoration program for this region. To focus our work, we have completed an initial analysis to identify important wetland complexes in this landscape based on the intersection of high-quality habitat, existing protected areas and restorable agricultural lands. These complexes include a mosaic of wetland, prairie/grassland, and forest habitats, as well as agricultural land. Protection of these complexes will produce the following outcomes: 1) nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species in greatest conservation need; 2) improved water quality; 3) increased participation of private landowners in habitat projects; and 4) enhancement of prior public investment in wetland protection and restoration.

Proposed activities under this grant include:

- 1) contacting and negotiating with interested landowners;
- 2) drafting and completing perpetual conservation easements;
- 3) documenting property conditions and drafting habitat management plans as appropriate;
- 4) dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring and enforcement of those easements.

As a nationally-accredited land trust, the Minnesota Land Trust works only with conservation easements that are perpetual. These easements prohibit land uses or development that negatively affect important habitat and other conservation values. These easements are monitored annually and enforced as necessary under the Land Trust’s comprehensive conservation easement stewardship program.

As with Phase I, we anticipate working in partnership with appropriate public agencies, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders, including BWSR, Ducks Unlimited, and local counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to ensure this program meets multi-agency conservation goals.

## Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **No**

## 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:

As described above, Minnesota's wetlands are essential to our wildlife health and diversity. This project directly benefits Species in Greatest Conservation Need and other important game and non-game wildlife species by minimizing the potential threats to their habitat brought about by detrimental agricultural practices, residential or commercial development or imprudent land management. The wetland habitat complexes that will be targeted through the ranking system will include a mosaic of wetlands, grasslands and woodlands. Priority projects will include high or outstanding habitat as identified in County Biological Survey data. They will also be located near other protected lands so as to help build larger habitat complexes which will be comprised of both public and private lands. In fact, with the vast majority of this landscape in private ownership, working with private owners on land protection strategies is key to successful conservation in this region. Finally, we anticipate working with partners in the region to identify those habitat complexes where private land protection can make a significant contribution to existing conservation investments.

This program addresses LSOHC priorities by protecting shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for Minnesota's wildlife, especially its migratory waterfowl and associated species.

## What is the nature of urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

With an aging landowner population and stabilized land values, we have a narrow window of time to work with these private landowners to achieve significant conservation outcomes. In addition, thanks to the successful landowner outreach in Phase I, multiple landowners are eager to move forward with conserving their properties.

## Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

MLT's unique ranking system works as follows: 1) MLT conducts outreach in targeted areas; 2) interested landowners submit applications; 3) properties are ranked ecologically through scientific criteria; 4) landowners bid their desired payment; 5) Finally, projects with the highest ecological value at the lowest cost are selected to move forward.

## Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes

## Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

### 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

### Prairie:

- Not Listed

## Relationship to other funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

The Minnesota Land Trust was a partner in the Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP), which received grants from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), from 2001--2011. This proposed OHF grant accelerates the Land Trust's work protecting critical habitat in the Edge of the Prairie landscape and does not supplant any existing funding sources.

## How does this proposal accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

This funding would expand upon the Land Trust's successes in Phase I and would accelerate our ability to deliver quality conservation outcomes very cost effectively. As a non-profit, the majority of financial support to the Minnesota Land Trust must be raised on an annual basis, with no dedicated funds or endowment which is targeted to this region. Therefore, funding from this proposal would significantly enhance our efforts in this landscape. Without it, MLT's ability to deliver important wetland habitat conservation would be significantly impaired, as funding for all projects must be raised on a project-by-project basis.

## Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2001--2011	ENRTF	\$2,000,000
2014--2015	McKnight Foundation	\$120,000

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

The land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program 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. Depending upon the property, opportunities for restoration and enhancement in the future will be explored on a case-by-case basis--MLT will assist landowners in connecting with appropriate agencies as such needs and opportunities arise.

## Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2016 and beyond	MLT easement monitoring and enforcement fund	Develop property baseline reports, monitoring plans and habitat management plans	Conduct annual property monitoring, address landowner inquiries and maintain accurate stewardship records	Defend conservation easements as necessary

## Activity Details:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

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

Because conservation easements are secured over private lands, there may be trails or driveways associated with this private ownership such as field roads, forest walking trails or residential access routes. Before accepting an easement, the Minnesota Land Trust documents any existing trail or driveway use to ensure that such use does not interfere with the habitat values of the property. The easements are then drafted to limit future development of trails or roads as necessary to protect the conservation values of the property. Since we will be obtaining easements through a reverse bid RFP process, specific parcels have not been identified at present and therefore we cannot discern the extent to which trails/roads exist.

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

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

The Land Trust will monitor easements annually to ensure the rights procured through the easement are upheld and enforced as necessary.

Will new trails or roads be developed as a result of the OHF acquisition - **No**

### Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Complete conservation easements, baseline documentation, monitoring plans and habitat management plans	June 30, 2019

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 11/1/2019

### Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

### 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 *The primary evaluation method will be the quality and quantity of habitat that is protected. Through our annual monitoring we will be able to assess the quality of the habitat and determine if there are any threats or violations to the easement. In addition, through the habitat management plans, we will be working with landowners to maintain and/or improve the species diversity on the properties. Overall, we will be evaluating how the protection of an individual parcel contributes to a larger habitat matrix.*

#### Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands *The primary evaluation method will be the quality and quantity of habitat that is protected. Through our annual monitoring we will be able to assess the quality of the habitat and determine if there are any threats or violations to the easement. In addition, through the habitat management plans, we will be working with landowners to maintain and/or improve the species diversity on the properties. Overall, we will be evaluating how the protection of an individual parcel contributes to a larger habitat matrix.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

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

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

The program will achieve a reduced amount of acres protected through conservation easement in the program area (750 acres as opposed to the 1200 acres proposed).

**Total Amount of Request: \$ 1629000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$190,000	\$0		\$190,000
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$1,073,000	\$315,000	Landowner	\$1,388,000
Easement Stewardship	\$180,000	\$0		\$180,000
Travel	\$10,000	\$0		\$10,000
Professional Services	\$147,000	\$0		\$147,000
Direct Support Services	\$29,000	\$0		\$29,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1,629,000	\$315,000		\$1,944,000

## Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Staff	0.70	3.00	\$190,000	\$0		\$190,000
Total	0.70	3.00	\$190,000	\$0		\$190,000

Amount of Request: \$1,629,000

Amount of Leverage: \$315,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 19.34%

## Output Tables

**Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
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	750	0	0	0	750
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	750	0	0	0	750

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
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	\$1,629,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,629,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$1,629,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,629,000

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	450	0	300	0	750
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	450	0	300	0	750

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$977,000	\$0	\$652,000	\$0	\$1,629,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$977,000	\$0	\$652,000	\$0	\$1,629,000

**Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$2172	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

**Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
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	\$2171	\$0	\$2173	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

0

## Parcel List

*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.*

### Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

### Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

#### Kandiyohi

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Brenner Lake	12236205	52	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Calhoun Lake	12133228	80	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Fish Lake	12235217	75	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

#### Otter Tail

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Otter Tail River	13441228	233	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Trulse Lake	13239234	130	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

#### Pope

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Gilchrist Lake	12337206	192	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

#### Stearns

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Spunk Creek Watershed	12629219	179	\$0	No	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

### Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

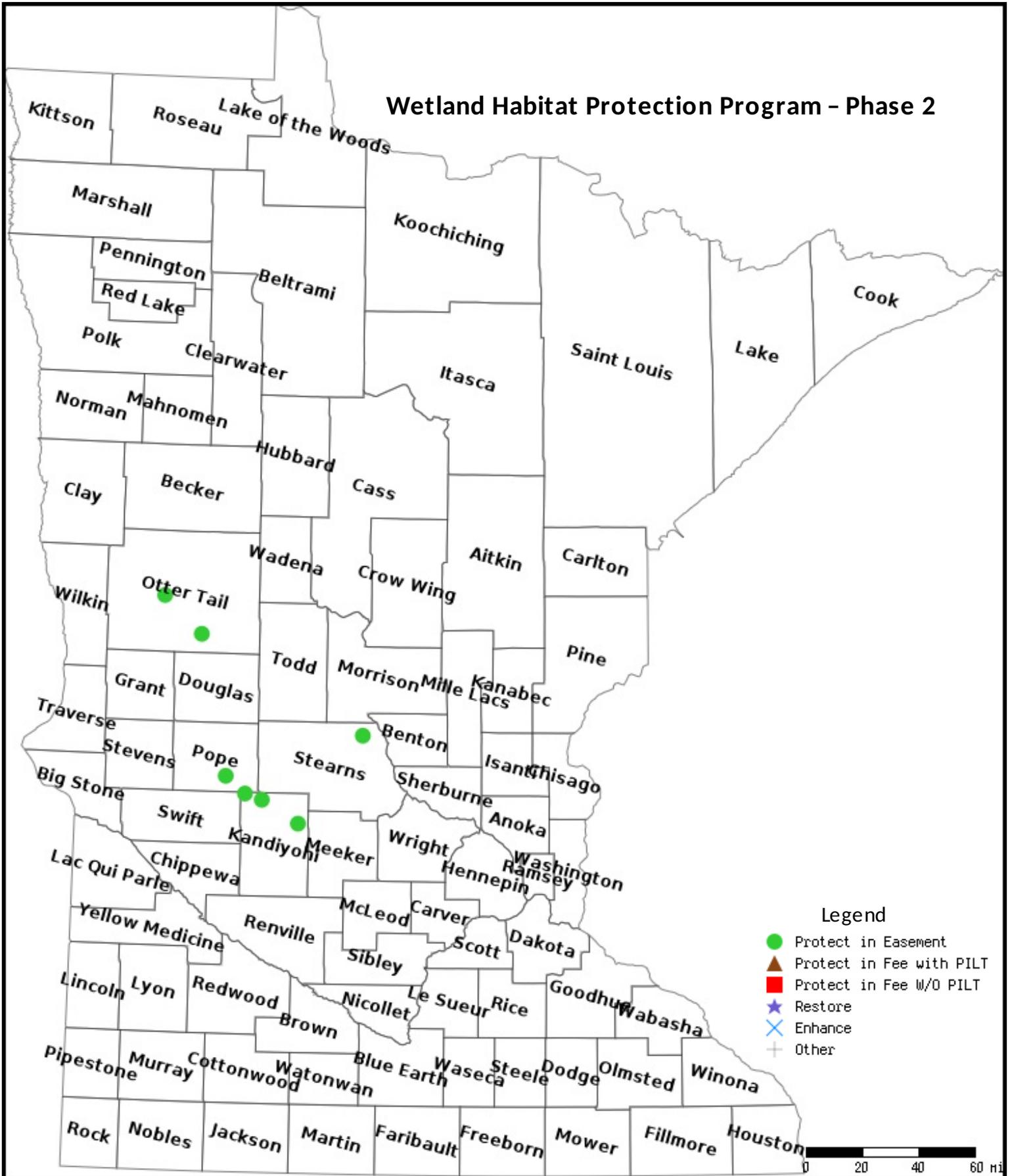
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

### Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

# Parcel Map

## Wetland Habitat Protection Program - Phase 2



Data Generated From Parcel List

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Comparison Report

**Program Title:** 2016 - Wetland Habitat Protection Program – Phase 2

**Organization:** Minnesota Land Trust

**Manager:** Kris Larson

## Budget

Requested Amount: \$2,563,000

Appropriated Amount: \$1,629,000

Percentage: 63.56%

Budget Item	Total Requested		Total Appropriated		Percentage of Request	
	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Appropriated Amount	Anticipated Leverage	Percentage of Request	Percentage of Leverage
Personnel	\$270,000	\$0	\$190,000	\$0	70.37%	-
Contracts	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$1,800,000	\$600,000	\$1,073,000	\$315,000	59.61%	52.50%
Easement Stewardship	\$240,000	\$0	\$180,000	\$0	75.00%	-
Travel	\$12,000	\$0	\$10,000	\$0	83.33%	-
Professional Services	\$196,000	\$0	\$147,000	\$0	75.00%	-
Direct Support Services	\$45,000	\$0	\$29,000	\$0	64.44%	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,563,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$1,629,000</b>	<b>\$315,000</b>	<b>63.56%</b>	<b>52.50%</b>

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

The program will achieve a reduced amount of acres protected through conservation easement in the program area (750 acres as opposed to the 1200 acres proposed).

# Output

**Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	0	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Easement	1,200	750	62.50%
Enhance	0	0	-

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	0	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Easement	2,563,000	1,629,000	63.56%
Enhance	0	0	-

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	0	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Easement	1,200	750	62.50%
Enhance	0	0	-

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	0	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	-
Protect in Easement	2,563,000	1,629,000	63.56%
Enhance	0	0	-