

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2020 / ML 2019 Request for Funding



Date: May 31, 2018

Program or Project Title: St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Phase I

Funds Requested: \$8,652,400

Manager's Name: Monica Zachay

Title: Land and Water Program Director

Organization: St. Croix River Association

Address: PO Box 655

City: St. Croix Falls , WI 54024

Office Number: 715-483-3300

Email: monicaz@scramail.com

Website: stcroixriverassociation.org

County Locations: Chisago, Kanabec, Pine, and Washington.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Northern Forest
- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

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

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat

Abstract:

This program will permanently protect approximately 1,600 acres of critical habitat through fee-title acquisition and conservation easements, and restore and enhance approximately 200 acres of habitat for species of greatest conservation need in strategically targeted protected land assets of biodiversity significance in the St. Croix Watershed. Its goals are to protect habitat, improve conservation connectivity, and provide public access for outdoor recreation opportunities.

Design and scope of work:

Spanning the border between Minnesota and Wisconsin, the St. Croix River is one of the nation's first federally designated "Wild and Scenic" Rivers and is home to a diverse abundance of native flora and fauna, rivaling any other location within the greater Upper Mississippi River Basin.

The landscape of the St. Croix River contains large swaths of unspoiled ecosystems. It is home to rolling barrens and brushlands containing a plethora of wildlife including threatened populations of sharp-tailed grouse and endangered Karner blue butterflies. The pineries of the north still thrive, providing forest products that sustain many communities along with seasonal economic boosts from visitors who come for an array of outdoor activities – from hunting and fishing, to hiking, biking and boating.

Although the status of the St. Croix as a Wild and Scenic River comes with federal protections, it applies only to a thin ribbon of land adjacent to the Riverway. Beyond the Riverway boundary, more than 75% of the St. Croix's forestlands remain in private holdings and the threat of development, fragmentation and conversion to agriculture is substantial.

In recent years with the creation of the "My St. Croix Woods" program, the St. Croix River Association (SCRA) is growing the demand for forest stewardship and protection by increasing collaboration with partners. Using this new approach and building upon years of

momentum, we seek to increase capacity to deliver permanent protection options to landowners that result in the conservation of well connected, functional forests and rivers that sustain and enhance native species. In partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL), we seek to protect large intact forest patches that are managed for complexity; sustain riparian forests that are managed for connectivity; and restore lands that are important to the 128 listed Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that are known to occur within this landscape.

TPL will protect approximately 980 acres in fee focusing on lands that have been identified as high priority in statewide and regional plans as immediate opportunities for protection. TPL will convey lands to the DNR except when County ownership is appropriate. In addition, TPL will acquire trout stream easements along section of Lawrence Creek and Sand Creek which are high priorities for DNR Fisheries in this watershed. The trout stream easements will be conveyed to MN DNR who will hold them in perpetuity.

MLT will acquire approximately 600 acres of conservation easements and develop restoration and habitat management plans for eased acres. Projects within targeted priority areas will be identified through a competitive RFP process and subsequently ranked based on ecological value and cost, prioritizing the best projects and securing them at the lowest cost to the state. MLT will also restore and enhance 210 acres of habitat on existing and new easements. Ecological restoration enhancement management plans will be developed in coordination with landowners and hired subcontractors.

The St. Croix River Association will provide program administration, and landowner outreach and engagement in priority areas.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Describe how your program will advance the indicators identified in the plans selected:

According to the Outdoor Heritage Fund: 25 Year Vision, 89% of the Northern Forest region is identified as habitat, but only 55% of it is protected. Additionally, 41% of the Metropolitan Urbanizing region is identified as habitat, with a mere 12% of it permanently protected. This project will protect forestland through acquisition and easements to prevent parcelization and fragmentation, producing multiple enduring conservation benefits, addressing wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and providing access to hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities.

This program will address objectives within the MN State Wildlife Action Plan including: 1) sustaining and enhancing species, habitat and landscape biological diversity and 2) maintaining habitat through acquisition of threatened sites that provide exceptional habitat and ecological values. This program emphasizes work within the St. Croix River Watershed priority area, home to 7 target mature upland/lowland forest birds and 5 target reptile species identified in the plan.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Northern Forest:

- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

Metro / Urban:

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

Describe how your program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife as indicated in the LSOHC priorities:

Through permanent land protection, our program will continue to prevent degradation and loss of quality habitat within the St. Croix River watershed. It will improve and increase the amount of available public land for hunting and angling opportunities in the eastern part of the state, within an easy drive from the Twin Cities Metro area. This program will also lead to larger complexes of restored forests, brushlands, and riparian areas that will improve terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Strong partnerships exist between local, state, and federal agencies; local non-governmental organizations; and willing conservation-

minded landowners. High quality lands will be protected through fee title acquisition and conservation easements. Protected lands in fee acquisitions are available for the public for outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing, thereby addressing the need to provide such opportunities within a short distance from the Twin Cities' growing and diversifying urban population.

Describe how the proposal uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:

This proposal uses a science-based multiple benefits approach for prioritizing and targeting areas of greatest conservation value. We will utilize The Nature Conservancy's St. Croix Basin GIS-based Priority Protection Analysis which incorporates Minnesota Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance, Lakes of Biological Significance, habitat complexes and connectivity, along with other data sets to spatially prioritize the most important sites for protection. The intent of this model was to develop and score priorities where multiple benefits overlap – habitat, biodiversity, water quality, water quantity, and resiliency. Evaluation criteria include: 1) aquatic and terrestrial habitat protection priorities, 2) lands important to drinking water quality and groundwater recharge, and 3) resilience of lands and waters to climate change and other anticipated future changes and disturbance.

More specifically, this targeting approach includes data on habitat quality, target species communities, and habitat complexes for terrestrial species with emphasis on expanding corridors adjacent to public lands. The most heavily weighted component of this approach uses data from the Minnesota Biological Survey focused on fish and wildlife that includes data on biodiversity, wetlands, native plant communities, Lakes of Biological Significance, wild rice catchments, coldwater refuge for trout, proximity to protected lands, and ecological connections. Added benefits for water quality are assessed using data on wellhead protected areas, groundwater contamination susceptibility, private well density, and groundwater recharge.

Using results of this Multiple Benefits approach, areas will be targeted down to the parcel level for landowner engagement and outreach for implementing permanent protection activities. For MLT easements, a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process by which landowners will apply for consideration of a conservation easement will be used. Proposed projects will be scored along ecological grounds, and will also consider donative value from the landowner.

How does the proposal address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species:

All of the areas targeted by this proposal have been identified and prioritized through state, regional and local natural resource plans due to their high biodiversity, connectivity and ability to preserve habitat for species of greatest conservation need.

The project area has a mixed representation of extensive forest lands and riparian habitats that are home to approximately 128 SGCN including: Lake Sturgeon, wood turtles, gray wolves, bald eagles, ospreys, common terns, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, yellow rails, and sharp-tailed grouse. The St. Croix Watershed is also globally-recognized for its mussel diversity with over 40 known mussels, including 5 federally endangered, and 20 state-listed species, such as the winged mapleleaf and snuffbox. The project area also contains a significant amount of high quality brushland and regenerating forestland habitat critical to the breeding success of the Golden-winged Warbler.

Within this region we have an unparalleled opportunity. The St. Croix has been classified as containing the best-preserved remnant of pre-settlement natural communities in the Upper Mississippi drainage. But we must protect the rich natural and cultural heritage of the St. Croix before they too are altered by ever encroaching agricultural and development pressure.

Identify indicator species and associated quantities this habitat will typically support:

Several species have been identified by the DNR to represent various forestland and aquatic habitats: Ovenbird, Golden-winged Warblers, White-tailed deer, and trout. The metrics are derived from existing data sources and scientific literature, but are gross averages; they are not accurate at the site-specific scale. Therefore, they are not intended to be used to score or rank requests, but represent the best information we have for immediate support to the Council's objective.

Ovenbird

Typically found in mature forests, Ovenbirds are an indication of the health of mature forest uplands with an average of 16 pairs for every 40 acres.

Golden-winged Warbler

Often associated with shrubland habitat and regenerating forests, more current research indicates a variety of forest habitats are required by Golden-winged Warblers. While territories vary in size, quality habitat will support roughly six pairs for every 40 acres.

White-tailed deer

White-tailed deer use a wide variety of forested habitats and are an important game species in the State. Covering most of the Northern Forest section, the six-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per square

mile of land. This translates to roughly 1 deer for every 50 acres of land.

Trout - All Species

Natural populations of trout, including healthy populations with good habitat, vary among locations, and also rise and fall within lakes and rivers; however quality habitat may support up to 40 pound per acre.

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation *Forestland protection from development and fragmentation will be measured based on the acreage of land protected by fee acquisition and permanent conservation easements obtained through this program.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need *With a priority on trout streams and adjacency to already protected lands, program success will be measured based on the acres of land protected via fee acquisition and permanent conservation easements adjacent to protected lands, as well as miles of riparian and trout stream habitat protected.*

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

TPL will convey all fee title land to the DNR or counties for permanent stewardship. Once land has been conveyed, initial site development and restoration of these lands will begin. Estimated costs for initial restoration work are included in this proposal. TPL will work with DNR to complete a restoration and management plan, and implementation of that plan will be completed in the following years. These properties will be managed and maintained by the respective government entities according to OHF standards.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023	MLT Stewardship & Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of conservation easements in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	
2020	TPL-OHF and DNR	Post property	Develop restoration/management plan for property	
2021	TPL-DNR	Develop restoration/management plan for property	Restore and steward property for habitat and public recreation	
2022	TPL-DNR	Restore and steward property for habitat and public recreation		

What is the degree of timing/opportunistic urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

The watershed faces ongoing development pressures in riparian areas from population growth and recreational tourism. From 2000-2016 central MN counties within the St. Croix experienced a 23% increase in population, nearly double the state average. Increases in housing density and associated development on rural forest lands can be linked to numerous changes to private forest services across watersheds, including decreases in native wildlife; changes in forest health; and reduced water quality, forest carbon storage, timber production, and recreational benefits (Stein et al. 2005).

Protecting healthy watersheds with permanent conservation options, such as easements and fee acquisitions, is an effective strategy to ensure that the ecosystem and economic services provided by healthy watersheds remain intact. Additionally, the 50th Anniversary

of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (Oct. 2, 2018) provides an opportune platform to bring the connection between forests and healthy waters to the forefront of political, social, and environmental sectors.

How does this proposal include leverage in funds or other effort to supplement any OHF appropriation:

The Minnesota Land Trust encourages private landowners to fully or partially donate the appraised value of their conservation easement, thereby receiving less than the appraised value might otherwise allow. This donated value is shown as leveraged funds in the proposal. We expect a significant landowner contribution conservatively estimated at \$400,000 through this grant.

The Trust for Public Land will attempt to bring various state, local, and private funds to acquire additional property and leverage the OHF grant.

Relationship to other funds:

- Clean Water Fund
- U.S. Forest Service, Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant

Describe the relationship of the funds:

The St. Croix River Association is currently managing \$400,000 from the Clean Water Legacy Fund to work with partners to restore private lands for water quality improvements, a \$150,000 Healthy Watershed Consortium grant (EPA, NRCS, and U.S. Endowment for Forestry) to work throughout the watershed (MN and WI) to increase the capacity for permanent protection work, \$130,000 of U.S. Forest Service funding to work with private woodland owners on forest stewardship activities in the Kettle River and Snake River subwatersheds, and a \$132,000 Conservation Partners Legacy grant to restore 165 acres of National Park Service land along the St. Croix River north of Stillwater.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Any state agency or organization requesting a direct appropriation from the OHF must inform the LSOHC at the time of the request for funding is made, 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:

Funding requested by the Partnership will not supplant or substitute for any previous non-legacy funding used for the same purpose.

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

Appropriation Year	Source	Amount
2011	TPL: ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors	\$423,000
2013	TPL: ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors	\$395,000
2009	MLT: ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 5	\$67,700
2010	MLT: ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 5 Supplemental	\$20,300
2011	MLT: ENRTF - Metro Conservation Corridors 6	\$27,400

Activity Details

Requirements:

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

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition? - **No**

Pursuant to state statute, County Board Notification will occur prior to 30 days of closing and project managers will be made available for questions if requested

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 - **Yes**

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

Land Use:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

MLT - Short-term use of agricultural crops is an accepted best practice in some instances for preparing a site for restoration. For example, short-term use of soybeans could be used for restorations in order to control weed seedbeds prior to prairie planting. In some cases this necessitates the use of GMO-treated products to facilitate herbicide use in order to control weeds present in the seedbank. However, neonicotinoids will not be used.

The purpose of the Minnesota Land Trust's conservation easements is to protect existing high quality natural habitat and to preserve opportunities for future restoration. As such, we restrict any agricultural lands and use on the properties. In cases where there are agricultural lands associated with the larger property, we will either carve the agricultural area out of the conservation easement, or in some limited cases, we may include a small percentage of agricultural lands if it is not feasible to carve those areas out. In such cases, however, we will not use OHF funds to pay the landowners for that portion of the conservation easement.

TPL - For land acquired that are conveyed as WMAs to the DNR, the DNR has indicated the following:

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife. Lands proposed to be acquired as WMAs may utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **Yes**

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing - **No**

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

Yes, all fee-title land acquired will be open to public hunting and fishing. Lands acquired with trout stream easements will be open for public fishing.

Will the eased land be open for public use - **Yes**

Only TPL trout stream easements will be open for public use. Easements through MLT will not be open to public use.

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:

MLT - Most conservation easements are established on private lands, many of which have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. Often, these established trails and roads are permitted in the terms of the easement and can be maintained for personal use if 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 line 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**

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
MLT - Conservation easements procured or options exercised	June 30, 2022
MLT - Restoration and enhancement projects completed	June 30, 2024
TPL - Landowner negotiation, agreements and due diligence	June 20, 2022
TPL - Land acquired	June 30, 2022
TPL - Initial site development/restoration	Fall 2022

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$8,652,400

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$670,100	\$30,000	Private	\$700,100
Contracts	\$729,000	\$0		\$729,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$3,835,000	\$0		\$3,835,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$500,000	\$0		\$500,000
Easement Acquisition	\$2,165,000	\$400,000	Landowner	\$2,565,000
Easement Stewardship	\$216,000	\$0		\$216,000
Travel	\$16,000	\$2,000	Private	\$18,000
Professional Services	\$260,000	\$0		\$260,000
Direct Support Services	\$134,300	\$72,300	Private	\$206,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$35,000	\$0		\$35,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$17,000	\$0		\$17,000
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$75,000	\$0		\$75,000
Total	\$8,652,400	\$504,300	-	\$9,156,700

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
SCRA Program Manager	0.50	3.00	\$120,000	\$30,000	Private	\$150,000
SCRA Administration	0.09	0.00	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
TPL Staff	0.65	3.00	\$300,100	\$0		\$300,100
MLT Staff	0.85	3.00	\$230,000	\$0		\$230,000
Total	2.09	9.00	\$670,100	\$30,000	-	\$700,100

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	St. Croix River Association	\$140,000	\$30,000	Private	\$170,000
Contracts	St. Croix River Association	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	St. Croix River Association	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$165,000	\$30,000	-	\$195,000

Personnel - St. Croix River Association

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
SCRA Program Manager	0.50	3.00	\$120,000	\$30,000	Private	\$150,000
SCRA Administration	0.09	0.00	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
Total	0.59	3.00	\$140,000	\$30,000	-	\$170,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Trust for Public Land	\$300,100	\$0		\$300,100
Contracts	Trust for Public Land	\$100,000	\$0		\$100,000

Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Trust for Public Land	\$3,835,000	\$0	\$3,835,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Trust for Public Land	\$500,000	\$0	\$500,000
Easement Acquisition	Trust for Public Land	\$165,000	\$0	\$165,000
Easement Stewardship	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$2,000	Private \$2,000
Professional Services	Trust for Public Land	\$115,000	\$0	\$115,000
Direct Support Services	Trust for Public Land	\$72,300	\$72,300	Private \$144,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Trust for Public Land	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
Capital Equipment	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0	\$0
Supplies/Materials	Trust for Public Land	\$0	\$0	\$0
DNR IDP	Trust for Public Land	\$75,000	\$0	\$75,000
Total		\$5,197,400	\$74,300	\$5,271,700

Personnel - Trust for Public Land

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
TPL Staff	0.65	3.00	\$300,100	\$0		\$300,100
Total	0.65	3.00	\$300,100	\$0		\$300,100

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$230,000	\$0		\$230,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$604,000	\$0		\$604,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	Minnesota Land Trust	\$2,000,000	\$400,000	Landowner	\$2,400,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$216,000	\$0		\$216,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$16,000	\$0		\$16,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$145,000	\$0		\$145,000
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$62,000	\$0		\$62,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$17,000	\$0		\$17,000
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$3,290,000	\$400,000		\$3,690,000

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
MLT Staff	0.85	3.00	\$230,000	\$0		\$230,000
Total	0.85	3.00	\$230,000	\$0		\$230,000

Amount of Request: \$8,652,400
Amount of Leverage: \$504,300
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 5.83%
DSS + Personnel: \$804,400
As a % of the total request: 9.30%
Easement Stewardship: \$216,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 9.98%

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

MLT: In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the MLT's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR approved rate only to personnel expense to determine the total

amount of the direct support services.

TPL: DSS request is based upon our federal rate which has been approved by the DNR. 50% of these costs are requested from the grant, 50% is contributed as leverage.

Does the amount in the contract line include R/E work?

MLT will use the contract budget item for three distinct purposes: to complete habitat management plans for the new easement acquisitions and for restoration plans and projects on existing easements.

A portion of TPL's contract line may be used for initial restoration on parcels acquired through this program.

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 staff regularly rent vehicles for grant-related purposes, which is a significant cost savings over use of personal vehicles.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

TPL: One-half of DSS as leverage and all travel costs. Additionally, TPL will attempt to leverage fee-acquisition as partial donation of appraised value of parcel(s).

MLT: Landowners will be encouraged to fully or partially donate easement values. The leverage portion of the easement line item is a conservative estimate.

Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable? - Yes

Tell us how this project would be scaled and how administrative costs are affected, describe the "economy of scale" and how outputs would change with reduced funding, if applicable:

With less funding we will be able to work on fewer and smaller projects. Larger projects, and a higher volume of projects, allow for greater efficiency in personnel and administrative costs.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	40	40
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	760	100	860
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	40	80	120
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	655	655
Enhance	0	0	0	170	170
Total	0	0	800	1,045	1,845

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$131,000	\$131,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$3,891,500	\$502,200	\$4,393,700
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$200,900	\$416,700	\$617,600
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,985,100	\$2,985,100
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$525,000	\$525,000
Total	\$0	\$0	\$4,092,400	\$4,560,000	\$8,652,400

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	20	0	0	0	20	40
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	860	860
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	40	0	0	0	80	120
Protect in Easement	300	0	0	0	355	655
Enhance	85	0	0	0	85	170
Total	445	0	0	0	1,400	1,845

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$66,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65,000	\$131,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,393,700	\$4,393,700
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$200,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$416,700	\$617,600
Protect in Easement	\$1,355,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,630,100	\$2,985,100
Enhance	\$265,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$260,000	\$525,000
Total	\$1,886,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$6,765,500	\$8,652,400

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,275
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$5,120	\$5,022
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$5,023	\$5,209
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,557
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,088

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$3,300	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,250
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,109
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$5,023	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,209
Protect in Easement	\$4,517	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,592
Enhance	\$3,118	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,059

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

3

I have read and understand Section 15 of the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Statute 97A.056, and the Call for Funding Request. I certify I am authorized to submit this proposal and to the best of my knowledge the information provided is true and accurate.

Parcel List

Explain the process used to select, rank and prioritize the parcels:

The Trust for Public Land works with its public partners to identify and prioritize projects that meet their objectives and are on their priority lists. Criteria includes whether the land provides critical habitat for game and non-game species, quality public recreational opportunities, presence of unique plants and animal species (including SGCN), goals of conservation plans, adjacency to other public land or habitat complexes, existence of local support, immediacy of threats, land owner willingness and time frame.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Chisago

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Carlos Avery WMA Addition	03321205	62	\$150,000	No	Full	Full
Chengwatana State Forest Addition 1	03720208	630	\$1,500,000	No	Full	Full
Chisago Lake Conservation	03320217	80	\$500,000	No	Full	Full
Lawrence Creek	03319203	9	\$38,000	No	Not Applicable	Full

Kanabec

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Hay Snake WMA Conservation	04223203	840	\$930,000	No	Full	Full
Peace Township	04123222	750	\$940,000	No	Full	Full

Pine

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Chengwatana State Forest Addition 2	03820212	160	\$300,000	No	Full	Full
Sand Creek	04119223	46	\$103,000	No	Not Applicable	Full

Washington

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Washington County Conservation Area	03120209	40	\$500,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

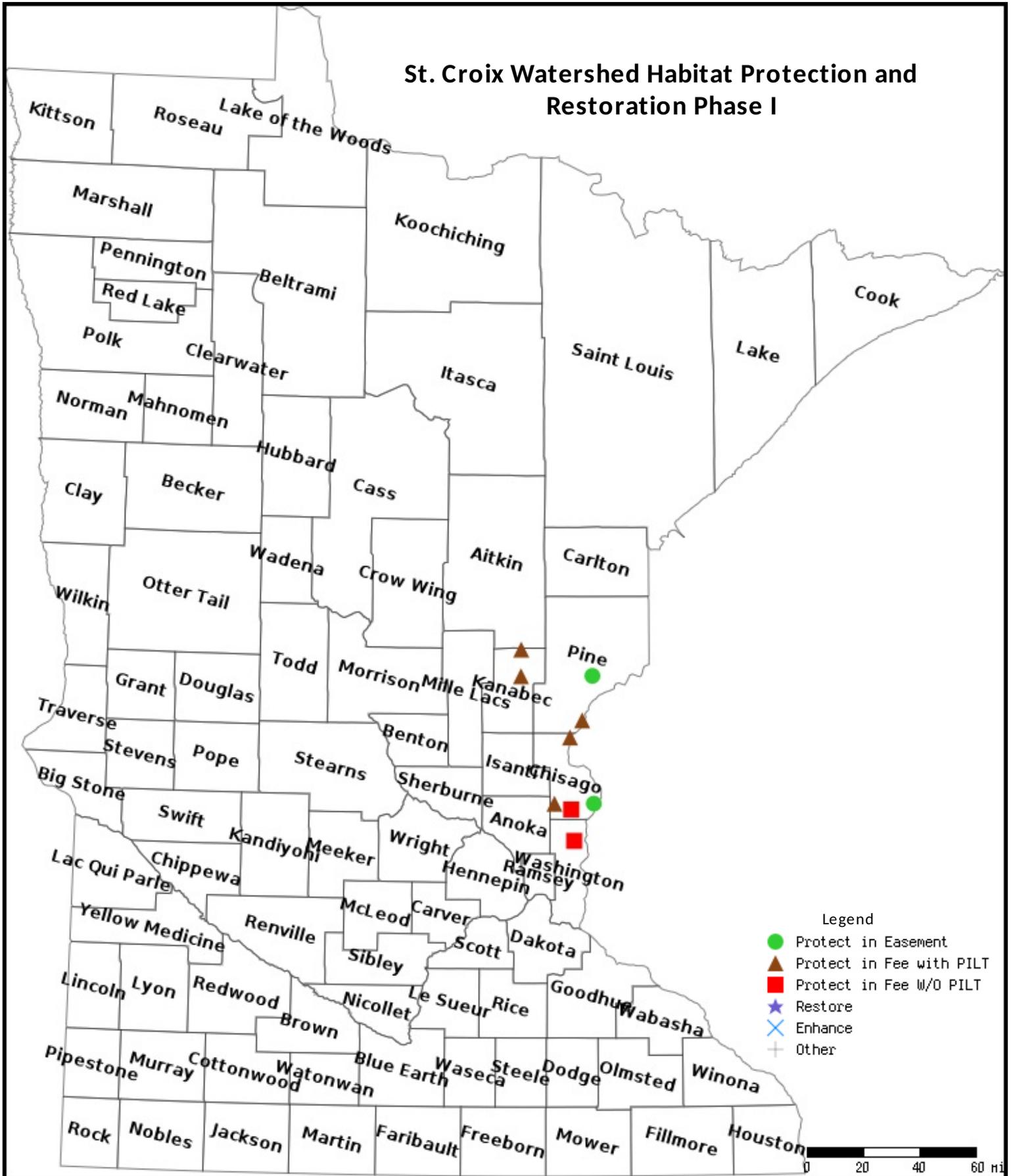
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

St. Croix Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Phase I



Data Generated From Parcel List

ST. CROIX WATERSHED

HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PHASE I

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This program will permanently protect approximately 1,600 acres of critical habitat through fee-title acquisition and conservation easements, and restore and enhance approximately 200 acres of habitat for species of greatest conservation need in strategically targeted protected land assets of biodiversity significance in the St. Croix Watershed. Its goals are to **protect habitat, improve conservation connectivity, and provide public access for outdoor recreation opportunities.**



Photo by Craig Blacklock

OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND REQUEST

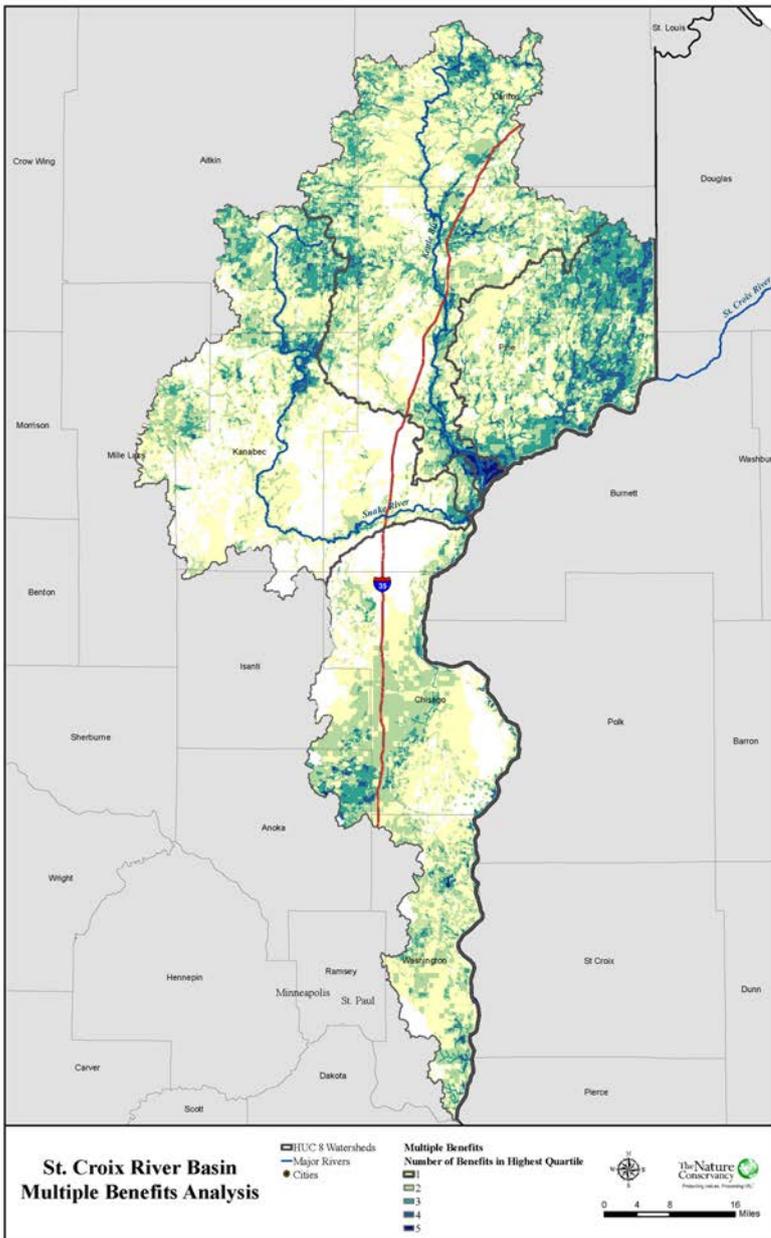
\$8,652,400 to protect over **1,600 acres** and restore/enhance over **200 acres.**

THE TIME IS NOW

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the St. Croix River's designation as one of the nation's first "Wild and Scenic Rivers". It is home to a diverse abundance of native flora and fauna, rivaling any other location within the greater Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Beyond the narrow federally protected Riverway boundary, more than 75% of the St. Croix's forestlands remain in private holdings and the threat of development, fragmentation and conversion to agriculture is substantial. We must act now to ensure critical habitats are protected for the next 50 years and beyond.





BUILDS UPON MOMENTUM

With the recent creation of the “My St. Croix Woods” program, the St. Croix River Association is growing the demand for forest stewardship and protection by increasing collaboration with partners. Building upon years of momentum, this program will increase capacity to deliver permanent protection on lands that support critical habitat areas.

SUPPORTS STATE GOALS

This program aligns with the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund priorities:

- **Northern Forests Section** - providing access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties and protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, and conservation easements.
- **Metro Urban Section** - protecting habitat corridors, with emphasis on the St. Croix River.

STRATEGICALLY TARGETS

This program uses a multiple benefits approach, emphasizing aquatic and terrestrial habitat, for prioritizing and targeting areas of greatest conservation value down to the parcel level. High priority areas depicted in blue. (Left)

PARTNERSHIP

- **Minnesota Land Trust** is a nationally accredited land trust that monitors, manages and enforces more than 500 conservation easements throughout the state. MLT will be responsible for negotiating the purchase of conservation easements and ongoing monitoring and enforcement.
- **The Trust for Public Land** works to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. TPL will be responsible for protecting land in fee and acquire easements along trout streams.
- **St. Croix River Association** is the only entity working watershed wide to protect, restore, and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed. SCRA will be responsible for program administration and landowner outreach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Monica Zachay, SCRA Land & Water Director at 715-483-3300 or monicz@scramail.org





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.

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.

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST ST. CROIX WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM Conservation Easement 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 Habitat to be Protected by an Easement													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weighting Factor	Quality of Natural Resources to be Protected by the Easement (33 points)													
	a) Habitat Quality (28 pts): Quality of Existing Ecological Systems (Terrestrial & Aquatic)													
	b) Imperiled Species (5 pts): Occurrence of Documented Rare Species on Parcel													
	SUBTOTAL:	0	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 (8 pts)													
	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 (8 pts)													
	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	0
	TOTAL ECOLOGICAL VALUE POINTS	0												
COST														
	i. Bid amount (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	ii. Estimated donative value (\$)/acre	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	TOTAL ACQUISITION COST (\$)	\$ -												

KEY	
	Priority
	Possible
	Out