

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Fiscal Year 2021 / ML 2020 Request for Funding

HA 08



Date: June 12, 2019

Program or Project Title: Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program - Phase 2

Funds Requested: \$8,926,000

Manager's Name: Kristine Maurer

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County Locations: Not Listed

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Metro / Urban

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat

Abstract:

Hennepin County, in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust, is seeking \$8.92 million to permanently protect, through conservation easement, 952 acres of the most important natural areas remaining in the county, and restore and enhance 500 acres of protected habitat including forest, savanna, prairie, wetlands, shallow lakes, shoreline, bluffs, and riparian areas.

Intense development pressure is a persistent threat to remaining habitat in Hennepin County. This grant will enable this partnership to continue implementation of the conservation easement and restoration actions initiated through the Outdoor Heritage Fund in 2018 and accommodate high landowner interest generated through targeted outreach.

Design and scope of work:

The Twin Cities metro area is rapidly losing ecologically significant and floristically diverse habitat as land development pressure increases; resulting in immediate consequences for the Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) which rely on critical habitats in Hennepin County.

Hennepin County in partnership with its cities used extensive field work and the Minnesota Land Classification System Methodology to inventory every acre of land in the county and document the quality of natural communities. This assessment resulted in the identification of ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors that connect areas of significant habitat across the county. In total, ecologically significant areas and corridors account for about 60,000 acres of land, of which only 31 percent is permanently protected. Using a combination of these rich datasets and other state, federal, and local data, the Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program (HCP) has established focus areas and a systematic process for protection, restoration, and enhancement of the

associated remaining high quality habitats. Over the next 18 years, the county plans to permanently protect 6,000 acres; resulting in permanent protection of 41 percent (24,600 acres) of the county's best remaining natural areas by 2041. Combined with our anticipated Phase 1 outputs, we will achieve nearly 20% of the county's long-term land protection objective during these first two phases of our program.

In 2018, Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) were awarded \$1.514 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) to support the goals of the HCP. Through work conducted under that grant to date, the project partners are poised to acquire 200 acres of easement and complete restoration and enhancement actions on 130 acres of protected land. As a result, 2018 funds are expected to be fully encumbered this year and fully spent in 2020.

HCP promotion, outreach, and proposal solicitation efforts have resulted in consistent landowner inquiries and high-quality easement opportunities that now exceed our current easement acquisition capacity by more than 200 acres; accounting for approximately one-fifth of the acres proposed for protection under Phase 2. Landowner interest is strong. Funding through this proposal will allow the county and Minnesota Land Trust to sustain this momentum by continuing to identify the best, most cost-effective opportunities to protect, restore, and enhance remaining natural areas.

The county will continue to work with MLT, its 11 watershed organizations, 45 cities, two park districts, the MN DNR, NPS, and USFWS to identify easement opportunities and build landowner connections. The Minnesota Land Trust will bring the experience of its land protection and legal team to negotiate the purchase of conservation easements with landowners. An RFP approach will identify high value protection opportunities and encourage a competitive marketplace for scarce monetary resources. All opportunities for easement acquisition will be scored based on six categories: spatial context, size, habitat quality and diversity, water resources, wildlife and plant conservation, and risk of conversion. Management factors, partner involvement, and professional judgement will also be considered.

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

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:

HCP priority areas incorporate biologically diverse and remnant wetlands, forest, savannas, prairies, floodplains, blufflands, and riparian and littoral habitats critical for the interconnection and buffering of already protected core habitats. Priority areas include the county's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors, and significantly overlap the State's Wildlife Action Network (Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025).

By targeting protection, restoration, and enhancement activities in priority areas, we will ensure the long-term health and viability of Minnesota's game and non-game wildlife and increase the ecological integrity of important habitats by forming habitat corridors and improving the quality of existing habitat through invasive species management and mitigation.

By simple virtue of proximity to population centers, HCP efforts will also increase opportunities to enjoy SGCN and other wildlife. Consequently, our program also addresses all of the OHF Funding Framework's priority actions for the metropolitan and urbanizing areas.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Metro / Urban:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

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:

Hennepin County is home to remnants of both Minnesota's Big Woods forest and the western prairies, and was historically dotted by abundant wetlands of many types; more than 50 percent of which have been lost. The county's natural resource corridors and ecologically significant areas include remnant old growth Maple-Basswood forest, rich and poor fens, tamarack bogs, oak savannas,

shallow lakes, restored prairie, and remnant native prairie, all of which are critically essential habitat for a variety of wildlife. The great diversity of habitat types and the resulting fish, game, and wildlife species found in Hennepin County presents unique and unparalleled opportunities for protection, restoration, and enhancement.

Hennepin County is home to 36 rare plants and fungi, over 25 rare and sensitive plant community types, multiple occurrences of rare animal assemblages, 25 rare invertebrates, and 41 rare animal species. There are also 59 SGCN and four federally-listed species that will benefit from this proposal.

Conservation easements are a critical tool in combatting the loss of Hennepin County's best remaining areas of habitat. Phase 2 of HCP will continue the work of placing permanent conservation easements on some of the State's most threatened habitat, and ensuring that Minnesota's most populous county retains a critical connection to our state's iconic flora and fauna. By the end of Phase 2, an additional 952 acres of the county's best remaining habitat will be permanently protected, and 500 more will be significantly improved through restoration or enhancement.

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:

Hennepin County's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors were established as part of the DNR's Minnesota Land Cover Classification System comprehensive land cover inventory completed in 2008. Natural vegetative communities evaluated as High, Good, or Moderate quality were identified as ecologically significant areas. They contain some forests, prairies and wetlands with primarily native vegetation that have not been significantly altered since European settlement. These are the best remaining and ecologically intact areas in the county and some of the finest habitat of their kind anywhere in the state. Natural resource corridors were identified by spatial analysis, focused on areas with high concentrations of ecologically significant areas which created connections between ecologically significant areas, and expanded large complexes of high quality habitat.

About 15 percent of the land area in the county - 60,000 acres - are ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors. Of these, about 41,400 acres are privately owned that are partially or entirely unprotected. Priority areas for program outreach have been developed using available data related to spatial context, size, habitat quality and diversity, water resources, wildlife and plant conservation, and risk of conversion in addition to local knowledge. The highest priority areas are generally areas adjacent to large core areas of already protected habitat.

All easement opportunities (identified through targeted outreach to landowners and via an RFP process) will be evaluated using ecological factors including but not limited to amount proximity to protected natural areas (e.g., USFW, NPS, and DNR lands, conservation easements, parks and preserves), habitat diversity and quality (e.g., MLCCS ranking, MND Sites of Biodiversity significance), size, proximity to important wildlife areas and rare species occurrences (e.g., MN DNR rare feature inventory, endangered species habitat areas, bird habitat, pollinator habitat, lakes of biological significance, Wildlife Action Network), threats of development (e.g., zoning and potential development), and proximity to important surface and groundwater areas (e.g., shoreland, wetland, floodplain, sensitive groundwater). In addition, donation values, nearness to partner planning areas, community interest, and restoration and management requirements will be considered.

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:

Hennepin County is home to remnants of both Minnesota's Big Woods forest and the western prairies, and was historically dotted by abundant wetlands of many types, more than 50 percent of which have been lost. The great diversity of habitat types and the resulting fish, game, and wildlife species found in Hennepin County presents unique and unparalleled opportunities for protection, restoration, and enhancement. The county's natural resource corridors and ecologically significant areas include remnant old growth Maple-Basswood forest, rich and poor fens, tamarack bogs, oak savannas, shallow lakes, restored prairie, and remnant native prairie, all of which all are critically essential habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Hennepin County is home to 36 rare plants and fungi, over 25 rare and sensitive plant community types, multiple occurrences of rare animal assemblages, 25 rare invertebrates, and 41 rare animal species. There are also 59 SGCN and four federally-listed species that would be impacted by this proposal. Species in Greatest Conservation Need that would be impacted by this proposal including Blanding's turtle and Trumpeter swans. Wildlife on the federal list of endangered and threatened species that can be found in Hennepin County include the Northern long-eared bat, Monarch butterfly, Higgins eye pearly mussel, and the Rusty-patched bumble bee.

Our rigorous selection criteria and scoring methodology takes into account a variety of datasets, metrics, and professional and partner knowledge, of rare and SGCN species. Furthermore, by focusing on priority areas and emphasizing the expansion of existing natural areas and creating habitat connections, this program is especially well-designed to promote habitat protection that will benefit such species. Restoration project selection and actions of the HCP also focus on increasing and enhancing diversity of sensitive, rare, and

important habitat.

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

DNR staff, in consultation with a variety of experts in NGOs and other agencies, have compiled a select group of indicator species and associated quantities. The metrics are derived from existing data sources and/or scientific literature, but are necessarily gross averages. It is important to emphasize that the estimates provided are not accurate at a site-specific scale.

Prairie Indicator:

•Bobolink - The breeding territory size of bobolinks is 1.7 acres in high quality habitat in Wisconsin. If all of the habitat was occupied, a 100 acres of habitat could potentially hold approximately 60 pairs of bobolinks.

Wetland Indicator:

•Trumpeter swans are a readily recognizable feature on wetlands and their restoration is a modern wildlife management success story. Trumpeter swans are strictly territorial on their breeding areas with shoreline complexity and food availability being factors in defining the area being defended. Though reported territories can range in size from 1.5 - >100 hectares, a reasonable expectation is that 1 trumpeter swan pair would be supported by each 150 acres of wetlands protected, restored, or enhanced.

Forest Indicator:

•White-tailed deer use a wide variety of forested habitats, are found throughout Minnesota, and are an important game species in the state. In the 33 forested deer permit areas for which deer densities are estimated, covering most of the LSOHC Northern Forest section, the sixty-year average (2010-2015) for pre-fawn deer densities across all deer permit areas is 13 deer per land habitat, or roughly 1 deer (pre-fawning) for every 50 acres.

Outcomes:

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need *Phase 2 of the Habitat Conservation Program will permanently protect 952 acres of strategic and diverse habitat within identified natural resource priority areas and restore 500 acres of new and existing protected land.*

By targeting protection, restoration, and enhancement activities in biologically diverse natural areas and remnant habitats critical for the interconnection and buffering of already protected core habitats, we will ensure the long-term health and viability of Minnesota's game and non-game wildlife and increase the ecological integrity of important habitats by forming habitat corridors and improving the quality of existing habitat through invasive species management and mitigation.

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

Both partners are experienced land and easement managers; co-holding easements provides another level of assurance that the habitat protected and restored will be sustained using the best standards and practices of conservation easement stewardship.

The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust with a successful stewardship program that includes 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. Hennepin County successfully holds, co-holds or manages seven conservation easements and 38 RIM easements.

To ensure that the protected resources will be managed to support biological integrity, Habitat Management Plans and Restoration/Enhancement Plans will be developed for each conservation easement and restoration/enhancement project. Hennepin County and the Land Trust are committed to maintaining relationships with project landowners, and securing the technical and financial resources to undertake prescribed activities.

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

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2024 (and in perpetuity)	MLT Stewardship & Enforcement Fund; Hennepin County Enterprise Fund	Annual monitoring of property in perpetuity	Enforcement as needed	
2024-2029	Hennepin County Solid Waste Enterprise Fund	Begin annual monitoring of restoration project performance standards	Make adaptive management course corrections as needed to meet performance standards	Continue monitoring periodically to ensure restoration objectives are sustained.

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 rapid loss and degradation of ecologically significant and floristically diverse habitat in the county poses immediate consequences for SGCN. According to Metropolitan Council projections, open space in Hennepin County is expected to decline from 39% to 23% by 2030. If these critical corridors and natural areas are not protected, they will continue to be fragmented and eliminated through development, having disastrous consequences for the fish, game, and wildlife species dependent upon them.

HCP promotion, outreach, and proposal solicitation efforts have resulted in high-quality easement opportunities that now exceed our current easement acquisition capacity by more than 200 acres. As a result of our targeted outreach, clusters of like-minded neighbors often apply in consortium, requiring greater need for accessible funding.

This award will allow this partnership to sustain current momentum by continuing to identify the best, most cost-effective opportunities to protect, restore, and enhance.

Does this program include leverage in funds:

Yes

Hennepin County will provide 1.3 FTE staff time over the course of the grant: portions of three Natural Resources Specialist (1.2 FTE), the Land and Water Supervisor (0.1 FTE). Hennepin County will also provide an estimated \$624,000 cash toward costs associated with easement acquisition.

The Minnesota Land Trust will encourage private landowners to fully or partially donate the value of their conservation easements, thereby receiving less than the appraised value might otherwise allow. This donated value is shown as leveraged funds in the proposal. The Land Trust has a strong track record of incentivizing landowner to participate in this fashion.

Finally, although it is not quantified in this proposal, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Three Rivers Park District, Watershed Districts, and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association will be engaged as a restoration partners in this program. All have committed to providing leveraged funds through their services, the amount of which will depend on the specific restoration and protection projects.

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

Describe the relationship of the funds:

Not Listed

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:

This proposal does not supplant or substitute for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund 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
2006	LCCMR (for Natural Resources Inventory)	\$80,000
NA	City of Bloomington, City of Plymouth, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (for Natural Resources Inventory)	\$160,000
NA	Hennepin County (1FTE Natural Resources Specialist, 2003-2018)	\$1,646,000
NA	Hennepin County (1.5 FTE Natural Resources Specialists, 2018-2019)	\$62,000
NA	Hennepin County (Stewardship funds for 4 easements co-held with MLT)	\$78,000
NA	Hennepin County (Operating budgets for natural resources program 2003-2019)	\$240,000
NA	Hennepin County, PCA, MDH, Landowner (Conservation easement restoration)	\$180,000
NA	Hennepin County, Three Rivers, Conservation Corps of MN (Conservation easement restoration)	\$74,700

Activity Details

Requirements:

If funded, this proposal 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 - **Yes (Permanently Protected Conservation Easements County/Municipal, Refuge Lands, Watershed property)**

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 - **No**

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

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **No**

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition - **Yes**

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

Conservation easements established on private lands often have driveways, field roads and trails located on them. These established trails and roads will be permitted in the terms of the conservation easement and can be maintained for personal use, provided that they do not interfere with the conservation value of the property. Creation of new roads or trails or expansion of existing ones is typically not allowed.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Existing trails and roads will be identified in the project baseline reports and will be monitored annually as part of the Land Trust's stewardship and enforcement protocols. Maintenance of permitted roads/trails will be the responsibility of the landowner.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Acquire conservation easements: 1) identify landowners; 2) negotiate, draft, and complete easements; 3) dedicate fund for stewardship	June 2023
Restoration & enhancement of existing permanently protected areas: 1) select projects; 2) draft restoration plan and performance standards; 3) perform restoration activities; 4) annual monitoring for restoration success; 5) adaptive management and additional restoration activities as needed to meet performance standards	June 2025
Restoration & enhancement of new conservation easements: 1) select projects; 2) draft restoration plan and performance standards; 3) perform restoration activities; 4) annual monitoring for restoration success; 5) adaptive management and additional restoration activities as needed to meet performance standards	June 2025

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$8,926,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$228,000	\$484,000	Hennepin County, Hennepin County	\$712,000
Contracts	\$1,477,000	\$0		\$1,477,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$6,080,000	\$1,536,000	Landowner Donation, Hennepin County	\$7,616,000
Easement Stewardship	\$624,000	\$0		\$624,000
Travel	\$12,000	\$0		\$12,000
Professional Services	\$318,000	\$0		\$318,000
Direct Support Services	\$62,000	\$0		\$62,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Supplies/Materials	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$8,926,000	\$2,020,000		\$10,946,000

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection Staff	0.80	3.00	\$228,000	\$0		\$228,000
Natural Resource Specialists	1.20	3.00	\$0	\$469,000	Hennepin County	\$469,000
Land and Water Supervisor	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$15,000	Hennepin County	\$15,000
Total	2.10	9.00	\$228,000	\$484,000		\$712,000

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$228,000	\$0		\$228,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$156,000	\$0		\$156,000
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	\$6,080,000	\$912,000	Landowner Donation	\$6,992,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$624,000	\$0		\$624,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$12,000	\$0		\$12,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$318,000	\$0		\$318,000
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	\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$7,500,000	\$912,000		\$8,412,000

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection Staff	0.80	3.00	\$228,000	\$0		\$228,000
Total	0.80	3.00	\$228,000	\$0		\$228,000

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Hennepin County	\$0	\$484,000	Hennepin County, Hennepin County	\$484,000
Contracts	Hennepin County	\$1,321,000	\$0		\$1,321,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0

Easement Acquisition	Hennepin County	\$0	\$624,000	Hennepin County	\$624,000
Easement Stewardship	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Hennepin County	\$60,000	\$0		\$60,000
Supplies/Materials	Hennepin County	\$45,000	\$0		\$45,000
DNR IDP	Hennepin County	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	-	\$1,426,000	\$1,108,000	-	\$2,534,000

Personnel - Hennepin County

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Natural Resource Specialists	1.20	3.00	\$0	\$469,000	Hennepin County	\$469,000
Land and Water Supervisor	0.10	3.00	\$0	\$15,000	Hennepin County	\$15,000
Total	1.30	6.00	\$0	\$484,000	-	\$484,000

Amount of Request: \$8,926,000
Amount of Leverage: \$2,020,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 22.63%
DSS + Personnel: \$290,000
As a % of the total request: 3.25%
Easement Stewardship: \$624,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 10.26%

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

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 Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services.

What is included in the contracts line?

Hennepin County will manage \$1,321,000 worth of restoration and enhancement activities under contracts with restoration partners. Another \$156,000 will be used for the development of Habitat Management Plans for selected conservation easements.

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:

From time to time, Land Trust staff may rent vehicles for grant-related purposes.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Hennepin County Environment and Energy Department operations are funded by the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (money received from the sale of energy and recovered materials) as allowed by Minnesota Statute. The Land Trust encourages landowners to fully or partially donate the value of conservation easements.

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:

Because this program endeavors to protect multiple parcels with this funding, it is scalable. Administrative costs are somewhat fixed, creating an economy of scale to doing more projects under one appropriation. Less funding will result in fewer protected, restored, and enhanced acres, and opportunities lost to development.

What is the cost per easement for stewardship and explain how that amount is calculated?

The average cost per easement to fund the Minnesota Land Trust's perpetual monitoring and enforcement obligations is \$24,000. This figure is derived from MLT's detailed stewardship funding "cost analysis" which is consistent with Land Trust Accreditation standards. MLT shares periodic updates to this cost analysis with LSOHC staff.

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	75	75
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	0	0	952	952
Enhance	0	0	0	195	195
Total	0	0	0	1,222	1,222

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$297,400	\$297,400
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	\$0	\$0	\$7,891,500	\$7,891,500
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$737,100	\$737,100
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,926,000	\$8,926,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	75	0	0	0	0	75
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	952	0	0	0	0	952
Enhance	195	0	0	0	0	195
Total	1,222	0	0	0	0	1,222

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$297,400	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$297,400
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	\$7,891,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$7,891,500
Enhance	\$737,100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$737,100
Total	\$8,926,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,926,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,965
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	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$8,289
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,780

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$3,965	\$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	\$8,289	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$3,780	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Automatic system calculation / not entered by managers

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0

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:

See attached for a detailed explanation of parcel selection.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

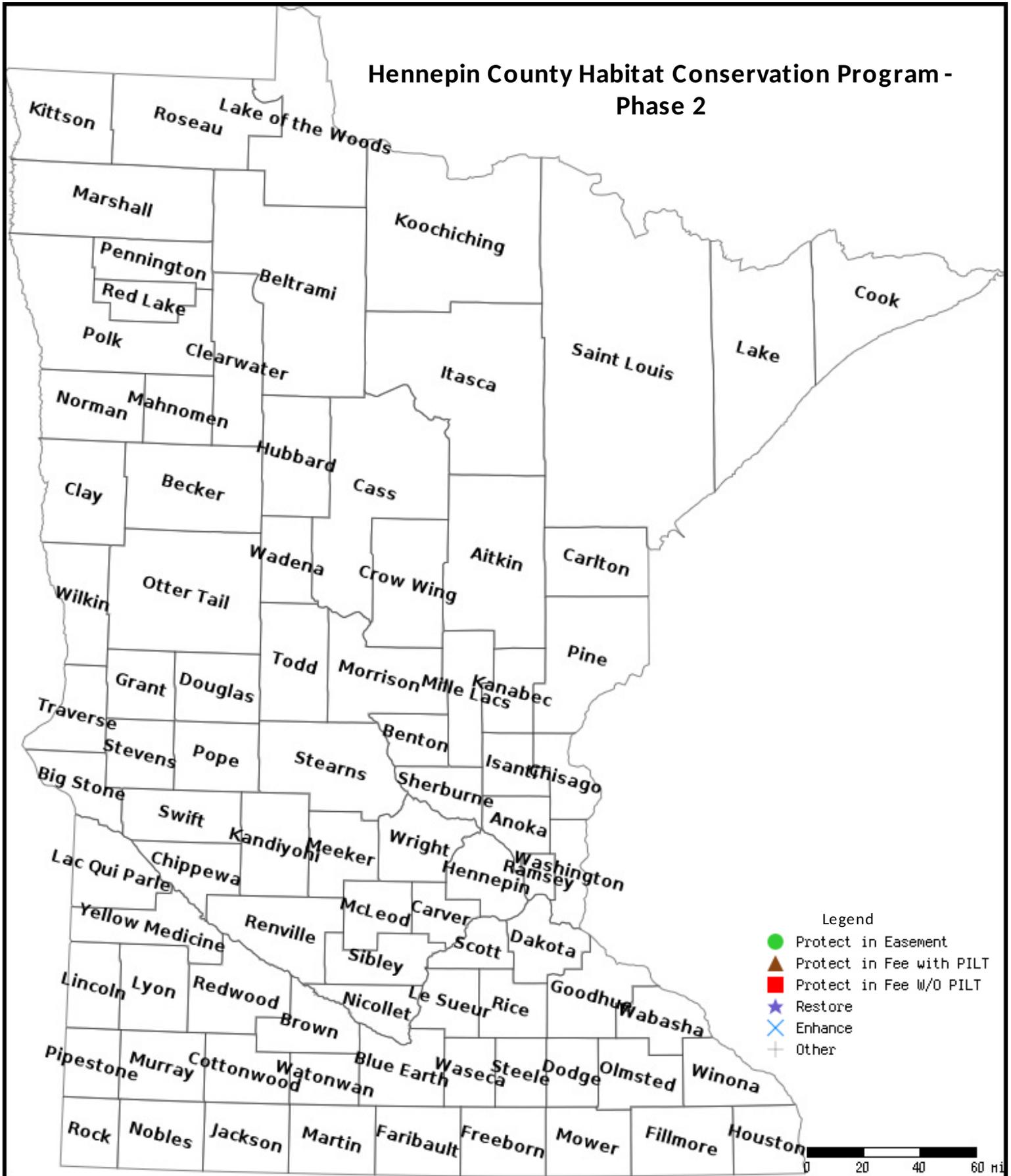
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program - Phase 2



Data Generated From Parcel List

Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program—Phase 2

An opportunity to permanently protect critical habitat threatened by development

Hennepin County, in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust, is seeking \$8.92 million to permanently protect 952 acres of the most unique and important natural areas remaining in the county through conservation easements, and restore and enhance 500 acres of protected habitat.

This grant will enable the county to continue implementation of the conservation easement and restoration actions initiated through the Outdoor Heritage Fund in 2018. This program will permanently protect a diversity of habitats, including deciduous forest, oak savanna, native prairie, wetlands, shallow lakes, shoreline, bluffs, and riparian areas.

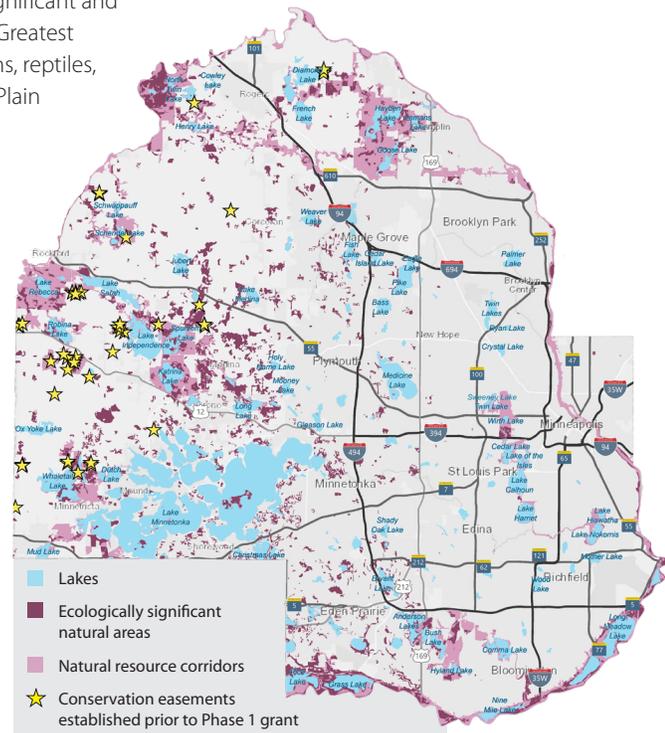
Time is running out to protect these natural areas

The remaining natural areas in Hennepin County are threatened as land development pressure increases, making it imperative to protect these areas now. The rapid loss and degradation of ecologically significant and floristically diverse habitat in the county poses immediate consequences for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including more than 120 species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrate species that rely on critical habitats in the Big Woods and Anoka Sand Plain ecological subsections.

Hennepin County is ready to continue land protection, restoration and enhancement initiatives

In 2018, Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust were awarded \$1.514 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) to support the goals of the county's Habitat Conservation Program. This partnership is poised to fully encumber 2018 funds this year, and expend the grant fully in 2020. The anticipated outputs of Phase 1 include protection of 200 acres of easement and restoration of 130 acres of protected land. These results will exceed the expectations of this current grant.

Program promotion, outreach, and proposal solicitation efforts have resulted in consistent landowner inquiries and high-quality easement opportunities that now exceed our current easement acquisition capacity by more than 200 acres. In fact, high-quality easement projects currently in progress account for approximately one-fifth of the acres proposed for protection under Phase 2. Landowner interest is strong. This award will allow Hennepin County and Minnesota Land Trust to sustain this momentum by continuing to identify the best, most cost-effective opportunities to protect, restore, and enhance remaining natural areas.



Conservation easements are a critical tool for protecting habitat

Several state plans identify conservation easements as a critical tool for supporting fish, game and wildlife populations. Additionally, landowners have expressed interest in alternatives to development for their land. Funding to support the popular Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program will continue to provide the financial means to make conservation a viable alternative to development for landowners.

Project partners

- **Hennepin County** is responsible for the delivery of conservation programs and services as the Soil and Water Conservation District for the county. The county will manage this program, work to build interest among landowners, and manage habitat restoration and enhancement projects.
- **Minnesota Land Trust** is a nationally accredited land trust that monitors, manages and enforces more than 500 conservation easements throughout the state. Minnesota Land Trust will be responsible for negotiating the purchase of conservation easements and ongoing monitoring and enforcement.

Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust have a strong history of successful partnership and will collaborate closely on this project. The county and the Land Trust will work together to conduct communications and outreach; orchestrating a competitive, market-based Request for Proposal process to identify potential easement projects, reviewing and ranking applications, procuring and co-holding easements, and implementing restoration projects.

Alignment with Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund priorities

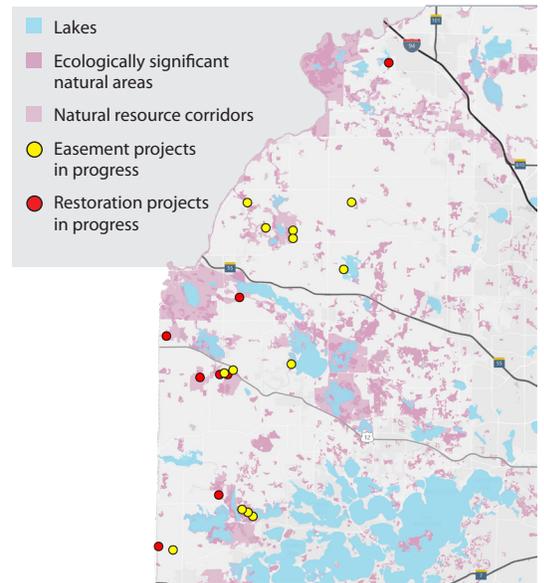
The project aligns well with the following priorities of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section:

- Ensure long-term health and viability of Minnesota's wildlife by permanently protecting habitats.
- Protect a network of biologically diverse upland and wetland habitat in the county, by buffering and increasing connectivity between already protected core habitats; including areas important for the ecological integrity of major rivers and lakes.
- Increase opportunities for recreation and observation of a variety of wildlife species, including numerous Species of in Greatest Conservation Need.
- Improving the quality of existing habitat through restoration and enhancement with particular attention to invasive species management and mitigation.

The \$8.92 million invested by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage fund will leverage:

- More than \$1 million in cash and staff time from Hennepin County.
- Donations of conservation easement value by landowners, estimated at \$912,000, which will be encouraged through the proposal solicitation process.
- Restoration assistance from the Three Rivers Park District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, watershed districts, cities, and Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

For more information, contact Karen Galles at Karen.Galles@hennepin.us or Kristine Maurer at Kristine.Maurer@hennepin.us



A prescribed burn on a newly established Hennepin County and Minnesota Land Trust conservation easement



A great grey owl perched near Crow-Hassan Park Reserve



Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program

Conservation easement selection criteria summary

The Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program (HCP) is a partnership between Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust that protects the best remaining wildlife habitat within the county's ecologically significant areas and natural resource corridors. This program works with willing landowners to secure conservation easements that protect the county's forests, wetlands, grasslands, and riparian and shoreland areas and the wildlife that rely on these habitats. The program also enhances existing habitat and restores degraded habitat. Easements completed through this program will be co-held by Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust.

Through an open Request for Proposal (RFP) process, landowners submit a simple project application. This application collects basic location information of the proposed project, and asks about the landowner's willingness to donate some or all of the conservation easement value. Program promotion and targeted outreach activities have resulted in a concentration of project applications from our highest priority areas, but any landowner may apply. Project applications trigger initial site visits and landowner conversations, followed by project scoring.

Each proposed project and scores are presented to and discussed with the HCP's Technical Advisory Committee. The entirety of this process guides the partners in deciding to proceed with a proposed parcel, to decline to proceed, or to consider a proposed parcel again at a later time.

Minimum Criteria

Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust have set the following minimum criteria for inclusion into the program:

- The proposed easement area must contain high-quality native plant communities (e.g., forests, prairies, woodlands, etc.), shoreland along rivers and streams, or rare and threatened species. Consideration may be given to land not containing high-quality areas if it is adjacent to critically important protected properties and restoration is a required element of the easement.
- The proposed easement area cannot be enrolled previously in permanent protection programs, such as the Reinvest in Minnesota program.

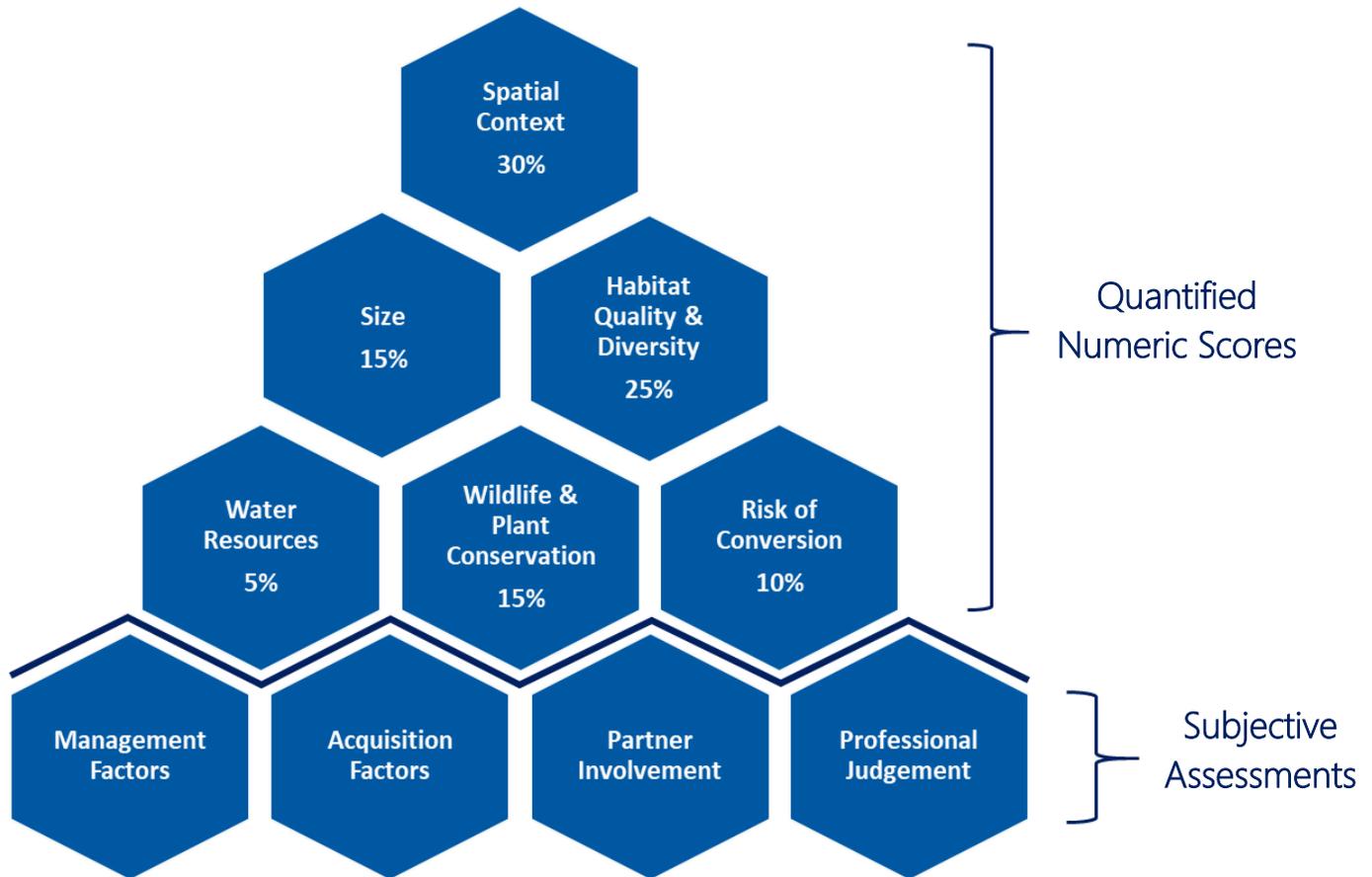
Additional land use requirements will be stipulated within each conservation easement agreement as it relates to the special characteristics of the land and the particular situation of the landowner.

Selection and Scoring Criteria

The ranking and selection methodology for easement selection is informed by primary literature review of existing prioritization methods used in Minnesota and other states for conservation project selection including the ecological ranking framework used by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and the University of Minnesota. In addition, methodologies were informed by feedback from the HCP's Technical Advisory Committee. This methodology will continue to evolve as advancements in science, information, and data become available to ensure the selection of the best projects.

Submitted projects are selected based on several quantified factors and also based on professional assessments. Using a ranking system that prioritizes projects based on ecological value and willingness to donate enables this program to secure conservation easements that protect Hennepin County's most critical wildlife resources in the most cost-effective way.

The diagram below depicts the criteria categories considered. Also identified are percent weights of the numerical categories and a description of each selection criteria categories:



Quantitative Numeric Scoring Criteria

- **Spatial Context** *Premise: Identify areas which create local abundance of open space and improves habitat connectivity; aggregation of lands affects local dynamics and occupancy of wildlife populations and results in greater buffering of interior habitat spaces.*

Considers existing protected areas (e.g., conservation easements, wildlife refuges and USFWS lands, regional parks, nature preserves, Wildlife Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, Aquatic Management Areas, National Parks lands, other state and federally protected natural areas) and identified natural areas and open spaces (e.g., Ecologically Significant Natural Areas, Hennepin County Natural Resource Corridors, Mississippi River Critical Area open spaces, and nearness to current and potential easement projects).

- Habitat Quality and Diversity** *Premise: Identify areas that meet multiple habitat criteria to prioritize high quality resource protection; also affects carrying capacity and ability to support diverse wildlife populations.*

Looks at habitat ranking data (e.g., A, B, and C ranking on Minnesota Land Cover Classification System, Moderate, High, and Outstanding MN DNR Sites of Biological Significance) and diversity indices (e.g., richness, Simpson's Diversity Index).
- Size** *Premise: Sufficient size such that conservation resources likely to remain intact and provide value, effects carrying capacity of wildlife populations and reduces edge habitat.*

Considers absolute and relative acreage of potential easement area.
- Wildlife and Plant Conservation** *Premise: Identify areas which likely to provide the greatest benefit to wildlife and protect rare resources.*

Considers rare resources and conservation planning data (e.g., Natural History Information System, Wildlife Action Network, Important Bird Areas, Important Duck Habitat, federal-listed species habitat, Lakes of Biological Significance, pollinator habitat).
- Water Resources** *Premise: Identify areas which can protect water resources for public and wildlife benefit.*

Considers presence of floodplains (e.g., FEMA data), water resources (e.g., Public Waters and National Wetland Inventory, Shoreland), sensitive waters, and groundwater sensitivity (e.g., springs, recharge rate, contamination susceptibility).
- Risk of Conversation** *Premise: Identify lands most susceptible to land use change.*

Identifies proximity to existing and future development (e.g., location within MUSA 2040, potential change in development density).

Subjective Assessment Criteria

- Acquisition Factors** *Premise: Identify land that is affordable with available financial resources and is reasonable relative to other available land.*

This category considers landowner willingness to donate. Landowners are asked whether they are willing to donate none, some, or all of the value of a conservation easement. In project ranking, landowners willing to donate some or all of the value of a conservation easement are given additional consideration, because their donation makes the easement a more cost-effective conservation option. Also considered here is the relative cost and available funds.
- Partnership** *Premise: Identify areas which foster opportunity for partnership.*

This category considers the proximity to partner planning areas, the neighborhood or community interest and involvement, and partner involvement or matching funds.

- **Management Factors** *Premise: Identify land that is manageable based on available resources.*

This category considers feasibility of restoration and enhancement efforts (e.g. impact to neighbors, level of invasive species infestation) and ongoing management needs (e.g. proximity to neighbors for a property that will need to be burned).

- **Professional Judgement & Other Considerations** *Premise: Sometimes other factors can create important benefits or challenging barriers.*

This category considers potential ecosystem services, ethical and public image concerns, and landowner engagement.

An Example: Below are the outputs of quantitative scoring for potential easement projects currently under consideration for funding through the HCP Phase 1 grant.

