

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: Agenda Item #9B

DATE: June 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Accomplishment Plan amendment request: ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(f)
Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration, Phase II

PRESENTER: Rich Biske, Freshwater Conservation Program Director, The Nature Conservancy

Background:

MS 97A.056 Lands in the Public Domain requires that if lands are partially or wholly owned by the state, additional public benefit must be present in order for outdoor heritage funds to be used. The statute also requires that an affirmative motion of at least nine members is necessary.

The Nature Conservancy is in the process of acquiring a property with a DNR-held Trout Stream Angler Access easement on it. The approximately 2,400 foot easement is a small portion of the larger 282 acre acquisition. Soon after the purchase is complete, TNC will transfer the property to the DNR as a Wildlife Management Area. This existing easement was considered in the appraisal.

TNC feels the supplemental benefits of acquisition of the entire property will provide greater protection to the watershed by covering an additional 278 acres.

Suggested Motion:

Project manager makes the presentation and stands for questions.

Suggested Procedure:

Council votes on amendment. Nine votes are necessary for approval.

Attachments: Maps, accomplishment plan amendment

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2014 Accomplishment Plan

Date: March 30, 2015

Program or Project Title: Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase II

Funds Recommended: \$ 5,770,000

Manager's Name: Richard Biske
Title: Southeast Minnesota Conservation Coordinator
Organization: The Nature Conservancy
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Legislative Citation: ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(f)

Appropriation Language: \$5,770,000 in the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for agreements to acquire land in fee for wildlife management area purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8; to acquire land in fee for scientific and natural areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5; to acquire land in fee for state forest purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 7; for permanent conservation easements; and to restore and enhance habitat on publicly protected lands as follows: \$4,800,000 to The Nature Conservancy; and \$970,000 to Minnesota Land Trust, of which up to \$160,000 to Minnesota Land Trust is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. Lands acquired or lands with easements acquired with this appropriation may not be used for emergency haying and grazing in response to federal or state disaster declarations. Conservation grazing under a management plan that is already being implemented may continue. A list of proposed acquisitions, permanent conservation easements, and restorations and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Explanation of Amendment Change: addition of 1 protect parcel - Fillmore 1.1

County Locations: Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Southeast Forest

Activity types:

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

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Habitat
- Prairie

Abstract:

This project will protect and restore declining habitats for important wildlife species in strategically targeted areas of outstanding biodiversity in Southeast Minnesota. The project will result in increased public access and expanded habitat complexes critical to the state.

Design and scope of work:

Importance of the Project Area:

The Southeast Blufflands region is as rich in habitat for game and nongame wildlife species as it is in aesthetic beauty. Long valleys rimmed with dry prairies and hardwood hills are bisected by coldwater trout streams. Unlike any other part of the state, much of the region and the greater Mississippi River Blufflands have been largely untouched by glaciers for 500,000 years. As a result of this unique geology, no other region in the state demonstrates this diversity and uniqueness of habitats of the Blufflands.

While much of the region has been converted to cropland, pasture and rural development, many of its bluffs and valleys are still home to high quality cliffs, forests, oak savannas, and prairies, including 86 different native plant community types mapped by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) covering nearly 149,670 acres. This diversity is critical to the State's enduring legacy of high quality forests, rivers and prairies. The region is home to 183 species of state-listed rare plants and animals in the region, many of them concentrated in the 749 sites of biodiversity significance mapped in the region by MBS.

Thanks to this diversity, the area is highly regarded for turkey and deer hunting along with other recreational pursuits such as trout fishing, hiking and biking. Outdoor recreation is a significant component to the local economy and heritage, drawing visitors from across the upper Midwest. However, unlike Northern Minnesota or other regions, less than 3% of the region's watersheds are open to the public and relatively very little is in any kind of protected status. Rapid growth of nearby cities like Rochester and LaCrosse are increasing rural development with bluff top and remote country homes. More roads, buildings and associated infrastructure further fragment an already fragmented landscape, disturbing forest habitat and increasing already high erosion rates. In addition, due to the high price of agricultural commodities in recent years, farming practices have increasingly encroached on these unique habitats including tracts in this proposal and have had significant impacts to water quality. Finally, while the overall scale of impact is yet to be determined, silica sand mining poses potential risks to the region's unparalleled biodiversity.

To maintain this legacy of the Blufflands' unique natural habitats, there are three primary needs or opportunities in the region: 1) expand the amount of protected land—both public and private—in strategic locations based on existing protected lands and high-quality habitat; 2) maximize the quality of this protected habitat through well-executed restoration and enhancement projects; and 3) increase public access to these unique habitats in an area of the state with relatively little public lands.

Investment in habitat protection and restoration in the Southeast Blufflands by the Outdoor Heritage Fund would expand and connect larger contiguous blocks of protected lands, allowing land managers to restore and maintain native habitats at a scale difficult to accomplish with fragmented ownership. An example of this is the frequent prescribed fire burns necessary to reclaim the unique "goat prairies" and oak savanna from the cedar and buckthorn hillsides, which is most effective at larger scale.

Certain habitat complexes stand out in the watershed, including the different units of the R.J. Dorer Memorial Forest, state parks, and larger blocks of existing conservation easements. These complexes serve as hubs for additional protection through strategic fee title and conservation easement acquisitions. This proposal aims to enhance this prior conservation investment and ensure that the legacy of the Blufflands region is preserved for the future.

Overall Scope of Work:

This project has three primary components: 1) fee title acquisition of approximately 1,087 acres of forest and 170 acres of prairie along 2 miles of coldwater trout streams adjacent to state forest land, scientific and natural areas and a state park; 2) Enhancement of 127 acres of prairie and 40 acres of forest habitat along with 70 acres of forest restoration including 100 acres of native prairie enhancement within these protected habitat complexes; and 3) Strategic protection of approximately 480 acres of high-quality habitat on private lands within these complexes through the acquisition of conservation easements. Project partners include The Nature Conservancy, the Minnesota DNR and the Minnesota Land Trust. Priority for these three activities will be placed on targeted tracts within high biodiversity conservation complexes identified by project partners as representing the highest quality and most diverse habitat types in the region.

Fee Acquisitions:

The Nature Conservancy will coordinate with MN DNR on all potential fee-title acquisitions. The Nature Conservancy will assist the participating DNR Divisions by conducting all or some of the following activities: initial site reviews, negotiations, appraisals, environmental reviews and acquisition of fee title. In the event the Conservancy comes into the chain of title, it will transfer the property to the DNR. The property acquired with this funding will be owned and managed by the DNR as State Forest, Wildlife Management Area or Scientific and Natural Areas, which will be open for public hunting and fishing.

Restoration and Enhancement:

Restoration plans and activities will be coordinated with DNR Forestry, Wildlife and Nongame leads for specific units. TNC will contract with CCM as much as possible and other local vendors for invasive brush removal and prescribed fire on 127 acres of bluff prairie and oak savanna restorations, 70 acres of forest planting and prescribed fire on 40 acres of forest enhancements on new acquisitions.

Conservation Easement Acquisitions:

To complement the fee title acquisitions described above, the Minnesota Land Trust will acquire permanent conservation easements on 480 acres of high quality prairie, forest and riparian habitat in the Blufflands. Priority will be given to important private parcels that are near-by or adjacent to existing protected habitat complexes.

The Minnesota Land Trust works only with conservation easements that are perpetual. These easements prohibit land uses or development that negatively affect important habitat and other conservation values.

As provided under the subdivisions titled "Payment Conditions and Capital Equipment Expenditures" (ML 2010, Ch. 361, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 10; ML 2011, First Special Session, Ch. 6, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 10; ML 2012, Ch. 264, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 8; ML 2013, Ch. 137, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 8; ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 8) The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) may be reimbursed for salary and fringe benefits based on a provisional fringe benefits rate consistent with OMB Circular A-122 and negotiated annually with the Conservancy's cognizant agency. Within 120 days of the end of each Nature Conservancy fiscal year, the Conservancy will provide MN DNR with the actual fringe benefits rate for the prior year and reconcile any overpayment made by the State.

Crops:

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Not Listed**

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

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H7 Keep water on the landscape
- LU6 Reduce Upland and gully erosion through soil conservation practices
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land
- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- A Vision for Wildlife and Its Use -- Goals and Outcomes 2006-2012
- Driftless Area Restoration Effort
- Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management
- Long Range Plan for the Wild Turkey
- Minnesota DNR AMA Acquisition Plan
- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Area's Long Range Plan
- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Forest Resource Council Landscape Plans
- Minnesota Sustainability Framework
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- National Audubon Society Top 20 Common Birds in Decline
- National Fish Habitat Action Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Strategic Plan for Coldwater Resources Management in Southeastern Minnesota
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- TNC's Root River Conservation Action Plan, TNC's Weaver Dunes Zumbro Delta Conservation Action Plan, Root River Landscape

Which LSOHC state-wide priorities are addressed in this proposal:

- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation opportunities
- Use a science-based strategic planning and evaluation model to guide protection, restoration and enhancement, similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Southeast Forest:

- Protect forest habitat through acquisition in fee or easement to prevent parcelization and fragmentation and to provide the ability to access and manage landlocked public properties
- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat
- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant goat prairies

Relationship to other funds:

- Not Listed

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

This proposal accelerates the efforts of several local partnerships working in Southeast Minnesota and the Root River Protection and Restoration Phase I approved for FY14. A broad cross section of state, federal and local agencies along with nongovernment organizations participate in a conservation collaborative and Landscape Stewardship Plans for Southeast Minnesota. Regional partners have identified priority conservation efforts based on the Minnesota Biological Survey, public land assets and natural resource value. Partners have agreed to coordinate ongoing conservation efforts and participate in land protection along with public and private land restoration and management. Acquisition and restoration projects included in this proposal build on 50 years of land conservation in the R.J. Doer Memorial Hardwood Forest. The DNR and local partners have made progress in recent years restoring rare and declining habitats like bluff prairies and oak savannas. However, it is widely recognized that much more needs to be done to revert these declining habitats. Partners are working together to protect and restore habitat mosaics that include forest, prairie, oak savanna and riparian areas on private and public lands that also protect the watersheds of the region.

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

Acquisition projects will be adjacent to or within close proximity to existing protected lands, including state-owned lands and lands under conservation easement. This will allow for the expansion of maintenance and restoration activities that are currently taking place on those protected lands and adjacent private lands. Habitats cleared of invasive species will be maintained with prescribed fire. Protection and restoration projects will improve future prescribed fire and maintenance activities through economies of scale. The conservation easements will be monitored and enforced through the Minnesota Land Trust's comprehensive conservation easement stewardship program. The Minnesota Land Trust was one of the first land trusts in the country to be accredited by the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. Accreditation means that this land trust abides by the Land Trust Standards and Practices and operates in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner. The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation. It recognizes organizations for meeting national standards for excellence, upholding the public trust and ensuring that conservation efforts are permanent.

Activity Details:

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition - **No**

Yes, for fee title acquisitions for the SNA program and Wildlife Management Areas. Local government approval is not required for additions to the Forestry program or for acquisition of conservation easements by the Minnesota Land Trust.

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

Is this land open for hunting and fishing - **Yes**

Lands acquired in fee will be designated as State Forest, Wildlife Management Area or Scientific and Natural Areas. Fee lands will be open to public hunting and fishing as provided in the Constitution.

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

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

Is the activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, subd 13(f) and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 - **Yes (WMA, SNA, Private Land, County/Municipal, State Forests, no)**

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Finish brush and tree clearing and Rxfire on 27 acres	April 2016
Finish brush and tree clearing and Rxfire on 100 acres	April 2017
Rxfire on 167 acres	May 2017
Forest Restoration 70	May 2017
Forest Enhancement 40	May 2017
Protection 1,257 acres	June 2017
Conservation Easements on 480 acres	June 2017

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **Not Listed**

Outcomes:

Programs in southeast forest region:

- Healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species *Species population and distribution will be measured in future biological surveys taking place in the project area.*
- High priority riparian lands, forestlands, and savannas are protected from parcelization and fragmentation *Riparian lands will be measured in miles protected, fragmentation will be evaluated by increase in interior to edge ratio, reduction of public property boundary.*
- Landlocked public properties have increased access for land managers *Increase in acres accessible for management.*
- Forestlands and savannas are protected from parcelization and fragmentation and accessible for resource management purposes *Increase in acres accessible for management.*
- Large corridors and complexes of biologically diverse wildlife habitat typical of the unglaciated region are restored and protected *Acres protected and overall increase in connected tracts.*
- Remnant goat prairies are perpetually protected *Acres of goat prairies protected.*
- Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat *Increase length (miles) and aerial extent (acres) of corridors.*
- Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat *Acres of perennial vegetation established and enhanced.*

Budget Spreadsheet

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

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

Not Listed

Total Amount of Request: \$ 5770000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$417,900	\$0		\$417,900
Contracts	\$240,000	\$0		\$240,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$4,124,700	\$0		\$4,124,700
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$540,000	\$0		\$540,000
Easement Stewardship	\$160,000	\$0		\$160,000
Travel	\$11,600	\$0		\$11,600
Professional Services	\$162,000	\$0		\$162,000
Direct Support Services	\$53,300	\$53,300	The Nature Conservancy	\$106,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$500	\$0		\$500
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Total	\$5,770,000	\$53,300		\$5,823,300

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Negotiator	0.30	3.00	\$83,100	\$0		\$83,100
Project Manager	0.46	3.00	\$109,500	\$0		\$109,500
Grant Administrator	0.27	3.00	\$53,600	\$0		\$53,600
Data Manager	0.12	3.00	\$21,700	\$0		\$21,700
Conservation Staff	1.60	3.00	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Total	2.75	15.00	\$417,900	\$0		\$417,900

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	The Nature Conservancy	\$267,900	\$0		\$267,900
Contracts	The Nature Conservancy	\$240,000	\$0		\$240,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	The Nature Conservancy	\$4,124,700	\$0		\$4,124,700
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	The Nature Conservancy	\$4,600	\$0		\$4,600
Professional Services	The Nature Conservancy	\$49,000	\$0		\$49,000
Direct Support Services	The Nature Conservancy	\$53,300	\$53,300	The Nature Conservancy	\$106,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	The Nature Conservancy	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Capital Equipment	The Nature Conservancy	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	The Nature Conservancy	\$500	\$0		\$500
Supplies/Materials	The Nature Conservancy	\$5,000	\$0		\$5,000
DNR IDP	The Nature Conservancy	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Total		\$4,800,000	\$53,300		\$4,853,300

Personnel - The Nature Conservancy

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Negotiator	0.30	3.00	\$83,100	\$0		\$83,100
Project Manager	0.46	3.00	\$109,500	\$0		\$109,500
Grant Administrator	0.27	3.00	\$53,600	\$0		\$53,600
Data Manager	0.12	3.00	\$21,700	\$0		\$21,700
Total	1.15	12.00	\$267,900	\$0		\$267,900

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Contracts	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
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	\$540,000	\$0		\$540,000
Easement Stewardship	Minnesota Land Trust	\$160,000	\$0		\$160,000
Travel	Minnesota Land Trust	\$7,000	\$0		\$7,000
Professional Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$113,000	\$0		\$113,000
Direct Support Services	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	Minnesota Land Trust	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$970,000	\$0		\$970,000

Personnel - Minnesota Land Trust

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Conservation Staff	1.60	3.00	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Total	1.60	3.00	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	70	0	70
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	170	1,087	0	1,257
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	50	340	90	480
Enhance	0	127	40	0	167
Total	0	347	1,537	90	1,974

Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?

Type	Native Prairie
Restore	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	65
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0
Protect in Easement	40
Enhance	100
Total	205

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$63,300	\$0	\$63,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$876,000	\$3,504,000	\$0	\$4,380,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$120,000	\$600,000	\$250,000	\$970,000
Enhance	\$0	\$330,700	\$26,000	\$0	\$356,700
Total	\$0	\$1,326,700	\$4,193,300	\$250,000	\$5,770,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	70	0	0	70
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	1,257	0	0	1,257
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	480	0	0	480
Enhance	0	0	167	0	0	167
Total	0	0	1,974	0	0	1,974

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$63,300	\$0	\$0	\$63,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$4,380,000	\$0	\$0	\$4,380,000
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$970,000	\$0	\$0	\$970,000
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$356,700	\$0	\$0	\$356,700
Total	\$0	\$0	\$5,770,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,770,000

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcel List

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

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Fillmore 1	10212221	130	\$116,000	Yes
Rush Creek 1	10408204	20	\$70,300	yes
Rush Creek 3.1	10408214	15	\$40,000	Yes

Houston

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Houston 1	10204221	50	\$38,000	Yes
Houston 2	10306230	50	\$38,600	Yes
Sheldon 1	10307224	25	\$82,200	yes

Wabasha

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Whitewater 1	10910235	17	\$67,200	yes
Zumbro Bottoms	11011214	25	\$82,200	yes

Winona

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
Rush Creek 2	10508233	50	\$96,700	yes

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
<u>Fillmore 1.1</u>	<u>10212216</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>\$1,356,000</u>			
Fillmore 2	10408222	282	\$1,018,700	No	Full	Full
Fillmore 3	10410221	78	\$325,000	No	Full	Full
Fillmore 4	10408230	63	\$284,100	No	Full	Full
Rush Creek 3	10408214	274	\$925,000	No	Full	Full
Watson Creek	10310220	36	\$63,000	no	no	no

Goodhue

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Bullard Creek	11214210	94	\$0	no	no	no
Hay Creek	11214218	90	\$0	no	no	no

Houston

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Houston 1	10204221	274	\$958,500	No	Full	Full
Houston 3	10306230	240	\$800,000	No	Full	Full

Olmsted

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Lake Zumbro	10814214	34	\$59,500	No	No	No

Wabasha

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Beaver Creek	10811224	120	\$0	no	no	no
Long Creek	10912227	300	\$525,000	no	No	no
Middle Creek	10912213	29	\$0	no	no	no
Zumbro River	10914208	39	\$68,300	No	No	No
Zumbro River Bottoms	11010218	37	\$64,800	No	No	No

Winona

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Apple Blossom Drive	10504219	117	\$0	no	No	no
Apple Blossom Drive	10504220	178	\$0	No	No	no
Burns Valley Creek	10607230	95	\$332,500	No	No	No

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Fillmore

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Fillmore 5	10208211	1,150	\$4,000,000	1	cabin	\$0	Remove

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Completed Parcel: Fillmore 1.1

# of Total Acres:	280
County:	Fillmore
Township:	102
Range:	12
Direction:	2
Section:	16
# of Acres: Wetlands/Upland:	
# of Acres: Forest:	
# of Acres: Prairie/Grassland:	
Amount of Shoreline:	(Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):	
Has there been signage erected at the site:	

Completed Parcel: Rush Creek 3

# of Total Acres:	274
County:	Fillmore
Township:	104
Range:	08
Direction:	2
Section:	14
# of Acres: Wetlands/Upland:	0
# of Acres: Forest:	204
# of Acres: Prairie/Grassland:	10
Amount of Shoreline:	0 (Linear Feet)
Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):	NA
Has there been signage erected at the site:	No - Signage will be placed soon.
Annual Reporting Organization Name:	The Nature Conservancy
Annual Reporting Manager Name:	Richard Biske
Annual Reporting Address:	PO Box 405
Annual Reporting City:	Preston
Annual Reporting State:	MN
Annual Reporting Zip:	55965
Annual Reporting Email:	rbiske@tnc.org
Annual Reporting Phone:	507-765-2450
Purchase Date:	October 15, 2014
Purchase Price:	\$909,090
Appraised Value:	\$909,090
Assessed Value:	\$922,400
Total Project Cost:	\$909,090
Fees Received:	\$0
Donations:	\$0
Property Managed By:	DNR - Wildlife Management Area -
Name of the unit area or location government unit or land manager:	Rush Creek Woods WMA



March 30, 2015

Mr. Mark Johnson
Executive Director
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Office Building, Room 95
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Acquiring Land with DNR Fisheries Easement

Dear Mr. Johnson,

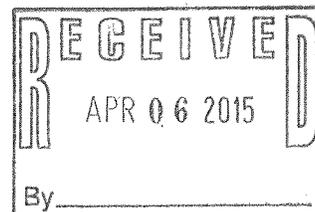
As described in correspondence to council staff on March 24, 2015, The Nature Conservancy is in the process of acquiring approximately 277 acres of land in Fillmore County. The property will be transferred to the MN DNR as a Wildlife Management Area. Approximately 8,600 feet of the South Branch of the Root River flows through the property, considered one of the best coldwater trout streams in the region. The property contains a mix of hardwood forest, riparian habitat, floodplain, remnant bluff prairie and oak savanna, several springs that feed cold water to the stream and portions of Mystery Cave. The project is funded through The Nature Conservancy's Southeast Minnesota Protection and Restoration Phase II, Legislative Citation: ML 2014, Ch. 256, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(f).

Approximately 2,100 feet of the river and springs covering approximately 6.8 acres is covered by a perpetual trout stream easement held by the State of Minnesota. The issue we are bringing to your attention for discussion is that the property includes an existing trout stream easement held by the State of Minnesota. These easements cover a narrow corridor along the South Branch of the Root River and totals less than 2.4% of the entire 277 acres. Due to the state held easement the project may fall under the "Lands in Public Domain" statute as it relates to Outdoor Heritage Funds.

Section 97A.056, Subd. 9., of the Minnesota Statutes states as follows:

"Lands in public domain. Money appropriated from the outdoor heritage fund shall not be used to purchase any land in fee title or a permanent conservation easement if the land in question is fully or partially owned by the State of Minnesota or a political subdivision of the state, unless: (1) the purchase creates additional direct benefit to protect, restore, or enhance the state's wetlands, prairies, forests, or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife; and (2) the purchase is approved by an affirmative vote of at least nine members of the council."

The Nature Conservancy
1101 West River Parkway, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55415



The Nature Conservancy is seeking the approval of at least 9 members of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to proceed with the protection of this unique conservation tract.

Project Description:

The property consists of 277 acres bisected by the South Branch of the Root River between Mystery Cave State Park and Forestville State Park. The property consists of a mixture of existing native habitat including: 2 remnant Dry Bedrock Bluff Prairies that can be expanded, 120 acres of mixed hardwood forest, small grasslands, 27 acres of riparian habitat and approximately 130 acres of ridge top and floodplain cropland. The property also has some unique features including the remainder of the state's largest Algific Talus Slope, nearly 20 springs, portions of the Mystery Cave underground network, a portion of a disappearing river and 1.6 miles of coldwater trout stream home to wild brook trout.

The project allows The Nature Conservancy and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to protect existing native habitats while restoring cropland, floodplain and stream channels to benefit fish and wildlife on the property. Protecting and restoring habitat on the property also improves fishing habitat and water quality downstream. The South Branch of the Root River is a popular fishing reach from this property to Forestville State Park downstream.

Additional Benefit:

The Lands in Public Domain statute requires that the purchase creates additional direct benefit to protect, restore, or enhance the state's wetlands, prairies, forests, or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. The current easement purchased in 1980 by the state from the previous owner permits the development of fish habitat and allows for public fishing only access. The easement exists on the downstream reach of river running through the property. Protection of the larger 277 acre property upstream of the angling easement will protect and improve water quality and fish habitat in the river. The existing easement only protects .4 miles of the stream corridor on the property, purchase of the entire property will protect an additional 1.25 miles of stream corridor and open it to full public access for fishing and hunting. Purchase of the property will allow for full floodplain restoration and management by restoring lowland hardwood forest and grasslands well beyond the 66 foot width currently covered by the easement.

Sincerely,



Richard Biske
Freshwater Conservation Program Director
The Nature Conservancy

Enclosure: Map of Proposed Acquisition

The Nature Conservancy
1101 West River Parkway, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55415

7 Springs WMA

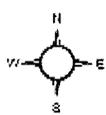


This map is intended for discussion purposes, the boundaries and acreage estimates should not be interpreted to be final or accurate.

-  7 Spings WMA
-  DNR Fisheries Easements
-  Streams

Fillmore County
T102 R12
Sections 16 & 21

0 500 1,000 Feet



The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™