

## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)

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**Subd: 04f**

**Project Title:** LaSalle Lake Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition

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**Category:** D. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 2,000,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 yrs, July 2011 - June 2013

**Other Non-State Funds (secured):** \$ 0

### Summary:

Acquire 190 acres of property on La Salle Lake adjacent to the Upper Mississippi River, with biologically significant forestland, deep-lake shoreline and cold-water stream habitat to be managed as an SNA.

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**Sponsoring Organization:** The Trust for Public Land

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**Location:**

**Region:** NW

**Ecological Section:** No. Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains (212N)

**County Name:** Hubbard

**City / Township:** Fern Township

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# 2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

## La Salle Lake: Protecting Critical Mississippi River Headwaters Lands

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

La Salle Lake is a rare opportunity to protect a large natural area of regional and statewide significance with steeply-sloping tunnel valley terrain that includes the entirety of Minnesota's second deepest lake, a cold-water stream, high-quality forest and wetlands, and a half mile of the Mississippi River. The Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (SCPP) states "habitat issues are arguably the most important issues facing the conservation and preservation of natural resources throughout Minnesota". La Salle Lake meets habitat recommendations from the SCPP, including protection of priority land habitats, protection of critical shorelands of streams and lakes – particularly 'protection of aquatic habitats at a large scale' and 'providing shoreline buffers', improving connectivity and access to outdoor recreation and protection of in-water habitats – particularly 'in-stream habitat' and 'deep water lakes with exceptional water quality'. This unique natural area is surrounded by a landscape of thousands of acres of publicly owned land, including the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest, and Itasca State Park. The La Salle Lake acquisition consists of two phases. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are currently working on Phase I- the acquisition of 257 acres of the property north of Scenic Byway Highway #9, which is anticipated be completed by winter 2010. This proposal addresses Phase II, which is the acquisition of the remaining 723 acres of the property that includes the entire pristine La Salle Lake. The funding sought in this request would fund approximately 190 of those 723 acres and would be managed as a Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). Funding is being sought from other sources for the balance of the Phase II property.

An innovative management plan that will be coordinated across multiple divisions of the Minnesota DNR is currently being developed and will be implemented once the property is acquired. La Salle Lake, a likely State Recreation Area candidate, will be the first project ever to implement this type of cross-division plan in the DNR Northwest Region and will serve as a model for future state land management plans. Potential management divisions include: Parks and Recreation Division (State Park/ Recreation Area), Division of Ecological Resources (Scientific and Natural Area-SNA), and Division of Wildlife and Fisheries (Wildlife Management Area-WMA & Aquatic Management Area-AMA). An Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Plan that includes likely sources of future funding will also be developed and implemented to ensure La Salle Lake is a well-maintained resource for Minnesotans and other visitors.

This project will increase and improve access to a prime outdoor recreation area for future generations. Surrounded by thousands of acres of publicly owned land, protection of the La Salle Lake natural area will ensure connection to the nearby Itasca State Park and access to the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest. This goal is consistent with habitat recommendation #3 in the SCPP, to "improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation", as well as helps to achieve the primary goal in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2008-2012 of "increasing participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors". The La Salle Lake property has an existing campground area that can serve as a future visitor center and campground for a likely State Recreation Area and will provide many opportunities for recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, canoeing, fishing and hunting.

Goal: Completion of Phase II: Acquisition of 190 acres of steep-sloping forestland, deep-lake shoreline and cold-water stream habitat in Hubbard County near the Mississippi River Headwaters to be managed as an SNA. The property has been ranked as having 'Outstanding and High Biodiversity Significance' by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS). Conservation of this property ensures the protection of extremely important natural resources including:

- The entire pristine La Salle Lake. At ~213 feet deep, it is considered the second deepest lake in Minnesota, with MCBS ranked 'Outstanding Quality' aquatic plant habitat.

- La Salle Creek, a cold-water trout stream that furthers the goal of Minnesota’s Aquatic Management Area Acquisition Plan 2008-2033 to “acquire... cold water stream habitat in the next 25 years to provide sustainable populations of trout and greater opportunities for angling recreation for future generations”.
- Native, rare and threatened species identified by MCBS. The property contains 17 different native plant communities including over 90 species of trees and shrubs and more than 140 species of herbaceous plants, including 12 species of orchids. Other rare plants (northern oak fern, hair-like sedge, ram’s head lady slipper) and important wildlife habitat including trumpeter swans (state threatened species), two state special concern caddisfly species and gray wolves (one of DNR’s ‘species in greatest conservation need’) are found throughout the area.

The Trust for Public Land, the Minnesota DNR and the landowner, in partnership with local governments, educational institutions, environmental non-profits, local businesses and local sportsman groups are working together to ensure the protection and management of the La Salle Lake property so it can be enjoyed by future generations. Once acquired, the property will be in state-ownership and managed by multiple divisions of the DNR.

**II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1: Acquisition of Phase II of the La Salle Lake Property                      Budget: \$2,000,000**

Acquire fee-title to permanently protect 190 acres of habitat that provides multiple benefits for conservation. ENRTF will provide funding for 190 acres of the 723 acres Phase II property. The DNR has a copy of the appraisal that valued this highly developable lakeshore property at \$10,500 per acre.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Acquire 190 acres in fee-title and transfer to the MN DNR	6/30/2013

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will be facilitating the fee-title acquisition and assisting the Minnesota DNR in development of the Management and O&M Plans. TPL has a proven track record of successful management of complex and time-sensitive real estate projects. Because of the immediacy of this rare real estate opportunity, TPL has offered to help and the Minnesota DNR has encouraged the partnership. The Minnesota DNR will be the final fee-title holder, using ENRTF dollars to purchase the land, and DNR will be developing and implementing the Management and O&M Plans for the site. This project will have many other partners throughout the process including the landowner, local governments, educational institutions, environmental non-profits, local businesses and local sportsman groups.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

The land is for sale, but the landowner is willing to work with TPL and the DNR. Phase I is slated for completion by winter 2010. Due diligence will continue on the Phase II portion of the property with closing expected prior to summer 2012. By spring 2012, TPL and the DNR will have developed an innovative DNR multi-divisional Management and Recreational Use Plan as well as an Operations and Maintenance Plan to be implemented once Phase II is acquired.

**C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs**

Once Phases I and II are completed, La Salle Lake, a possible State Recreational Area candidate site, will provide nearly one thousand acres of rare habitat and unique terrain for Minnesotans and other visitors to enjoy for generations to come. The La Salle Lake property will provide a connection to the Itasca State Forest, the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest as well as other publicly owned

lands surrounding the property. An innovative DNR multiple-division Management and Recreational Use Plan is being developed and will be implemented once the property is acquired. An Operations and Maintenance Plan that identifies potential future sources of funding will also be developed to ensure La Salle Lake will be a well-managed, viable resource for Minnesota.

As part of this request, \$10,000 is being sought to cover DNR land acquisition costs and initial site development costs. Because of its pristine nature, no restoration is contemplated on the 190 acres to be acquired with this request. We have also made a request for funding for the westerly portion of the Phase II property from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, which has been recommended in the amount of \$4,632,000 by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Of that amount, \$85,000 has been allocated to pay for DNR land acquisition costs, initial site development and restoration. We further plan to make a request to the Parks and Trails Fund in the amount of approximately \$1,975,000 to fund the acquisition of the improved portion of the property at the north end of the lake near the highway. That request to the Parks and Trails Fund will also seek funding for DNR land acquisition costs, initial site development and restoration in an amount to be determined in consultation with the DNR.

## 2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

### IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title):</b> 190 acres will be acquired and transferred to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for permanent ownership and ongoing management as a likely State Recreation Area.	\$ 1,990,000
DNR land acquisition costs and initial site development	\$ 10,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST</b>	<b>\$ 2,000,000</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Various Federal sources are being considered	Unkown	Pending
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Outdoor Heritage Fund, Parks and Trails Fund, and Bonding are being explored.	Unknown	Pending
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> TPL staff and legal time, Due diligence; ranging from \$50,000-\$100,000	Unknown	Pending
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable)</b>	N/A	
<b>Funding History</b>	N/A	

## 2011-2012 Acquisition List for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Proposal

**Project Title:** La Salle Lake

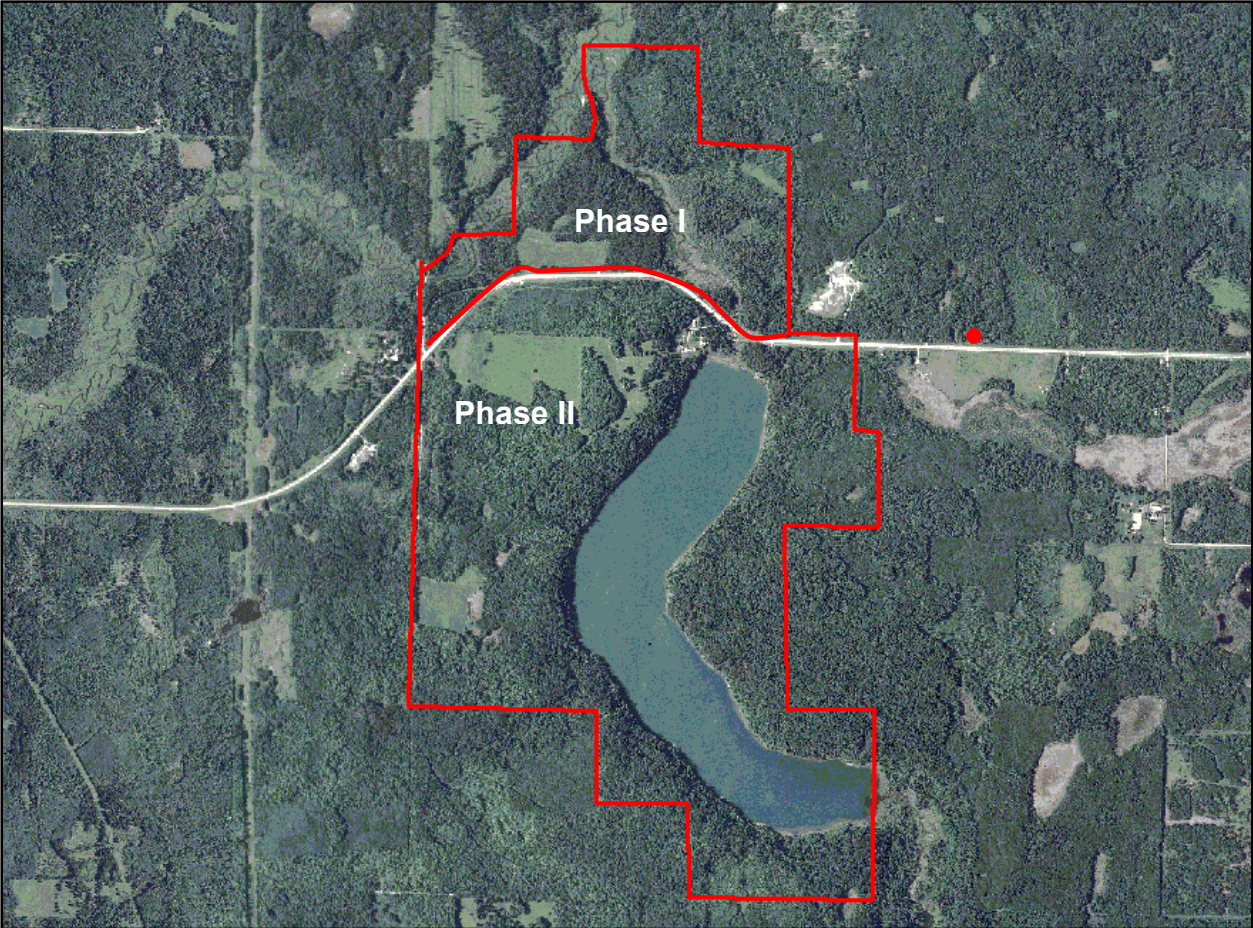
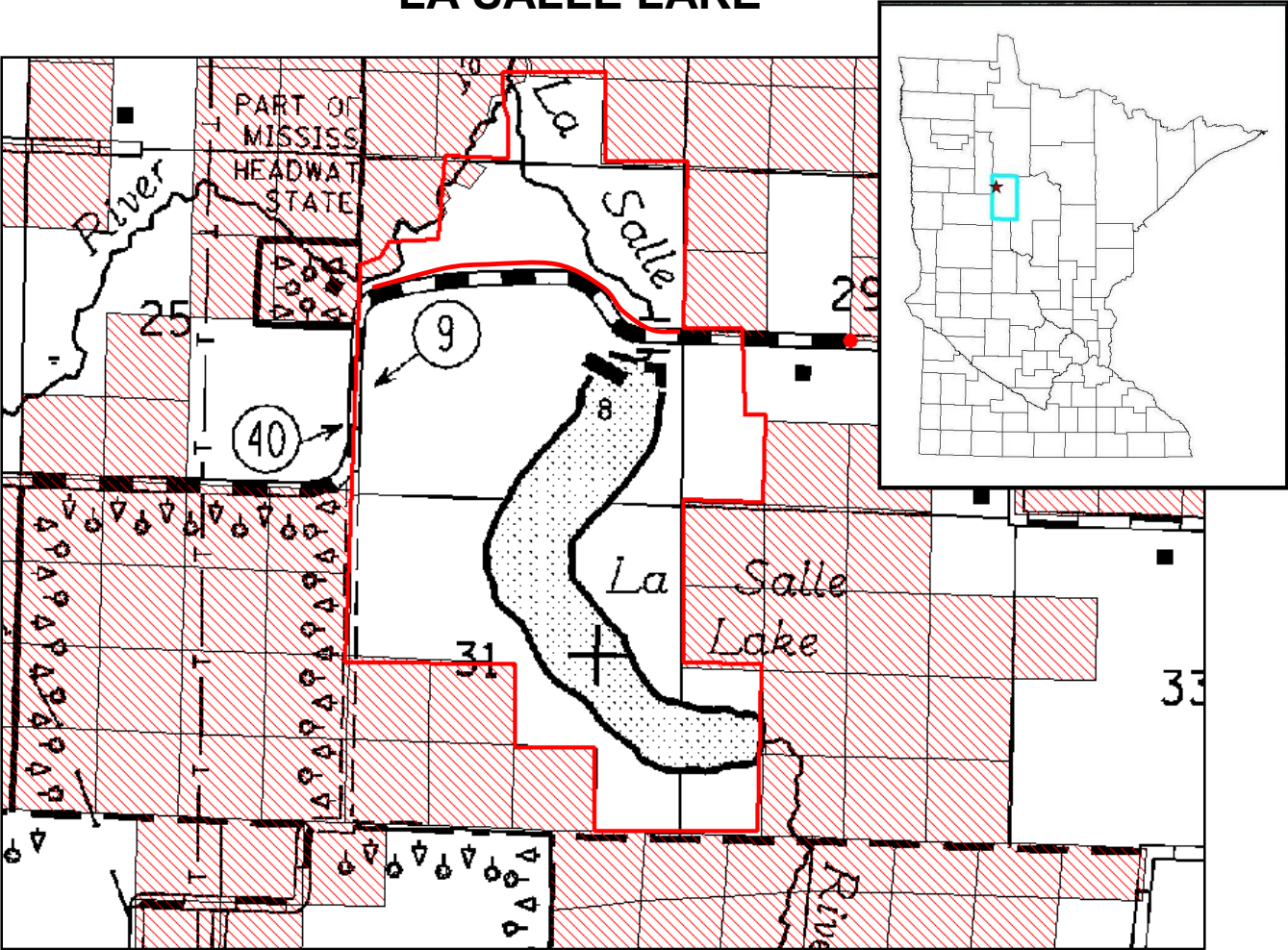
**Project Manager Name:** Susan Schmidt

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund \$ Request:** \$2,000,000

**Final Title Holder(s):** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

#	Parcel Name	Acquisition Type (Fee-Title OR Conservation Easement)	County	Estimated # of Acres	Geographical Coordinates (Provide Latitude/Longitude OR UTM-X/UTM-Y)			
					Latitude	Longitude	UTM-X	UTM-Y
1	La Salle Lake	Fee-Title	Hubbard	190	47°20'20.16" N	95°10'14.21" W	438532.91	294078.58
<b>NOTES:</b>								

# LA SALLE LAKE



## **LA SALLE LAKE PROJECT MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS**

Ms. Susan Schmidt is the Minnesota State Director of The Trust for Public Land (TPL). She is responsible for leadership and management of TPL's Minnesota Office with a special focus on government and community relations. Ms. Schmidt has more than 25 years of experience working with local and state agencies and community groups on community development and implementation of land conservation and environmental policy. For the La Salle Lake project, Ms. Schmidt will be the primary government and agency relations staff.

Mr. Robert McGillivray is a Senior Project Manager for the Minnesota State Office of The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and has been with TPL for 7 years. He works directly with landowners, public agency partners, and community members to protect land throughout the state of Minnesota for public use and enjoyment. For the La Salle Lake project, Mr. McGillivray will manage all aspects of the real estate transaction including conducting property research, negotiating contracts, identifying and securing financing and coordinating due diligence activities.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national, non-profit, land conservation organization whose mission is to conserve land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come.