

M.L. 2015 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2018

PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Coordination and Mapping and Conservation Easements

PROJECT MANAGER: Wayne Ostlie

AFFILIATION: Minnesota Land Trust

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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09e

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$515,000

AMOUNT SPENT: \$345,665

AMOUNT REMAINING: \$169,335

Overall Project Outcomes and Results

In this eighth phase of the Metro Conservation Corridors the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) sought to protect 120 acres of critical habitat through conservation easements within designated Metro conservation corridors. To facilitate this outcome, MLT implemented a competitive RFP process (a revision of the MMAPLE framework developed for the ENRTF-funded Avon Hills program in Stearns County) to solicit bids from interested landowners within areas of high biological value targeted for the program. A framework for scoring and prioritizing bids was developed for the Metro Corridors program that placed emphasis on a set of ecological criteria (size of habitat to be protected, condition of the habitat, and ecological/protection context within which the parcel lies) and cost. Along with their proposal for inclusion into the program, landowners identified the funding level necessary for their participation.

The Land Trust utilized an array of strategies to effectively target landowners within priority areas, ranging from direct mail to face-to-face meetings and web-based methods (Facebook and web postings). Subcontracts were entered into with Anoka Conservation District, Isanti SWCD, Sherburne SWCD, and Washington Conservation District to conduct landowner outreach within priority areas.

Three properties were projected under this phase of the program. In total, 158 acres of high-quality habitat were protected through conservation easement, including 14,152 linear feet of undeveloped shoreland. This ENRTF grant leveraged \$71,850 through landowner donation of easement value and support provided by partners toward the costs of easement project development and acquisition, equivalent to roughly 14% of the overall project budget. Though a large portion of project funding was left unspent MLT was able to exceed protection deliverables while efficiently utilizing state funds to secure conservation easements on strategically-located parcels containing high-quality habitat which buffered, or connected to, protected habitat complexes.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

MLT also convened and led quarterly meetings of the MeCC partnership to review project accomplishments, share information related to each respective partner's conservation work across the MeCC program area, and to strategically plan and coordinate conservation activities.

The MeCC web-based project database upgrade work was completed by the DNR during Spring 2016. A web-based map for public use can be accessed on the DNR's website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/metroconservationcorridors/index.html>. An upgrade to the MeCC web-based project database was completed under Phase VI was used and the MeCC corridor map was revised and posted for public use in early 2017.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2015 Work Plan Final Report

Date of Status Update Report: 10/30/2018

Final Report

Date of Work Plan Approval: 9/16/2015

Project Completion Date: 6/30/2018

PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Coordination and Mapping and Conservation Easements

Project Manager: Wayne Ostlie

Organization: Minnesota Land Trust

Mailing Address: 2356 University Avenue W., Suite 240

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Location: Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Isanti, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, Washington, Wright Counties

Total ENRTF Project Budget:

ENRTF Appropriation: \$515,000

Amount Spent: \$345,665

Balance: \$169,335

Legal Citation: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09e

Appropriation Language:

\$515,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Land Trust for the eighth phase of the Metropolitan Conservation Corridors partnership to provide coordination and mapping for the partnership and to acquire permanent conservation easements on at least 120 acres of strategic ecological landscapes to protect priority natural areas in the metropolitan area, as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and portions of the surrounding counties. A list of proposed easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work plan. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards, as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Expenditures are limited to the identified project corridor areas as defined in the work plan. Up to \$40,000 may be used for coordination and mapping for the Metro Conservation Corridors. All conservation easements must be perpetual and have a natural resource management plan. A list of proposed easement acquisitions must be provided as part of the required work plan. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2018, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

I. PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Coordination and Mapping and Conservation Easements

II. PROJECT STATEMENT:

The Metro Conservation Corridors (MeCC) Partnership accelerates protection and restoration of remaining high-quality natural lands in the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area by strategically coordinating and focusing conservation efforts within a connected network of critical lands. This corridor network stretches from the area’s urban core to its rural perimeter, including portions of 16 counties.

Our projects and activities take place within science-based corridors and are guided by the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, Minnesota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, as well as numerous local and resource-specific plans. More recently, the Land Trust has been incorporating new criteria in its project selection methodology, planning and mapping, including the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) and the Impaired Waters data layer into the existing Metro Corridors priorities map. The new data selection criteria will allow the Land Trust to prioritize high-quality habitat that provides multiple benefits such as water quality, scenic beauty, outdoor opportunities, habitat for pollinators and species in greatest conservation need, and potential for high quality restoration via Ecological Landscapes partner organizations.

This project addresses several recommendations of the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan:

- Protect priority land habitats
- Protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes
- Restore land, wetlands, and wetland-associated watersheds
- Improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation

As part of the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership, the Minnesota Land Trust has worked extensively in the greater Twin Cities area since 1992 to permanently protect high-quality nature habitat with an emphasis on private landowner conservation through conservation easements. This strategy has been acknowledged by a variety of stakeholders and plans, including the LCCMR 6-year Strategic Plan and the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan, as one of the key tools necessary to achieve land conservation goals in a metropolitan area where escalating land values prohibit fee title acquisition of many priority lands. To date, the Minnesota Land Trust has permanently protected 3,989 acres of high-quality habitats under the Metro Conservation Corridors program. Overall, Minnesota Land Trust has protected approximately 44,544 acres of habitats statewide.

The goal of Ecological Landscapes is to permanently protect strategic lands that contribute to a regionally connected network of critical habitat within the greater Twin Cities area, promote biodiversity, provide outdoor-based opportunities for metro area children and help maintain water quality of the region’s most important rivers, lakes, and streams. To this end, the Land Trust has been incorporating new criteria in its selection methodology, including the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) and the Impaired Waters data layer into the existing Metro Corridors priorities map. The new data selection criteria will allow the Land Trust to prioritize high-quality habitat that provides multiple benefits such as water quality, scenic beauty, outdoor opportunities, habitat for pollinators and species in greatest conservation need, and potential for high quality restoration via Ecological Landscapes partner organizations.

The Land Trust works only with perpetual conservation easements. These easements prohibit land uses such as row cropping or real estate development that negatively affect important habitat, water quality and other conservation values. In addition, the easements require the land to be managed according to approved habitat management plans and direct the use of native vegetation in conjunction with any required restoration. The Land Trust also will explore the potential for public access with landowners on a case-by-case basis. These easements are monitored annually and enforced as necessary under the Land Trust’s comprehensive conservation easement monitoring, management, and enforcement program funded in part through the

Stewardship and Enforcement Fund. Grant funds may also be requested for the dedicated Stewardship and Enforcement Fund on a project-by-project basis in accordance with LCCMR-approved policies and procedures. The Land Trust will report to LCCMR annually on the status of the Stewardship and Enforcement Fund and the easements acquired with funds from this grant.

Activity 1 of this project provides coordination and leadership for the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership by Minnesota Land Trust staff. Activity 2 of the project brings improved prioritization through enhanced data base development and mapping of the corridors. Activity 3 is specific to Minnesota Land Trust, and includes 1) contacting and negotiating with interested landowners; 2) drafting and completing conservation easements; 3) documenting property conditions and developing habitat management plans; and 4) dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring, management and enforcement of those easements.

III. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of February 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date. Work specific to M.L. 2015 – 9e will now begin with conclusion of M.L. 2013 – 4d on June 30, 2016.

Amendment Request (1/29/16): We are requesting a change in project managers from Kris Larson to Wayne Ostlie to reflect a staffing change.

Amendment approved by LCCMR 2-4-2016.

Project Status as of August 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09e to date. Work specific to M.L. 2013 Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 4d concluded on 6/30/16. An email request on 7/21/16 was made to begin work on M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 9e. The request was formally approved by LCCMR staff on 7/22/16 through an email.

Amendment Request (10/20/16): The Land Trust is requesting the addition of 7 parcels to the parcel list based on outcomes of the June-September 2016 RFP process, and as discussed in a joint LCCMR/LSOHC meeting on October 4.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR 12/6/2016

Project Status as of February 1, 2017: Work has begun on the individual parcels that were identified through a 2016 RFP process and approved by the full LCCMR council on 12/6/16. Title work has been initiated on priority parcels, and easement negotiations have been initiated. Coordination with the other MeCC partners continues, a March 2017 meeting is scheduled to convene to review the corridors database, program area and pending projects anticipated to be completed under this phase of the partnership.

Project Status as of August 1, 2017: Project development continues on the top-priority projects that were identified through the RFP and approved by the LCCMR in December 2016. Title work, a survey, baseline report documentation, drafting of a habitat management plan, and an appraisal have largely been completed one project. Title work, mapping, easement negotiations, and initial appraisal valuations have initiated for two other priority projects.

Partners met in April 2017 to review the project accomplishment database, receive project updates and review project work from the various partners, and coordinate conservation activities across the partnership. Another partnership meeting, and periodic review and update of the project accomplishment database will occur during the third quarter of CY2017.

Amendment Request (10/5/17): The Land Trust is requesting the addition of 3 parcels to the parcel list. Each of these parcels includes high quality natural areas. Both landowners of these properties and conservation partners have expressed a desire to both protect these properties and fund the required easement stewardship costs associated with them.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR 10/10/2017

Project Status as of February 1, 2018: Project development continues on the top-priority projects that were identified through the RFP and approved by the LCCMR in December 2016 and October 2017. Title work, surveys, baseline report documentation, and an appraisal have been largely completed on the Stanchfield Creek project. Title work, mapping, easement negotiations, and initial appraisal valuations were initiated for the Lake Sarah, Keystone Woods, and Red Wing projects.

Partners met in January 2018 to receive project updates and review project work from the various partners, and coordinate conservation activities across the partnership. LCCMR staff was present for a portion of this partnership meeting as an opportunity to make introductions with and engage in a meaningful conversation with new LCCMR staff, as well as discuss partnership work and grant reporting requirements.

Overall Project Outcomes and Results:

In this eighth phase of the Metro Conservation Corridors the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) sought to protect 120 acres of critical habitat through conservation easements within designated Metro conservation corridors. To facilitate this outcome, MLT implemented a competitive RFP process (a revision of the MMAPLE framework developed for the ENRTF-funded Avon Hills program in Stearns County) to solicit bids from interested landowners within areas of high biological value targeted for the program. A framework for scoring and prioritizing bids was developed for the Metro Corridors program that placed emphasis on a set of ecological criteria (size of habitat to be protected, condition of the habitat, and ecological/protection context within which the parcel lies) and cost. Along with their proposal for inclusion into the program, landowners identified the funding level necessary for their participation.

The Land Trust utilized an array of strategies to effectively target landowners within priority areas, ranging from direct mail to face-to-face meetings and web-based methods (Facebook and web postings). Subcontracts were entered into with Anoka Conservation District, Isanti SWCD, Sherburne SWCD, and Washington Conservation District to conduct landowner outreach within priority areas.

Three properties were projected under this phase of the program. In total, 158 acres of high-quality habitat were protected through conservation easement, including 14,152 linear feet of undeveloped shoreland. This ENRTF grant leveraged \$71,850 through landowner donation of easement value and support provided by partners toward the costs of easement project development and acquisition, equivalent to roughly 14% of the overall project budget. Though a large portion of project funding was left unspent MLT was able to exceed protection deliverables while efficiently utilizing state funds to secure conservation easements on strategically-located parcels containing high-quality habitat which buffered, or connected to, protected habitat complexes.

MLT also convened and led quarterly meetings of the MeCC partnership to review project accomplishments, share information related to each respective partner's conservation work across the MeCC program area, and to strategically plan and coordinate conservation activities.

The MeCC web-based project database upgrade work was completed by the DNR during Spring 2016 and made available for partner review, planning, and coordination purposes. The web-based map for public use can be accessed on the DNR's website at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/metroconservationcorridors/index.html>, while the web-based project database can be accessed by authorized partners at: <https://webapps15.dnr.state.mn.us/mecc/>. An upgrade to the MeCC web-based project database was

completed under Phase VI was used and the MeCC corridor map was revised and posted for public use in early 2017.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1: Partnership Coordination, Mapping and Outreach

Description: The Minnesota Land Trust will provide Metro Conservation Corridors coordination and leadership by convening and facilitating meetings, providing support to partners, compiling overall reports and accomplishments, and guiding strategic outreach and implementation efforts.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 15,000
Amount Spent: \$ 763
Balance: \$ 14,237

Activity Completion Date:

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. Convene and facilitate quarterly meetings of the partnership to share information and coordinate work	June 30, 2018	\$ 3,000
2. Compile and submit overall partnership reports twice yearly	June 30, 2018	\$ 6,000
3. Conduct outreach to local communities and landowners with number of activities and target audiences	June 30, 2018	\$ 6,000

Activity Status as of February 1, 2016: Partners continue to meet quarterly to review project accomplishments and coordinate activity, but no funds have been spent from MeCC Phase VIII. MLT continues to compile partner reports, and all partners continue to work on and update the online database to facilitate tracking and reporting of MeCC projects, all under MeCC Phase VII funding.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2016: Partners continue to meet quarterly to review project accomplishments and coordinate activity, but no funds have been spent from MeCC Phase VIII. The Land Trust continues to compile partner reports, and all partners continue to work on and update the online database to facilitate tracking and reporting of MeCC projects. Through an email exchange with LCCMR staff on 2/5/2016 and reconfirmed during a meeting with LCCMR staff on 7/19/2016, the Land Trust will not compile overall partnership status updates, but will submit an overall final report for the partnership summarizing the outcomes of the work completed under the appropriation.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2017: The Partnership has not met in FY2017, but a meeting has tentatively been scheduled for March 2017. MLT continues to compile partner reports, and all partners continue to work on and update the online database to facilitate tracking and reporting of MeCC projects, all under MeCC Phase VII funding.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2017: Partners met on April 5, 2017 to review project accomplishments, receive project updates from the various partners, coordinate conservation activities, and discuss timelines for existing grant appropriations.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2018: Partners met on January 9, 2018 to review project accomplishments, receive project updates from the various partners, coordinate conservation activities, and discuss timelines for existing grant appropriations. LCCMR staff attended the first half of this partnership meeting to provide an opportunity to discuss grant reporting requirements, inform strategic planning efforts, and provide feedback regarding general questions posed by partners.

Final Report Summary:

MLT convened and led quarterly meetings of the MeCC partnership to review project accomplishments, share information related to each respective partner’s conservation work across the MeCC program area, and to strategically plan and coordinate conservation activities.

ACTIVITY 2: Partnership Mapping and Database Management

Description: Activity 2 will provide management of and updates to the MeCC GIS-based database developed to track MeCC projects as well as mapping needs of the partnership. Enhanced database development and mapping of the corridors will be provided by a contracted entity such as the MN DNR, Minnesota Information Technology (MN.IT) or a different third-party entity capable of working with the existing datasets and online mapping systems.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 15,000
Amount Spent: \$ 0
Balance: \$ 15,000

Activity Completion Date:

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. Maintain current records of accomplishments in database	June 30, 2018	\$ 15,000

Activity Status as of February 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date. Work specific to M.L. 2015 – 9e will now begin with conclusion of M.L. 2013 – 4d on June 30, 2016.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date. Work specific to M.L. 2015 – 9e will begin shortly building from the work completed under M.L. 2013 – 4d now that it has concluded.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2017: Review and update of the project accomplishment database in conjunction with MeCC partners and MN.IT staff occurred in September 2016. Another periodic update will occur early in 2017.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2017: Review of the project accomplishment database in conjunction with MeCC partners and MN.IT staff occurred in April 2017. Another periodic review and update is scheduled for Fall 2017.

Activity Status as of February 1, 2018: Several updates adding completed projects occurred early in 2017. Another periodic review and update is scheduled for Spring 2018.

Final Report Summary:

After April 2017, minimal activity occurred pertaining to MN.IT involvement in updates to the project database. The MeCC protection and restoration partners continue to update the web-based project database with their completed projects, which has a public interface so that accomplishments and activities can be shared with a broader audience.

ACTIVITY 3: Permanent Protection of Ecological Landscapes

Description: The Land Trust will protect critical habitat within the mapped corridors by: 1) contacting landowners; 2) negotiating and completing permanent conservation easements on 120 acres of land (including documenting property conditions and creating habitat management plans as appropriate); and 3) dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring, management and enforcement of the easements.

The Land Trust will work primarily with donated easements, purchasing easements when necessary and then at below market value whenever possible. Easement purchases under this program will strive to maximize the donative generosity of landowners—thereby stretching out the state funding further—with a goal of paying no

more than 50% of land value in total for each of any easements completed. Criteria for determining when a purchase is necessary include landowner ability to donate, connectivity of parcel to other protected lands, and quality of natural resources on the site. All potential easement projects are evaluated for habitat value (quality and quantity of existing habitat on site), context (proximity and relationship to other protected lands), opportunity/threat (which landowners will participate now), and other benefits (meeting multiple objectives, including visual and physical access, forestry goals, water quality, etc.). Current potential projects are identified on the attached list. If new projects are identified, MLT will seek amendments of the work plan to request additions to the approved project list. We will continually evaluate potential projects and pursue those that protect the highest quality habitat and maximize public benefit.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 3:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 485,000
Amount Spent: \$ 344,903
Balance: \$ 140,097

Activity Completion Date:

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. Protect 120 acres by completing conservation easements by identifying and contacting landowners, completing all components of conservation easement projects, developing habitat management plans, and conducting long-term conservation easement management, monitoring, and enforcement.	June 30, 2018	\$ 485,000

Activity Status as of February 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date. Work specific to M.L. 2015 – 9e will now begin with conclusion of M.L. 2013 – 4d on June 30, 2016.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date.

July 27, 2016 Amendment Request: The Land Trust has moved four potential projects on the approved parcel list to an inactive status.

As with MeCC VII, an RFP-process was initiated to identify landowners interested in pursuing a conservation easement within portions of Washington, Anoka, Sherburne and Isanti counties targeted for their ecological values. The Land Trust is utilizing mailings, web-based methods, and one-on-one meetings through our local partners (Isanti SWCD, Washington Conservation District, Anoka Conservation District and Sherburne SWCD) to conduct outreach to targeted landowners across the program area. Mailings containing the RFP application form and program description were sent to landowners in targeted areas. This same information was placed on the Land Trust’s website and Facebook page. Expansion to other Metro counties is anticipated. We will schedule an October 2016 meeting with LCCMR staff to review parcels emerging as priorities through this RFP process for inclusion onto the approved parcel list.

Amendment approved by LCCMR on 08/05/2016.

Amendment Request (10/20/16): The Land Trust is requesting the addition of 7 parcels to the parcel list based on outcomes of the June-September 2016 RFP process, as discussed in a joint LCCMR/LSOHC meeting on October 4. Descriptions and maps of proposed project areas are submitted for review, along with a description of the process used to solicit and rank parcels.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR on 12/6/2016

Activity Status as of February 1, 2017: Project development has begun on the top-priority projects that were identified through the RFP and approved by the LCCMR council in December 2016. Projects are in the early

stages of development; title work has been initiated, site visits and meetings with each landowner have taken place, initial easement terms have been discussed and easement drafting has commenced.

Activity Status as of August 1, 2017: Project development continues on the top-priority projects that were identified through the RFP and approved by the LCCMR in December 2016. Title work, a survey, baseline report documentation, drafting of a habitat management plan, and an appraisal have largely been completed for Medvecky Woods 1 project. A draft easement has been shared with the landowner and the Land Trust is currently in negotiation with the landowners refining easement terms. Title work, mapping, easement negotiations, and initial appraisal valuations have begun for the Medvecky Woods 3 and Stanchfield Creek projects. Identifying high-quality projects that are also poised to contribute the necessary easement stewardship costs (\$20,000) continues to be a major challenge to closing projects.

Amendment Request (10/5/17): The Land Trust is requesting the addition of 3 parcels to the parcel list. Negotiations with several landowners of previously-approved parcels have reached an impasse due to financial considerations. Both landowners of these properties and conservation partners have expressed a desire to both protect these properties and fund the required easement stewardship costs associated with them. Descriptions and maps of the proposed parcels for easement acquisition are submitted for review, along with a description of the process used to solicit and rank parcels.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR on 10/10/2017

Activity Status as of February 1, 2018: Project development has begun on the 3 recent parcel list additions from October 2017 (Lake Sarah, Red Wing and Keystone Woods). Title work, surveys and appraisals have been initiated for both the Lake Sarah and Red Wing projects. Easement negotiations have commenced for all three projects. Work continues on the Stanchfield Creek project, with preliminary survey and appraisal completed and in review, and habitat management plan underway. Easement negotiations continue, though general terms and a purchase price have been agreed upon. Closings on the Stanchfield Creek, Red Wing, and Lake Sarah conservation easements are anticipated for May/June of 2018; Keystone Woods is not expected to close under this grant and has been shifted to inactive status as the Land Trust has not been able to procure the necessary stewardship funding for long-term monitoring and enforcement of the easement. Identifying high-quality projects that are also poised to contribute the necessary easement stewardship costs (\$20,000) continues to be a major challenge to closing projects.

Final Report Summary:

The Land Trust exceeded its protection goals by closing on three perpetual conservation easements which, in total, permanently protected 158 acres of high-quality habitat. MLT leveraged \$71,850 in non-ENRTF dollars as contributions to the costs of easement project development and acquisition through conservation partners and landowner donation, equivalent to roughly 14% of MLT's overall project budget. The three properties protected under permanent conservation easements are:

- **Red Wing (Ghei):** 69-acres of scenic forested bluffs and grasslands in the City of Red Wing are now protected by this conservation easement. The predominant land cover consists of mesic hardwood forest which covers the steep bluff sides on the property. A majority of the grasslands on the property are reconstructed prairie, established by the landowner through a prior Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice. An intermittent stream is located near the southern boundary of the property, turning north to eventually drain to the Cannon River which is roughly half a mile to the north. The plant communities found on the property are key habitat for species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), such as Western rat snake, five-lined skink, and Louisiana waterthrush, as established by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in *Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan, 2015-2025*. The property abuts another private property permanently protected with a Minnesota Land Trust-held conservation

easement. Within 3 miles of the property are over 2,000 acres of State Forest lands (primarily the “Cannon River Bottoms” unit of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial State Forest), two (2) State Wildlife Management Areas, two (2) State Scientific and Natural Areas, three (3) State Aquatic Management Areas, and four (4) other properties permanently protected with Minnesota Land Trust conservation easements.

- **Stanchfield Creek (Wendberg):** This 77-acre conservation easement protects high-quality imperiled, forested wetlands which are vulnerable to extirpation, and over a mile and a half of shoreline of Stanchfield Creek in Isanti County. The property is almost entirely within “Maple Ridge 29”, a Minnesota Biological Survey Site of High Biodiversity Significance. Maple Ridge 29 is just over 800 acres in size and contains 14 surveyed native plant communities and two rare features identified by MN DNR Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program. Three native plant communities have been surveyed in the wetlands on the property, and include: Sedge Meadow, Willow-Dogwood Shrub Swamp, and Black Ash-Yellow Birch-Red Maple-Basswood Swamp (Eastcentral). The forested wetland cover type of the property is considered key habitat for SGCN, such as Blanding’s turtle, red-shouldered hawk, and hooded warbler, as established by the MN DNR’s Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025. 4 acres of formerly cultivated lands were closed to agricultural uses under the terms of the easement and will be restored by the landowner to oak savanna, helping to restore connectivity and reduce fragmentation on the landscape. The property lies within the Stanchfield Creek minor watershed, which is a conservation priority corridor for the MPCA identified in the *2017 Rum River Watershed and Restoration Protection Strategies* plan. Stanchfield Creek which runs over the property is an important warm water fishery for the Rum River. The property is also identified as the highest priority candidate for conservation for the Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas Program based upon its *Strategic Land Protection Plan*. Within approximately 5 miles of the property, there are four (4) State Wildlife Management Areas, two (2) State Aquatic Management Areas, and three (3) properties permanently protected with a Minnesota Land Trust conservation easement.
- **Lake Sarah (Slavec):** Located in the City of Independence in Hennepin County, this 12-acre conservation easement is undeveloped, primarily consisting of gently rolling topography. A broad, shallow valley containing wetlands occurs in the northern portion of the property. This wetland valley extends westward onto other privately-owned properties protected by conservation easements. Slopes adjacent to the valley are relatively steep and occupied by Big Woods forest, a natural community type endemic to Minnesota and historically occupying approximately 3,000 square miles in southcentral Minnesota; only scattered remnants remain today. The forest on the property is contiguous with larger forest blocks in adjacent Lake Sarah Regional Park. The property is part of a large complex of protected or public lands including the 193-acre Lake Sarah Regional Park (abutting to the north), the 2,553-acre Lake Rebecca Park Reserve (to the west), and two private properties protected through RIM conservation easement (adjacent to the west and northwest of the property). Located within the Hennepin County Priority Natural Resource Corridor, protection of this parcel completed a conservation corridor connecting Lake Sarah Regional Park and Lake Rebecca Park Reserve.

V. DISSEMINATION:

Description: The Metro Conservation Corridors partnership will periodically distribute information about the program and accomplishments through the various communication methods of our partner organizations and as we conduct coordinated outreach efforts. As projects are completed, the partners involved will publicize

accomplishments through press releases and organization newsletters and websites. The MeCC database includes a public web-based map that displays accomplishments. Additionally, the partnership plans to update the MeCC section on the DNR’s website and share mapping data at public presentations.

Additionally, the Land Trust will disseminate results of our permanent habitat protection efforts in our publications (electronic and print) and on our web page. We will work to publicize completed projects in the media, targeting communities in which projects are located. Additionally, we will participate when possible in broader efforts of the Metro Conservation Corridors Partnership.

Status as of February 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date.

Status as of August 1, 2016: No work has been undertaken on M.L. 2015 – 9e to date.

Status as of February 1, 2017: To date there have been no accomplishments to share publically.

Status as of August 1, 2017: To date there have been no accomplishments to share publically.

Status as of February 1, 2018: To date there have been no accomplishments to share publically.

Final Report Summary:

The Land Trust utilized existing partnerships with local conservation partners (Anoka and Washington Conservation Districts) and established new partnership (with Isanti and Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation Districts) to conduct targeted landowner outreach in priority geographies to identify interested landowners. Outreach materials, including program fact sheets and application materials, were developed and shared with local partners and or were direct-mailed to landowners by MLT. In addition, MLT marketed the easement program and RFP process through social media and on its web site.

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. ENRTF Budget Overview:

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Overview Explanation
Personnel:	\$ 100,000	[Overall, Mapping and Coordination: \$15,000] MLT conservation and support staff expenses including salaries and benefits to manage and coordinate the program for three years. [Ecological Landscapes: \$85,000] Staff expenses including salaries and benefits for approximately .33 FTE per year for 3 years (1 FTE total) as follows: conservation directors or other land protection staff (approximately 0.4 FTE), staff attorney and other support staff (approximately 0.25 FTE) or contract staff for land protection project professional services, including negotiating and drafting conservation easements and/or completing easement baseline documentation.*
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$ 82,000	[Overall, Mapping and Coordination: \$15,000] MLT anticipated contract expenses include contracting database development and mapping of the corridors with an entity such as the MN DNR, Minnesota Information Technology (MN.IT) or a different third-party

		entity capable of working with the existing datasets and online mapping systems. [Ecological Landscapes: \$67,000] MLT anticipated contract expenses include title reports and closing costs, mapping, mineral assessments where appropriate, appraisals, habitat management plans, and land surveys. When efficiencies can be gained from contracting legal and/or project management contract support, MLT anticipates pursuing those options as well.
Easement Acquisition:	\$ 330,000	An estimated 120 acres of permanent easements will be held by the Minnesota Land Trust. As a part of each acquisition, the Land Trust will seek a donation from landowners in order to cover project costs related to long-term easement stewardship and monitoring. Stewardship and monitoring costs will be itemized and substantiated using MLT's Project Cost Analysis worksheet.
Travel Expenses in MN:	\$ 3,000	Mileage and related travel expenses in Minnesota. Up to \$2700 for mileage reimbursement estimated at \$0.55 per mile and \$300 for meals. Allowable travel expenses are in keeping with the DNR Commissioners plan.
TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET: \$ 515,000		

*Consistent with our past grants, contract staff is included here to allow flexibility to supplement existing MLT staff capacity to complete anticipated outcomes.

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: N/A

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000: N/A

Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation: 1.1 FTE over 3 years (i.e., 0.1 FTE per year combined between MLT staff and contractors on Overall, Mapping and Coordination plus 0.33 FTE per year on Permanently Protection Ecological Landscapes)

Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation: N/A

B. Other Funds:

Although we do not anticipate any other cash funds at this time, we do anticipate providing leverage through the value of easements donated to the Land Trust under this project. Any reported donated value will be substantiated by an appraisal.

VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: The Land Trust and DNR, MN.IT, or a different third-party entity capable of working with the existing datasets and online mapping systems are the only entities receiving funds for coordination and mapping, however, work is coordinated with other Metro Conservation Corridors partners (please see the overall work plan for list of project partners). Additionally, our partners include private landowners, as well as various units of state and local government that help in identifying and completing potential projects.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: This project is part of the Land Trust’s long-term, strategic conservation agenda. The conservation agenda sets out the specific conservation focus of the Minnesota Land Trust. This focus includes natural habitats for wildlife, fish and plants, riparian shorelines, rivers and streams, and scenic landscapes accessible or visible to the public. The conservation agenda also identifies a suite of critical landscapes throughout the State that embody the natural and cultural features that make Minnesota unique. The Metropolitan Conservation Corridors is one of the Land Trust’s identified critical landscapes – one that addresses the unique conservation challenges that exist in a largely developed area.

Additionally, This project advances and continually informs the long-term strategy of the Metro Conservation Corridors, initiated in partnership with the LCCMR in 2003 to accelerate the protection and restoration of critical habitat in the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area. Progress towards this long-term strategy is ongoing, and MeCC will continue its work as long as urbanization and fragmentation continue to threaten critical habitat. The Land Trust has been incorporating new criteria in its selection methodology, including the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) and the Impaired Waters data layer into the existing Metro Corridors priorities map. The new data selection criteria will allow the Land Trust to prioritize high-quality habitat that provides multiple benefits such as water quality, scenic beauty, outdoor opportunities, habitat for pollinators and species in greatest conservation need, and potential for high quality restoration via Ecological Landscapes partner organizations.

The Minnesota Land Trust has a comprehensive easement monitoring and enforcement program directed at preserving the conservation values of protected lands. With each easement accepted, the Minnesota Land Trust will secure the funds necessary to meet our long-term obligations, setting aside funds for each project as necessary to meet future needs.

C. Funding History:

Funding Source and Use of Funds	Funding Timeframe	\$ Amount
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2007	\$ 134,000
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2008	\$ 225,000
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2009	\$ 250,000
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2010	\$ 485,000
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2011	\$ 265,000
ENRTF - MeCC	M.L. 2013	\$ 300,000

VIII. FEE TITLE ACQUISITION/CONSERVATION EASEMENT/RESTORATION REQUIREMENTS:

A. Parcel List: See Acquisition List Attachment

B. Acquisition/Restoration Information:

Conservation Easement Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

Following initial outreach and evaluation, suitable conservation easement projects are subjected to several rounds of review and approval. These stages of critical review ensure the conservation values of any particular project are present and worthy of protection.

1. First, the MLT project manager meets with a landowner, assesses natural resources present on a property, gathers information and conducts research into the conservation values present.

2. The project manager then presents the project to a meeting of the full MLT conservation staff for review, analysis and discussion.
3. If the project is recommended to move forward, the project manager presents the project to the MLT Conservation Committee, a subset of the board of directors and other conservation professionals.
4. If the Conservation Committee recommends the project to the full MLT board of directors, the board ultimately makes the final approval of accepting the easement or not.
5. Staff also completes a conservation easement checklist per LCCMR requirements.
6. LCCMR-funded projects are submitted to the DNR for DNR Commissioner approval.
7. Finally, MLT legal staff completes an exhaustive review of the project documentation and the landowners themselves complete an independent legal review.

When several projects are advanced for approval, MLT staff uses the following criteria to rank and prioritize conservation easement opportunities:

1. Conservation values are assessed based on the ecology, natural resources and habitat potential of the particular site and are ranked higher when they include high quality resources and threatened or rare habitat types.
2. The uniqueness of the resources present on a particular site are weighed against each other and ranked higher when resources present are uniquely rare and in high need of preservation.
3. Each property is evaluated for its inclusion in the Minnesota County Biological Survey or similar natural resource inventories, which have already demonstrated the high resource values as worthy of protection.
4. Properties are assessed for their connectivity to other preserved parcels and are prioritized when adjacent to existing preserved land is determined.
5. Inclusion of a particular property in local, regional or state conservation plans elevates the urgency for protection.
6. The potential for ecological and scenic benefits from their preservation are assessed and a project will be ranked higher when these public benefits have been demonstrated as worthy of protection.

Secondarily, MLT staff and board consider landowner readiness to proceed with a project, including family demands, family agreement, and landowner health and urgency to prioritize projects. Additionally, available project funding and the landowner's willingness to donate value or contribute funds to cover transactional costs and/or stewardship needs can contribute to a project being highly prioritized.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified. Include a link to the plan if one is available.

Numerous strategic conservation plans identify the use of a conservation easement as an important tool in protecting habitat and water quality, as part of a suite of conservation options. Plans that identify the value of conservation easements express a consensus that an easement is an important component of protecting ecosystems services and public good.

Plans and statute that identify priority conservation easement projects and support the use of conservation easements in their protection include:

- Local County Comprehensive Plans (vary by Minnesota county)
- Local County Comprehensive Water Plans (vary by Minnesota county)
- Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan
(http://www.lccmr.leg.mn/documents/scpp/statewide_plan.htm)

- Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/nrplanning/bigpicture/cwcs/tomorrows_habitat.pdf)
- Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources' 6-Year Strategic Plan (http://www.lccmr.leg.mn/documents/strategic_plan/lccmr_strategic_plan.pdf)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Long Range Duck Recovery Plan (http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/recreation/hunting/waterfowl/duckplan_042106.pdf)
- Minnesota Statutes Chapter 84C, which recognizes the importance of private conservation efforts by authorizing conservation easements for the protection of natural, scenic, or open space values of real property, assuring its availability for agriculture, forest, recreational, or open space use, protecting natural resources, and maintaining or enhancing air or water quality. (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=84C>)

3. For any conservation easement acquired, a restoration and management must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

Components of each habitat management plan will include:

- The landowner's land management goals and objectives (by priority)
- A complete inventory of the resources on site
- Site-specific habitat management and/or restoration recommendations
- A schedule for conducting management practices
- Tools and guidance for evaluation of management efforts and their impacts on the resources and habitats present

All habitat management plans will be developed by a qualified resource management professional and provide guidance in utilizing habitat management practices that enhance the conservation values of a protected property. Implementation of these plans will be the responsibility of the landowner, though all management activities will be monitored by MLT at least annually to ensure activities comply with the plan and the conservation easement. Costs for management activities will be the responsibility of the landowner, though government cost-sharing programs exist that may provide match funding for specific activities.

The terms and restrictions of each conservation easement require that the habitat management plan must be submitted for approval by MLT prior to the landowner beginning any management activities. A copy of each plan and its approval will be maintained on file at MLT and we will work with landowners to update their plans periodically. MLT will assist with future updates to landowners' plans as funding is available.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

All conservation easement interests secured under this grant program will be held by MLT permanently.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction. A copy of the written approval should be provided to LCCMR.

Minnesota Land Trust's Director of Land Protection will prepare and submit a complete overview of each conservation easement project and submit it for DNR Commissioner approval at least ten (10) business days

prior to any final acquisition transaction. This component of our project approval process is also outlined in response to question #1, above.

6. Provide a statement addressing how conservation easements will address specific water quality protection activities, such as keeping water on the landscape, reducing nutrient and contaminant loading, protecting groundwater, and not permitting artificial hydrological modifications.

Minnesota Land Trust's standard conservation easement template includes a number of restrictions that are intended to prevent negative impacts to water quality. Standard restrictions include limiting agricultural uses such as row crops, prohibiting mining, preventing surface alteration and alteration of water bodies unless these activities are a component of an approved habitat management or restoration plan, and requirements for maintaining vegetated buffers to prevent surface runoff. Additionally, in easements that do allow limited amounts of agriculture, MLT includes a standard clause that requires those areas be restored to a natural condition when agricultural uses cease and that those restored areas cannot be returned to agriculture at any time in the future, thus limiting impacts to groundwater, surface water and potential erosion.

7. Describe the long-term monitoring and enforcement program for conservation easements acquired on parcels by your organization, including explanations of the process used for calculating conservation easement monitoring and enforcements costs, the process used for annual inspection and reporting on monitoring and enforcement activities, and the process used to ensure perpetual funding and implementation of monitoring and enforcement activities.

See attached document, MLT Conservation Easement Stewardship Program.

IX. VISUAL COMPONENT or MAP(S): See Map Attachment.

X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: N/A

XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted no later than February 1, 2016, August 1, 2016, February 1, 2017, August 1, 2017, and February 1, 2018. A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2018.

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund											
M.L. 2015 Project Budget											
Project Title: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Coordination and Mapping and Conservation Easements											
Legal Citation: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09e											
Project Manager: Wayne Ostlie											
Organization: Minnesota Land Trust											
M.L. 2015 ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 515,000											
Project Length and Completion Date: 3 years, June 30, 2018											
Date of Report: October 30, 2018											
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET											
	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 1 Balance	Activity 2 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 2 Balance	Activity 3 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 3 Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM	<i>Partnership Coordinating, Mapping and Outreach</i>			<i>Partnership Mapping and Database Development</i>			<i>Permanent Protection of Ecological Landscapes</i>				
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)	\$15,000	\$763	\$14,237				\$85,000	\$55,140	\$29,860	\$100,000	\$44,097
[Overall, Mapping and Coordination: \$15,000] MLT conservation and support staff expenses including salaries and benefits to manage and coordinate the program for three years. [Ecological Landscapes: \$90,000] Staff expenses including salaries and benefits for approximately .33 FTE per year for 3 years (1 FTE total) as follows: conservation directors or other land protection staff (approximately 0.4 FTE), staff attorney and other support staff (approximately 0.25 FTE) or contract staff for land protection project professional services, including negotiating and drafting conservation easements and/or completing easement baseline documentation.											
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts				\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$67,000	\$55,682	\$11,319	\$82,000	\$26,319
[Overall, Mapping and Coordination: \$15,000] MLT anticipated contract expenses include contracting database development and mapping of the corridors with an entity such as the MN DNR, Minnesota Information Technology (MN.IT) or a different third-party entity capable of working with the existing datasets and online mapping systems. [Ecological Landscapes: \$67,000] MLT anticipated contract expenses include title reports and closing costs, mapping, mineral assessments where appropriate, appraisals, habitat management plans, and land surveys. When efficiencies can be gained from contracting legal and/or project management contract support, MLT anticipates pursuing those options as well.											
Easement Acquisition							\$330,000	\$233,050	\$96,950	\$330,000	\$96,950
An estimated 120 acres of permanent easements will be held by the Minnesota Land Trust. As a part of each acquisition, the Land Trust will seek a donation from landowners in order to cover project costs related to long-term easement stewardship and monitoring. Stewardship and monitoring costs will be itemized and substantiated using MLT's Project Cost Analysis worksheet.											
Travel expenses in Minnesota							\$3,000	\$1,031	\$1,969	\$3,000	\$1,969
Mileage and related travel expenses in Minnesota. Up to \$2700 for mileage reimbursement estimated at \$0.55 per mile and \$300 for meals. Allowable travel expenses are in keeping with the DNR Commissioners plan.											
COLUMN TOTAL	\$15,000	\$763	\$14,237	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	\$485,000	\$344,903	\$140,097	\$515,000	\$169,335



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2015 Acquisition/Restoration List

Project Title: MeCC 8 - 3.2 Protect Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements

Project Manager Name: Wayne Ostlie

M.L. 2015 ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 515,000

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates		Estimated Cost	Estimated Annual PILT Liabilities	County	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status
		Latitude	Longitude										
1	Stanchfield Creek	93°22'20" W	45°39'26" N	\$70,050	N/A	Isanti	Oak-maple woodland, sedge meadow, mixed cattail marsh, and mixed deciduous swamp native plant communities. Site of high biological significance. Three quarters of a mile of shoreline along Stanchfield Creek, a key tributary to the Rum River.	conservation easement acquisition	77	0.72	private individual	Minnesota Land Trust	Complete
2	Red Wing	92°38'48" W	44°34'0" N	\$100,000	N/A	Goodhue	Hardwood forest, oak woodlands, grasslands, and intermittent stream. Adjacent to property with conservation easement held by Land Trust.	conservation easement acquisition	69	1.08	private individual	Minnesota Land Trust	Complete
3	Lake Sarah	93°42'16" W	45°3'44" N	\$63,000	N/A	Hennepin	Maple-basswood forest and wetlands. Bordered on two sides by permanent wetland preserve RIM easement and Lake Sarah Regional Park. Within ecologically significant natural area and Hennepin County-identified critical natural resource corridor.	conservation easement acquisition	12	0	private individual	Minnesota Land Trust	Complete

NOTES:

