



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2024 Approved Work Plan

## General Information

**ID Number:** 2024-298

**Staff Lead:** Tom Dietrich

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** June 12, 2024

**Project Title:** Priority Lakes: Meeting Protection Goals and Multiplying Benefits

**Project Budget:** \$1,890,000

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Crystal Mathisrud

**Organization:** Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District

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## Project Reporting

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** June 20, 2024

**Reporting Schedule:** June 1 / December 1 of each year.

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2027

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2027

## Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 08p

**Appropriation Language:** \$1,890,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Hubbard County Soil and Water Conservation District, in cooperation with Minnesota Land Trust, to protect habitat, forest health, and water quality in the best fishing lakes by creating lake implementation action plans, conducting community-based habitat restorations and improvements, and protecting forest lands with conservation easements and Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) enrollments within prioritized areas of the upper Mississippi River basin in Hubbard County. Of this amount, up to \$168,000 is for deposit in a monitoring fund to be used by Minnesota Land Trust as approved in the work plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 116P.20.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2027

## Narrative

**Project Summary:** Use existing tools and partnerships to meet protection goals and transition to long-term community driven, coordinated management for multiple benefits, including: habitat, water, forest health, local economy and climate resiliency.

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

The State of Minnesota has prioritized the long-term protection and management of private lands to secure the future health and vitality of our natural resources for our state and people. Partners across the state have developed high quality tools to identify and protect according to vulnerability and impact. We have become exceptional at prioritizing and rapidly implementing protection.

Protecting water quality in the 26 best fishing lakes in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB) of Minnesota is within reach. People love these pine studded shores for the diverse forests, clean waters & world-class fisheries. It is no mistake that these high-quality resources exist together. Forests absorb rainfall, reduce runoff, improve infiltration and protect our great state's water quality and quantity. MN DNR Fisheries research of over 1,300 lakes revealed that phosphorus concentrations in lakes are directly related to land disturbance and maintaining 75% forestland cover in a watershed is critical for water quality.

To maintain 75% forestland cover continuously, improve resource quality and multiply benefits over a long period of time, we need to be proactive and teach and support our partnering landowners to actively use their plans and promote adaptive management to secure long term ecosystem services benefits.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

The goal of this project is to pilot a Lake Planning and Protection method of community engagement, outreach and coordinated action in partnership with Minnesota Land Trust and Lake Associations. Partners will collaborate to draft action orientated lake plans that include shoreland and forestland protection, management and restoration goals. SWCD and MLT staff will help plan, attend and participate in lake association events focused on taking action according to the identified goals in the draft lake plans. Events will serve to complete small, localized action with landowners, promote awareness and use of lake plans, conservation easement opportunities and shoreland/forestland best management practices at multiple scales to suit the landowner or group of landowners being served. Demonstration restoration projects will be planned and executed on existing protected lands and/or lands newly protected as part of this project. Tree, shrub and understory planting will be highlighted as an impactful and scalable restoration practice for large and small acre shoreland properties. Engaged, activated landowners who receive consistent and thoughtful local technical support from SWCD and partners will ensure long-term management and protection success for our Priority Lakes water quality, habitat and recreational resources.

**What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

1. Reach protection goals for 2 Upper Mississippi Basin Priority Lakes.
2. Engage 2 lake associations in creating usable Lake Plans.
3. Provide technical support to 200 landowner.
4. Create a repeatable model for service providers to engage existing local groups around the topic of forest management and support them in using their individual management plans to take management actions.
5. 1 tree planter, site prep equipment purchased.
6. 5,000 native trees and shrubs planted.
7. 2900+ acres of conservation easements total via partnerships -- 400-500 acres paid for with LCCMR funds.
8. 5,900 new SFIA acres.

## Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

County(s): Hubbard

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

County(s): Hubbard

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Action Planning and Community Outreach – primary focus

**Activity Budget:** \$127,350

**Activity Description:**

Pilot projects will focus on Kabekona and Steamboat priority lake systems and partnering with already active lake associations to create a culture of active land and resource management. SWCD staff will engage lake associations in the project area, highlighting the connection between land management and maintaining the health of lake habitat and drinking water alike. Promote the identification of overlap between individual landowner vision and state and local conservation goals where individual actions create meaningful impact. Empower people to have and use individual land management plans to ensure progress toward meeting meaningful goals.

SWCD staff and lake association members work together to create short, usable local Lake Implementation Action Plans for each community to showcase their shared vision and outline a timeline and actions to take toward meeting their shared goals. Lake Implementation Action Plans ensure that management plans become management actions, they also provide a landmark to help measure and document progress as the community completes activities and subsequently updates their plan for new future goals every 2-3 years.

Partnering organizations and service providers are invited to attend lake association events to provide information, technical support and services to landowners to ensure their success in implementing projects and practices.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Hold kick off meeting and information session for project team,	August 31, 2024
2. Create lake association lake planning and land management informational kits	December 31, 2024
3. Build interactive Lake Planning module and story map on existing MN Watersheds Virtual Lab,	December 31, 2024
4. Hold lake planning introduction meetings for 2 pilot project groups and gather input for action plan	January 31, 2025
5. Draft lake implementation action plans, present to respective lake associations, include guest presentations according to plan interests	May 31, 2025
6. Organize services with consulting foresters, DNR and other partners—create access for implementation	December 31, 2026
7. Reach 200+ landowners and connect them to land management resources	May 31, 2027

### Activity 2: Action Plan Implementation through technical support – primary focus

**Activity Budget:** \$120,650

**Activity Description:**

Organize community habitat improvement opportunities for pilot groups--DNR, consulting foresters, Minnesota Land Trust and SWCD staff will assist landowners in using their management plans to implement improvements and plan for future actions.

This activity must remain flexible to meet the habitat improvement needs and goals that have been identified in individual protected lands management plans in year 2 of the project. While this activity will result in habitat improvements for pollinators and or wildlife, with a preference for reestablishing diverse, native forest floor and understory communities, the overarching goal is to provide the lake association group with a successful hands-on experience using a management plan to take action.

Participation in a – “Plan-to-Action” experience is an important step to ensure landowners transfer theory education to confidence and ability to use knowledge for action.

We expect these projects will take place on privately owned lands protected by permanent RIM, MLT or DNR conservation easements.

SWCD will support small scale tree planting activities according to small acre management plans utilizing local funds and DNR cost-share.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Note potential restoration or habitat actions identified while writing Lake Implementation Action Plans with pilot groups	May 31, 2025
Review potential actions with pilot groups and engage them in choosing and planning projects	May 31, 2025
Purchase tree planter and site prep tools	August 31, 2025
Complete restoration and/or habitat improvement installation	October 31, 2025
Implement tree planting projects with pilot groups, plant 5000 native trees and shrubs	October 31, 2026
Complete review of restoration and/or habitat improvement projects at 6 and 12 months	May 31, 2027

**Activity 3: Strategic forest land protection utilizing MLT Easements and SFIA to rapidly reach protection goals for priority lakes.**

**Activity Budget:** \$1,642,000

**Activity Description:**

Leverage lake planning, tree and shoreland projects, and the pursuit of common goals as established in activities 1-2 as opportunities to engage key landowners in reaching protection goals through easement and SFIA enrollments. A key component of successful easement applications is a trusting relationship between the landowner and the service provider.

SWCD staff will plan and conduct outreach for both SFIA and easements, including coordinating with plan writers and DNR for SFIA and with MLT for easements.

MLT, as the easement experts, will lead the easement application, verification and completion process with SWCD staff as the on-the-ground helper to follow up with landowners as needed per situation. MLT will ensure all easement requirements are met throughout the project.

MLT will purchase the easements and process payments to landowners.

LCCMR funds will be used to protect approximately 500 acres toward the project goal. Easement outreach will focus on Steamboat Lake. All UMRB Priority Lakes are included in the overall project protection goals and eligible for easement funding according to RAQ score.

All LCCMR and DNR requirements for easement acquisition and reporting will be followed.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Coordinate Targeted Outreach for High Priority Easements	October 31, 2024

Prepare and Send Targeted SFIA Outreach Mailer: Fish are a Forest Product and Shoreland insets	March 31, 2025
Conduct Follow Up Outreach and Landowner Visits for High Priority Easements	May 31, 2025
Hold Forested Shoreland Meet and Greet Event: Recognize Work Completed and Inspire New Engagements	May 31, 2026
Preliminary Reporting and Project Checklist Review: Verification Completed and In-Process Easement and SFIA Applications	July 31, 2026
Purchase 500 acres of conservation easements with LCCMR funds	June 30, 2027
Enroll 5,900 acres in SFIA	June 30, 2027
Leverage project outreach and MLT programs to purchase 2,900 additional acres of conservation easements	June 30, 2027

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Ruurd Schoolderman	Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)	MLT manages a portfolio of 700+ easements totaling 76,000 acres. MLT will develop and hold the conservation easements completed under this grant. In addition, MLT will work to connect its landowners with land management resources and use the results of this project to inform new stewardship approaches.	Yes
Keith Karnes	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO)	Primary LLBO contact and project advisor. Provide technical support and outreach within LLBO priority areas.	No
Mitch Brinks	Maps By Mitch	GIS, parcel prioritization specialist - contract	Yes
Dain Erickson	Red Canoe	Outreach materials designer - contract	Yes
Dana Gutzmann	Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District	Provide technical assistance for Cass County Landowners and review requests for Leech Lake River One Watershed, One Plan funds for BMP implementation associated with pilot project management plans.	Yes
Lindberg Ekola	Board of Water and Soil Resources	Private Forested Watersheds Protection Coordinator for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. In this role, he is managing the development of watershed-based landscape stewardship plans. These plans provide guidance on forestland protection and private forest management in ways that support the development and implementation local water plans (1W1Ps)	Yes
Gary Michael	DNR Forestry	Primary DNR Forestry contact and project advisor.	No
Dan Steward	Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District	Local project forest landscape management and easement acquisition coordinator.	Yes

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

The intent of this project is to establish a transferable model and set of tools that can be used by other districts and watershed areas across the state to reach protection goals and successfully transition into a community inclusive, landowner driven long-term management culture that continuously increases the benefits achieved with our landowner partners who commit to conservation easements and SFIA. These agreements are protection tools, but they are also testament to commitment to manage and care for our resources.

Dissemination will include:

-The development of a set of tools to be shared with other SWCDs and partners to duplicate this work. Tools will include outreach templates, coordinated management workflows, service provider contact lists and a road map to potential leveraging funds. This information will be shared at Area 8 SWCD meeting, Local Forestry Teams and potentially as a BWSR Academy Session.

-The development of a module and storymap on our Minnesota Watersheds Virtual Lab Hub -- a project HCSWCD has been working on since 2020 to create accessible, long-term resources for projects and topics of interest in our community. This module will share the big ideas of Lake Planning, Protection and Management for Restoration to help groups inspired, motivated and in touch with their SWCD to start a local project like this where there is interest. We share Virtual Lab Pages via smart codes on documents and presentations, so we can easily share the online resources widely while sharing printed or digital materials in multiple settings.



-Mitch Brinks will be contracted to define our project baseline utilizing current GIS and county land data. After defining the starting point, we will track all new easements, SFIA, landowner contacts, outreach, events and restoration projects to show the metrics of the work done and how that translates into measurable outcomes such as reduced nutrients, sediment and phosphorus in surface water and the impacts of those reductions on fisheries and aquatic life.

-In addition to the data side of tracking, we will seek to create landowner success stories in 1 pager, post card and short video formats to share at vents, via mailers and on youtube and other social media. We will use these items to engage new people in management activities as well as to recognize those who are participating -- recognition is powerful and often prompts people to help share the good work we are doing.

We will seek to present our project experience and resulting tools, templates and model at the Minnesota Water Resource Conference, Wild Turkey Federation Conference, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Deer Hunters Association, Coalition of Lakes, Audobon, Minnesota Women's Woodland Network, Lake Association meetings and other events.

All documents, brochures, project signs, outreach materials, and project videos created as part of this project will include acknowledgement of ENTRF funding support and the ENTRF logo.

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

This pilot is intended to help local implementors transition from the placement of protection tools across the landscape to using those tools in an integrated, activated community approach where landowners work together to maximize private and public benefits of long-term, intentional management.

Partners will create a transferable template for how to implement and coordinate these strategies where high impacts are possible but land is fragmented. It will help partners grow relationships with each other, lake associations and community groups that will be key in creating a self-sufficient program and incrementally meeting our long-term management goals around forests and water quality.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Project Manager		Team coordination, communication and reporting			0%	0.15		\$16,650
Forest-Water Connection Coordinator		Lake Implementation Plan Development and Coordination			0%	0.45		\$24,000
Conservation Technician		Conduct outreach activities and assist landowners and partners with conservation easement application process			0%	1.5		\$70,000
Forest Resources Technician		Landowner outreach, engagement, small acre plan writing			0%	1.05		\$60,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$170,650</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
MLT	Sub award	Personnel: Land protection, legal and support \$160,000. Travel \$3,000 in-state. Easement Aquisition Costs: Appraisals \$48,000, surveys/boundary posting \$54,000, title review and closing costs \$21,000, Habitat management for new easements \$36,000, \$7,000 mapping, and \$37,000 for document completion and contingency.				3.6		\$366,000
Maps by Mitch	Professional or Technical Service Contract	GIS and prioritization mapping for targeted outreach mailers and accomplishment reporting				0.24		\$12,000
Red Canoe	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Landowner outreach material design and landowner accomplishment highlights				0.1		\$8,000
Various Foresters and Contract Service Providers	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Coordinated partnering, outreach, deliver services to landowners				0.6		\$50,000

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$436,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Trees and Shrubs	Restoration and habitat improvement practices					\$9,600
	Tools and Supplies	Native understory ground cover seed mix	restore native ground cover in existing forest					\$5,600
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$15,200</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
		1 Tree planter and 1 seed sprayer	To enable planting of 5000 trees with landowner groups and restoration actiities	X				\$10,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
	Conservation Easement Acquisition	Acres: 500 Parcels: 6						\$1,089,000
	Stewardship Funds	MLT						\$168,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,257,000</b>
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	Print Lake Management Plans and Brochures	Share lake plans with community for community use and spread the word					\$1,150

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,150</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,890,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Capital Expenditures		1 Tree planter and 1 seed sprayer	<p>The tree planter and seed sprayer are necessary to support reforestation of open lands adjacent to the priority lakes identified for protection where forest restoration will be a requirement of the land management plan included with an easement and have a significant impact on water quality protection. Areas too large to hand plant are anticipated in the project area.</p> <p><b>Additional Explanation :</b> Tree Planter and Seed Sprayer will be offered for check-out use by Hubbard Co landowner through the useful life of the equipment, housed at Hubbard SWCD in Park Rapids.</p>

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
<b>State</b>				
In-Kind	MLT existing funds for easements and acquisitions in project area	Will be used to acquire additional easements that meet the project goals across the basin. This is potential match for the whole 3 year period	Potential	\$5,100,000
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$5,100,000</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Land Owner Contributions to Habitat Improvement and Tree Planting Projects	Purchase supplies (trees, seeds) and hire services to support completion of non cost-sharable management projects	Potential	\$44,000
In-Kind	NACD Small Acre Forestry Grant	Support plan writing for land owners with smaller tracts than eligible for SFIA	Potential	\$40,000
In-Kind	Steamboat/Necktie HUC10 319 Small Watershed Restoration Project	This long-term funding includes restoration funds to focus on remeandering the Necktie River, which is the headwaters of Steamboat Lake. Federal Funds	Pending	\$280,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$364,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$5,464,000</b>

## Acquisition and Restoration

### Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Hart Lake 1	Hubbard	Wild rice lake	Restoration	26.48	0.27	\$28,000	Private	In process enrollment in RIM	Has Not Begun
Hart Lake 2	Hubbard	Wild rice lake	Conservation Easement	120	0.51	\$142,320	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Horseshoe Lake Complex 1	Hubbard	High RAQ 1725 ft Horshoe Lake Shore	Conservation Easement	56	0.32	\$48,960	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 1	Hubbard	Lake Benedict 153 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	39	0.02	\$126,480	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 2	Hubbard	High RAQ 1600 ft Shore on Lake Benedict	Conservation Easement	57	0.3	\$158,220	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 2	Hubbard	High RAQ 180 ft Shore Lake Benedict	Conservation Easement	39	0.03	\$126,000	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Necktie R Corridor Hart Outlet 1	Hubbard	1400 stream feet Necktie R between Hart and Steamboat Lake, critical fish reproduction habitat	Restoration	94	0.27	\$13,640	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Necktie R Corridor Hart Outlet 1	Hubbard	1400 stream feet Necktie R between Hart and Steamboat Lake, critical fish reproduction habitat	Conservation Easement	94	0.27	\$137,940	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Necktie R Upper Meanders 1	Hubbard	Stream section impacted by ditch, natural brook trout producing source water stream for Hart and Steamboat Lakes	Conservation Easement	80	0.3	\$97,800	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 1		Oak Lake 3000 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	38	0.57	\$66,360	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 2	Hubbard	Oak Lake 850 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.16	\$64,320	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 3	Hubbard	Oak Lake 750 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	19	0.14	\$46,860	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 4	Hubbard	Oak Lake and Kabekona R 1000 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.19	\$58,620	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Spring Lake Corridor	Hubbard	Spring Lake Corridor 470 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.09	\$35,880	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Spring Lake Corridor 2	Hubbard	Spring Lake Habitat Corridor Forest	Conservation Easement	120	0	\$716,220	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun

Steamboat Lake Complex 7	Hubbard	Steamboat Lake 300ft Shore N	Conservation Easement	17	0.06	\$40,740	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Inlet Corridor	Hubbard	High RAQ Score, Inlet source water stream, critical fisheries reproduction habitat, 400 ft Necktie R Shore	Restoration	42	0.08	\$4,340	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Inlet Corridor	Hubbard	High RAQ Score, Inlet source water stream, critical fisheries reproduction habitat, 400 ft Necktie R Shore	Conservation Easement	42	0.08	\$43,560	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Inlet Corridor 2	Hubbard	High RAQ Score, Inlet source water stream, critical fisheries reproduction habitat, 2080 ft Necktie R Shore	Restoration	33	0.4	\$6,200	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Inlet Corridor 2	Hubbard	High RAQ Score, Inlet source water stream, critical fisheries reproduction habitat, 2080 ft Necktie R Shore	Conservation Easement	33	0.4	\$49,500	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Stream Corridor 1	Hubbard	Necktie River Inlet to Steamboat Lake 370 Stream ft	Conservation Easement	42	0.7	\$34,140	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Sucker Branch 1	Hubbard	4000 Stream ft Sucker Branch - Kabekona and Lester Lake Connectivity	Conservation Easement	76	0.76	\$36,060	Private	MLT	Negotiations In Progress
<b>Totals</b>				<b>1,187.48</b>	<b>5.92</b>	<b>\$2,082,160</b>			



## Conservation Easement Acquisition

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

This project will result in a method for collaborative, science-based restoration of lake-based watersheds (lakesheds) using the following: Prioritize by Water - "P". Categorize the watersheds by land cover patterns at three watershed scales (HUC 8, 10 and 14 levels). Review the relationships between land cover, particularly forests, and water quality. Sort watersheds by dominant land cover, land ownership, geomorphology, and ecological data. Confirm the appropriate blend of resource management strategies (BMPs - ag and urban, PFM - forestland protection and stewardship) for each subwatershed and minor watershed. Target by Land - "T". Prioritize conservation work down to the parcel level. Create spreadsheets that summarize scores for three factors - Riparian, Adjacency, Quality (RAQ) using methodologies developed by BWSR and DNR. Create RAQ Landowner Tables for use by the teams. Metrics for Measuring Success - "M". In each watershed, measure progress toward 75% protection goal of each lake's watershed. Use the 8 categories from the PFM Implementation Toolbox. (see page 41 - <http://landscapeconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Landscape-Stewardship-Guide-USDA-USFS-2011.pdf>)

### **2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.**

Leech Lake River One Watershed, One Plan; <https://www.hubbardswcd.org/portfolio/leech-lake-1w1p/>  
Leech Lake River Landscape Stewardship Plan; [https://www-dev.bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-06/Leech\\_LSP\\_Complete\\_doc\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www-dev.bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-06/Leech_LSP_Complete_doc_FINAL.pdf)

### **3. For any conservation easement acquired, a restoration and management plan 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.**

All conservation easement acquisitions handled by MLT require a management plan. HCSWCD, has a forest resources technician on our team who is DNR certified to write forest stewardship plans and is responsible for writing management plans to submit to BWSR with RIM easements. We frequently partner with Minnesota Land Trust, NWLT or Forests for the Future to match landowners with easement programs and those programs also seek to include a management plan with every easement.

Within our office, we review easement compliance annually and use this process to check in with landowners to see if they have any questions, concerns or wishes to update their management plans. We currently keep all files in both paper and electronic format so they are easy to access for landowners who prefer to meet in person and for landowners who prefer virtual meetings.

We wish to grow our capacity to assist with long-term management according to these plans through this pilot project. We see potential to grow our local capacity to assist and support landowners in long-term management and restoration activities through the focused partnership with MLT and DNR Private Forest Management and we believe that growing action-based management support to landowners is essential for maximizing the conservation value of protected lands.

The LCCMR funded easements will be held by MLT and therefore project partners will follow MLT standard process for easement acquisition and stewardship.

### **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.**

Easements will be completed and held by Minnesota Land Trust. We are not pursuing acquisitions for transfer/conveyance to the state or county. If the need for county board approval arises, HCSWCD will take the necessary actions to ensure we meet the requirement.

**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.**

Easements will be completed and held by Minnesota Land Trust. We will ensure DNR commissioner approval is obtained and sent to LCCMR at least 10 days prior to closing.

**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.**

Forests protect water quality. They absorb rainfall, reduce runoff, and improve infiltration. MN DNR Fisheries research of over 1,300 revealed that phosphorus concentrations in lakes are directly related to land disturbance and maintaining 75% forestland cover in a watershed is critical for water quality. Watersheds in northern Minnesota are mostly forested with higher levels of public landowners so water quality is high, and often pristine. The primary risk to water quality is on private lands because they are more likely to be converted or developed resulting in increased storm-water runoff and declining water quality. This project seeks to identify and protect high quality forested parcels that are also adjacent to priority surface waters and corridors or complexes of protected habitat. The aim of this project is to rapidly acquire easements and forestland protection/management for priority lakes so that we do meet the protection goal and then transition into managing these lands to increase the public benefits while supporting the landowners in meeting their personal visions for forest land management--land owners choose.

**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 enforcement 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.**

Land protected through conservation easements will be sustained through state-of-the-art standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship. The Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited land trust with a very successful stewardship program that includes annual property monitoring, effective records management, addressing inquiries and interpretations, tracking changes in ownership, investigating potential violations and defending the easement in cases of a true violation. Easement monitoring occurs on an annual basis and completed by staff or trained volunteers. Landowners are contacted well in advance of the easement monitoring and offered the opportunity to accompany the monitor during the site visit. In analyzing conservation easement protection costs, the Land Trust estimates the recurring annual costs associated with monitoring, managing and enforcing perpetual conservation easements. These costs can vary depending upon a number of factors, including location, the nature of the restrictions and number of reserved rights. The Land Trust uses the amount of stewardship needed for a "typical" project as the amount generally requested for stewardship funding. However, the format allows for tailoring this request when a project's elements depart significantly from the norm.

## Restoration

**1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.**

All restoration activities completed with LCCMR funds will occur on lands that are permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

**2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.**

Restoration projects implemented within this project are expected to be focused on forest floor and native understory restoration in existing forests where there is opportunity to restore the native habitat and layers that have been disrupted due to past use change, human activity and plantation tracts. The goal is to identify, plan and install restoration projects with the pilot groups to provide an opportunity to use management plans to plan and take action.

All restoration projects include documentation from starting condition through project steps and to immediate and subsequent year outcomes. We utilize required reporting as well as photographs and videos from field work to measure, document and also tell the story of the project for our annual report and local news outlets. We keep all records and project stories in electronic and hard copy format in our office, filed according to project type, watershed and year of implementation.

**3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.**

HCSWCD staff partner with MLT, DNR and BWSR training staff to ensure that projects follow established guidelines and that an authorized person signs off on project plans and completed project installation.

**4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.**

Long-term maintenance and management financial needs will be met primarily by landowners and/or cost-share opportunities for projects conducted on privately owned conservation easement protected parcels. HCSWCD will utilize local funds to provide long-term technical support for maintenance and management.

**5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.**

HCSWCD’s preference is to engage the Conservation Corp of Minnesota if possible. Once a potential project is identified, staff will reach out to the Corp to request a project and availability estimate.

**6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.**

All restoration and management projects completed with LCCMR funds will be reviewed by a qualified team member initially after the project is completed and again at the 1 year (our policy) and 3-year anniversary of implementation follow-up. The review process will be used to document the successes of the project, whether goals have been met, if any further improvements could be made and recommended, and if lessons learned at the site could be applied elsewhere.

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Map*

File: [ad0c085d-2f2.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Map*

Pilot Project Area including Kabekona and Steamboat Priority Lake systems with prioritized forested parcels and remaining protection goals highlighted...

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
HCSWCD Letter Of Authorization	<a href="#">06209081-667.pdf</a>
Hubbard County SWCD Resolution	<a href="#">9ae77697-749.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Tax Info - Hubbard Cty 2021 - 30 pgs	<a href="#">00d44850-456.pdf</a>
MLT Support Letter	<a href="#">ea693593-686.docx</a>

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

Project Budget change includes reduction in the number of easements and acres we can achieve with the LCCMR funds. This is partly because I didn't understand the full cost of easement processing and the stewardship fund when I wrote the proposal. I also didn't understand that the staff and contract expenses for easement processing should be entered into the "contracts" fields in the budget. Notice the amount of funds in the "easement acquisition" field has changed to shift the necessary funds for easement processing over to the "contracts" field. I have also entered a separate line item for the stewardship fund in the "easement acquisition" field and a line item for habitat management in the "contracts" field.

The Personnel Budget line item that had been designated to BWSR RIM staff has been updated to the Conservation Technician with additional details added to the role description. In following up with MLT and BWSR staff on workplan and budget details, we realized we could be more effective in the long-term if we split the easement process work so that the SWCD staff completes the landowner focused local outreach and follow up, especially when it requires many one-on-one visits to prepare the application and MLT staff perform the more technical and legal aspects of the process. Another benefit of working in this arrangement should be that we grow our individual organization skills and combined capacity to do both local and regional coordinated protection and management activities utilizing the various strengths and flexibilities of each organization in the partnership. In our corrected budget all "personnel" line items are for HCSWCD staff and all MLT and other partner contracts are included in the "contracts" line items.

I have added the Steamboat/Necktie HUC10 319 Federal grant to the project match. This project has been selected for funding, including the re-meandering of a previously ditched Brook Trout stream that is the headwaters of Steamboat Lake. \$280,000 is the estimated amount the project will receive 2023-2025 with additional blocks of funds to continue for 10 years.

Project narrative outcomes field was updated to specify that 400-500 acres of the total 2900 acres enrolled in easements goal will be achieved with LCCMR funds. The rest of the acres will be pursued with MLT, Forests for the Future and other partnering program funding. We intend to demonstrate how we are better able to achieve a shared goal together in a highly focused landscape when we have more choices for landowners and high community engagement in settings where we intentionally take action together.

Aquisition and Restoration question 8, 3 I clarified our answer to acknowledge the management capacity growth we expect to gain from working together with MLT, DNR PFM, BWSR and local partners in this focused landscape.

In "Activities and Milestones" I have edited the description text to clarify each goal and which aspects will be completed by who and with LCCMR funds or leveraged funds. In the 3rd activity, I have updated the estimated acres that will be protected with LCCMR funds to an estimate of 500 which is in better alignment with current costs, including stewardship.

Our easement target list has been updated to note MLT as the potential easement holder for all parcels to simplify project contracting and execution. I would still like to see future funding allow for flexible placement of easements with various easement holders and will ask about that again as we work through details for this project.

We have updated all tabs and fields to reflect the change to MLT as the primary easement holder and edited activities and milestones to clearly state which activities will be completed with LCCMR funds and by who as well as what activities will be pursued with complimentary funds.

We have updated the easement acquisition milestones to better define the focused outreach for protection and management will occur in the Steamboat and Kabekona Lake areas because these are the locations where we wish to test our process and use that experience to create the transferable model of how to reach protection goals while shifting to long-term management. We will also work toward protection of all 26 Priority Lakes identified in the Upper Mississippi River Basin with easement and sfia enrollment as part of this project, and will look to use the transition to management models developed with Steamboat and Kabekona Lakes at the other Priority Lakes in future phases and funding cycles.

Entered dissemination plan.

5/28/2024

Removed non-Hubbard Co parcels from the easements target list. Added potential restoration projects to the parcel list. We will discuss potential restoration projects with all landowners who decide to proceed with an easement application as part of this project and will seek to fund additional restoration and tree planting activities with matching funds.

Updated the tree planter and spraying equipment categories to capital expenditures due to the \$5000 threshold and added information on future use of these items.

Combined all MLT professional contract line items into one line item categorized as a subaward.

6/12/2024

All comments from 5/31/2024 have been addressed.

Added "in-state" travel to the MLT subaward item, added language regarding easement acquisition LCCMR and DNR protocol compliance and provided a justification statement for the capital expense tree planter and sprayer equipment.



## Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

**Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?**

Yes

**Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

N/A

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No

**Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

No