

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2010 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 086-C

Project Title:

The Future of Wild and Scenic River Protection

LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:

C. Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Acquisition

Total Project Budget: \$ \$375,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 years, 2010 - 2012

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$0

Summary:

The Land Trust will address future protection needs along Minnesotas remarkable wild and scenic rivers by analyzing the gaps in current protection and securing conservation easements within these priority areas.

Name: Kris Larson

Sponsoring Organization: MN Land Trust

Address: 2356 University Ave W, Ste 240
St. Paul MN 55114

Telephone Number: (651) 647-9590 or (218) 722-4641

Email: klarson@mnland.org

Fax: (651) 647-9769

Web Address: mnland.org

Location:

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| _____ Knowledge Base | _____ Broad App. | _____ Innovation |
| _____ Leverage | _____ Outcomes | |
| _____ Partnerships | _____ Urgency | _____ TOTAL |

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: The Future of Wild and Scenic River Protection

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Minnesota State Wild & Scenic Rivers Program was established in 1973 to protect rivers throughout the state which have “outstandingly remarkable” natural, scenic, and cultural values. Portions of six rivers in Minnesota—the Kettle, Rum, Mississippi, North Fork of the Crow, Cannon and Minnesota—are designated as wild and scenic under the state program. In addition, there is one river—the St. Croix—that is also designated under the federal program.

While the State of Minnesota and National Park Service were very active in protecting land along these rivers in the early years of the program, since the late 1970s the programs have been underfunded and under-staffed, resulting in both a lack of *new* conservation easements being established and a threat of losing the public benefits of the *existing* conservation easements. Fortunately, both the DNR and National Park Service have recently renewed their interest in the wild and scenic river protection and are currently in the process of inventorying their existing easements, creating an electronic records system and establishing protocols for easement monitoring. This will all help to protect the integrity of the existing conservation easements.

However, an important question remains regarding the *future* of land protection along the wild and scenic rivers: Where and how should Minnesota’s conservation organizations, agencies and policy makers focus future protection efforts and funding to ensure the long-term integrity of our wild and scenic rivers?

This project is intended to help answer this question and advance the protection of the wild and scenic rivers into the future by:

- 1) evaluating the current state of land protection along the rivers and identifying gaps and opportunities for additional protection based on multiple public policy goals including conserving wildlife habitat, enhancing scenic and recreational experiences, and maintaining water quality; and
- 3) completing 4-8 permanent conservation easements within the opportunity areas identified in the analysis.

In this first phase of what we hope to be a longer-term project, we will focus on the three rivers that the DNR is currently prioritizing: the Rum, the Cannon and the St. Croix. We will utilize the DNR’s data it currently is collecting as a basis for our analysis, thereby extending the value of state’s research into the next phase of protection. The analysis will look at both protected fee land and conservation easement (including those easements already held by the Land Trust), as well as the regulatory controls and existing protection efforts along the rivers. At the conclusion of the project, the analysis will be available to the DNR, National Park Services and other potential partners, making it an important investment with multiple benefits.

Attached is a map of the Rum River as a demonstration of the gaps in protection. The Rum has one of the highest concentrations of state wild and scenic easements and existing Minnesota Land Trust easements, yet there remain significant areas in great need of analysis and protection.

This project follows several recommendations as outlined in the *Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan*, including H1: Protect Priority Habitats; H2: Protect Critical Shorelands of Streams and Lakes; and H9: Invest in Overall Research on Land and Aquatic Habitat.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Analysis of Existing Protection Status, Identification of Future Opportunities and Outreach to Landowners **Budget:** \$75,000

The Land Trust will work with the DNR, National Park Service and others to evaluate the existing status of land protection on the three rivers. This analysis will:

1. Evaluate data on existing conservation easements and fee owned public lands
2. Assemble other appropriate natural resource data along the rivers, such as county biological survey information, as well as ownership data
3. Identify gaps in protection and highlight future opportunities or priorities for protection
4. Conduct outreach to landowners and other potential partners: this includes approximately three public outreach sessions and direct contacts with landowners

Deliverable 1

1. *Analysis w/maps of potential protection priorities*
2. *Outreach to landowners with lists of potential projects*

Completion Date

June 30, 2011
Sept. 30, 2011

Result 2: Land Protection through Conservation Easements **Budget:** \$300,000

The Land Trust will complete 4-8 conservation easements on properties identified in the analysis as priority for protection. Funding will cover easement negotiations, acquisition costs and conservation easement stewardship. The intent is to pursue donated easements where possible and utilize our limited acquisition funds for high-priority parcels when necessary.

Deliverable

1. Protect up to 300-600 acres by completing all components of conservation easement projects and dedicating funds to ensure long-term easement sustainability.

Completion Date

June 30, 2012

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This project will be conducted by the Minnesota Land Trust. We will work closely with the DNR and National Park Service, as well as other entities engaged in the protection of the rivers. Our work is intended to be complementary and of added value to others as they engage in their own work along the rivers.

B. Timeline Requirements

We anticipate completing the analysis by June 30, 2011, the outreach by September 30, 2011 and the 4-8 conservation easements by June 30, 2012.

C. Long-Term Strategy

The Land Trust has identified several of the wild and scenic rivers as priorities for protection in its own internal planning. As such, we anticipate being active along these rivers for years to come. In addition, the DNR, National Park Service and other entities have their own long-term goals along the river. We hope this work will help foster long-term partnerships and shared priorities for protection work among all the potential partners—with the ultimate goal being better conservation along these important natural and scenic assets.

Project Budget

The Future of Wild and Scenic River Protection

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (2 years)

| BUDGET ITEM | AMOUNT |
|---|-------------------|
| Personnel: Staff expenses including salaries, benefits and related costs for approximately 1.00 FTE for each year as follows: Regional conservation directors or other land protection staff (approximately .75 FTE) and staff attorney and other support staff (approximately .25 FTE): may provide through hiring or contract. | \$ 150,000 |
| Contract services: GIS analysis and planning assistance | 10,000 |
| Conservation Easement Acquisition Costs: Acquisition by gift or purchase of 4-8 easements protecting up to 300-600 acres of land to be held by the Minnesota Land Trust, including costs of: | \$ 130,000 |
| Purchase price of conservation easement(s) | |
| Title work, title insurance, etc | |
| Maps, GIS (including project mapping by Community GIS) | |
| Other (including appraisals, survey, closing costs, recording fees, etc.) | |
| Travel (mileage in state for analysis, outreach and protection): | \$ 5,000 |
| Conservation Easement Stewardship : Dedicating funds for long-term stewardship on 4-8 easements as needed. | \$ 80,000 |
| TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR | \$ 375,000 |





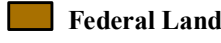
V. OTHER FUNDS

| SOURCE OF FUNDS | AMOUNT | Status |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Other Non-State \$ Being Leveraged During Project Period: These other funds represent an estimate of the potential value of easements donated to the Land Trust under this project. The value of donated easements is difficult to predict, but we believe we can achieve at least \$400,000 in leverage | \$ 400,000 | Pending, dependent upon actual projects completed. |
| Other State \$ Being Spent During Project Period: While not currently anticipated, the Land Trust does from time to time collaborate with other partners in order to complete specific projects. | unknown at this time | |
| In-kind Services During Project Period: While the Land Trust does not itemize the specific value of in-kind services, substantial amounts of unreimbursable staff time and overhead are required to complete land protection projects with Trust Funds. | unknown | |

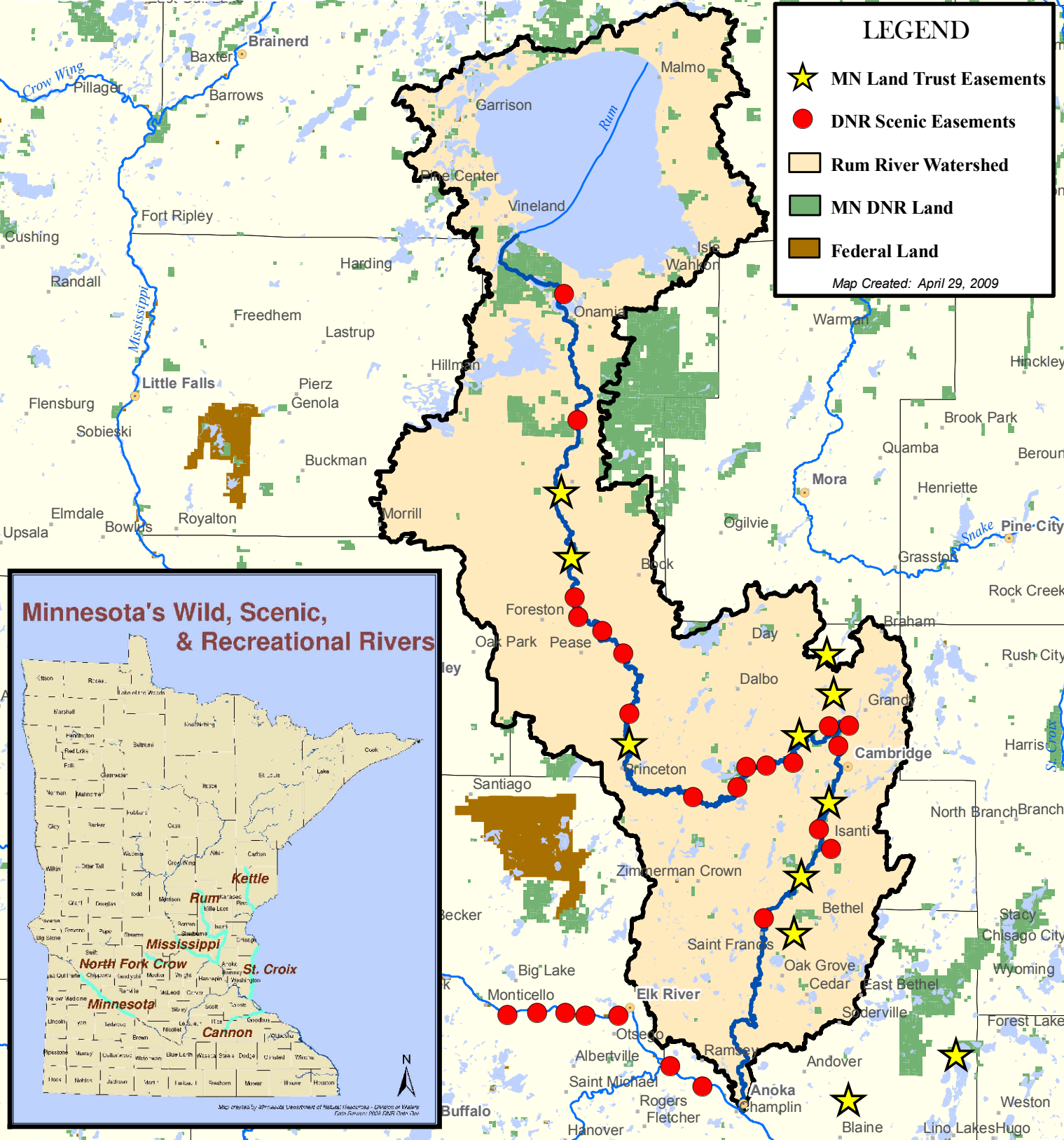
RUM RIVER

Wild & Scenic River Protections

LEGEND

-  MN Land Trust Easements
-  DNR Scenic Easements
-  Rum River Watershed
-  MN DNR Land
-  Federal Land

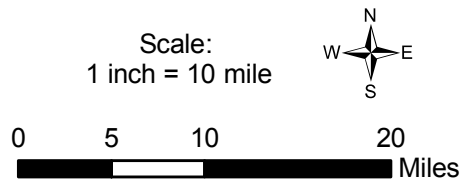
Map Created: April 29, 2009



MAP RESOURCE INFORMATION

MN Land Trust Easements created by Community GIS Services, Inc.
 State Ownership Land Information derived from MN DNR - MIS Bureau.
 Other information derived from ESRI Data & Maps 9.3.

The Minnesota Land Trust cannot be held liable for accuracy of GIS material provided. GIS materials should not be relied upon to establish legal title, boundary lines, or locations of improvements.



Minnesota Land Trust: Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Organization Description

The Minnesota Land Trust is a private, nonprofit organization that preserves the natural and scenic heritage of our State by permanently protecting lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life.

Since 1991, the Minnesota Land Trust has been helping landowners and local communities preserve our State's natural and scenic heritage in the face of increasing threats to our important landscapes. To meet our current challenges, the Land Trust has developed a *conservation agenda* to strategically guide our work and has adopted *integrated four-part program* to implement this agenda.

The *conservation agenda* sets out the specific *conservation focus* of the Minnesota Land Trust and identifies a suite of *critical landscapes* throughout the State that embody the natural and cultural features that make Minnesota unique.

The suite of strategies selected reflects our growing awareness that *permanently protecting* Minnesota's valuable lands and waters, particularly through the use of conservation easements, requires an expanded notion of land protection and includes:

- **Community Assistance.** We support and assist thoughtful community land use planning, programs and projects that use natural resource data to identify places to protect and places to build.
- **Direct Land Protection.** We identify and directly protect significant tracts of land throughout the State. We carefully select, design and implement individual real estate projects to make sure that conservation goals and objectives can be met and conservation values protected in perpetuity where appropriate. We continue to work extensively with conservation easements, using other real estate options when needed. The Land Trust is the only statewide organization that extensively uses conservation easements as a protection strategy. The Land Trust completed its first easement in 1993 encompassing 80 acres of land in Washington County. Since then, we have completed 369 projects protecting 33,138 acres throughout Minnesota.
- **Land Management.** We encourage and support the restoration and management of specific sites where appropriate to ensure their long-term ecological viability.
- **Research, Education and Advocacy.** We engage in research and provide information and materials to the public and policy makers on needs, issues and tools related to land conservation. We advocate at federal, state and local levels for policies, practices and programs that further our mission.

Project Manager Qualifications

Director of Conservation Programs

Kris Larson returned to the Minnesota Land Trust in the fall of 2006. He worked for the Minnesota Land Trust in several capacities from 1998-2003, including Acting Executive Director, Conservation Planning Director and Conservation Director for the northern region. More recently, Kris served as the Executive Director for the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts, where he oversaw all the organization's operations and services for more than sixty land trusts and government open space programs. Kris also gained valuable experience in land conservation while at the Brandywine Conservancy in Pennsylvania prior to coming to Minnesota in 1998. He has a bachelor's degree from Carleton College and a master's degree in Landscape Architecture from the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia.