

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2019 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 260-G

Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection and Wetland Restoration

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 2,247,520

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: June 30, 2024 (5 yrs)

Summary:

This project aims to protect and restore sensitive areas from urban and agricultural encroachment for the betterment of surface water, groundwater and drinking source water.

Name: Scott Henderson

Sponsoring Organization: Sauk River Watershed District

Title: District Administrator

Department: _____

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Sauk Centre MN 56378

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Location

Region: Central

County Name: Douglas, Stearns

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Map highlights potential sites of protection and restoration within the Sauk River Watershed, especially adjacent to the Sauk River.

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity	_____ Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL _____%
_____ If under \$200,000, waive presentation?			



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
2019 Main Proposal Template

PROJECT TITLE: Priority habitat protection and wetland restoration for surface water, groundwater, and source water resiliency in the Sauk River watershed.

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project aims to protect and restore lands within the Sauk River Watershed (SRW) that impact drinking water supply management areas, source water, and wildlife habitat, by enrolling these lands into a conservation easement and restoration program. The project will prioritize conservation easements, which are a cost-effective way to permanently protect high quality land, while still maintaining the tax base and private ownership. Restoration activities will also be prioritized based on the needs of individual easements. Permanent easements will also ensure that the initial restoration investment is realized over time. The SRW is within a rapidly growing region of the state that has also experienced some of the most intense conversion from perennial cover to cropland in the past decade and is expected to increase. It is vital that high quality, sensitive lands are protected now. Portions of SRW already have issues with drinking water shortages and contamination. These easement/restoration acres will promote nutrient retention, infiltration and groundwater recharge, benefiting smaller communities within SRW that depend on groundwater and larger communities downstream who depend on surface water for their drinking water. This program, unlike RIM or CREP, will protect existing natural lands in addition to some marginal crop land, and since there is no statutory formula, this program can complete the acquisitions at a likely significantly lower rate.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Site Prioritization and Targeted Outreach

Evaluate and rank sites using a previously developed desktop analysis that identifies multiple benefits of parcels, as well as a previously developed scoring protocol. Emphasis will be on wetlands and on undeveloped, intact, native habitat adjacent to already protected lands, thus creating effective “complexes”.

Local and State partners will conduct targeted outreach to landowners of prioritized sites to determine interest in conservation and restoration activities. Outcome evaluation will be measured based on number of acres prioritized, landowners reached and landowners interested in the program.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$10,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Generate prioritized sites for protection	2019
2. Conduct targeted landowner outreach	2020

Activity 2: Conservation Easement Acquisition

Acquire easements on land that provide multiple benefits for enhanced water quality and habitat. This project aims to protect 600 acres of land. Potential projects will be evaluated and those that protect the highest quality habitat will be pursued. Outcome evaluation will be measured by acres enrolled in easements.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$1,905,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Protect 600 acres via conservation easements by identifying and contacting landowners, completing all components of conservation easement projects, including assurance of long-term monitoring and enforcement.	2022

Activity 3: Easement Site Restoration, Monitoring and Evaluation

Restore habitat for improvement of water quality, which could include inundating degraded peat wetlands and wet prairies, restoring native vegetation and introducing prescribed burns. Restoration will result in increased water storage, attenuation of sediment and pollutants, and infiltration promotion to resupply groundwater.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) 2019 Main Proposal Template

Restoration needs will vary by property. We expect half the easement sites to need some restoration and expect to restore 300 acres. Additional funding for restoration assistance on eased lands is concurrently being requested by this partnership from private funding sources. Outcome evaluation will be measured by cataloging vegetation management, monitoring hydrology of wetlands using wells and piezometers, analyzing soils to determine carbon storage, and modeling nutrient removal.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$393,500

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Restoration projects selected and designed	2022
2. Restoration projects completed	2024
3. Monitor restored wetlands for 5 years following project completion	2029

III. PROJECT PARTNERS:

A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
Nathan Hylla	Proj. Mngt Supervisor	Stearns County SWCD	Outreach; Technical assistance
Nick Bancks	Program Manager	Minnesota Land Trust	Easements; Outreach
Christian Lenhart	Research Asst. Professor	University of Minnesota	Monitoring; Research

B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
John Maile	Wetlands Specialist	MN DNR	Technical assistance; Outreach
Sheldon Myerchin	State Coordinator	U.S. FWS	Technical assistance
Leah Hall	Headwaters Proj. Coord	TNC	Technical assistance
Tanner Bruse	Farm Bill Biologist	Pheasants Forever	Technical assistance
Lisa Vollbrecht	Asst. Public Utilities Dir.	City of St. Cloud	Technical assistance

IV. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

Stewardship of the easements will be the responsibility of MLT, a nationally accredited land trust, who will ensure the conservation values are protected and the easement terms are upheld. MLT has dedicated stewardship funds, which are used to steward and monitor easement in perpetuity.

This project will serve as a pilot project, which partners hope to make into a larger program in the region. It will establish a methodology to identify key areas for natural solutions and evaluate their impact. The results and the project development with affected communities will create a model to expand the investment in natural solutions for resilient pollutant reduction activities to other communities in Minnesota. Monitoring efforts from this project will help to determine carbon storage in restored fens and peatlands to document change overtime, with an overall goal of being able to better quantify the effectiveness of restoring wetlands for nutrient removal. Additionally, monitoring data would be used to calibrate a model to evaluate other wetland restoration sites and their cumulative impact on surface and groundwater. Future funding would be proposed using a combination of Clean Water Funding and Sauk River Watershed District authorities for restoration and Outdoor Heritage Funds for protection activities.

V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS:

ENRTF appropriation, following legislative approval, is anticipated for July 2019. Prioritization and outreach will begin in 2019 and easement procurement will follow in 2021-2024. Restoration activities would commence once easements have been secured from 2022-2024. Monitoring work of conservation easements and restoration work will continue by partners past the close of this funding.

2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

Project Title: Priority habitat protection and wetland restoration for surface water, groundwater, and source water resiliency in the Sauk River watershed.

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 5 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel:	
Sauk River Watershed District and Stearns SWCD: Landowner Outreach	\$10,020
Includes outreach materials and all landowner communication and meetings 0.08 FTE; 167 hours @ \$60/hour (.64 Salary, .36 Benefits)	
Minnesota Land Trust: Easement Negotiation	\$108,000
0.4 FTE Conservation Staff for 3 years. (.83 Salary, .17 Benefits)	
Stearns SWCD: Wetland Restoration Design	\$60,000
Includes survey, design and construction inspection 0.5 FTE; 1000 hours @ \$60/hour (.64 Salary, .36 Benefits)	
University of Minnesota: Wetland Monitoring	\$20,000
Dr. Chris Lenhart - project design, monitoring and research; 6.3% FTE for 2 years: \$16,000 (.75 Salary, .25 Benefits) Undergraduate assistant - 20% FTE for 2 summers: \$4,000	
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: Subcontractors will follow criteria as stipulated by the DNR reimbursements manual.	\$463,000
<i>Title and Closing (10 @ \$3,000)</i>	<i>\$30,000</i>
<i>Mapping (12 @ \$10,000)</i>	<i>\$12,000</i>
<i>Minerals (2 @ \$2,500)</i>	<i>\$5,000</i>
<i>Appraisals (12 @ \$7,000)</i>	<i>\$84,000</i>
<i>Surveys (8 @ \$4,000)</i>	<i>\$32,000</i>
<i>Habitat Management Plan</i>	<i>\$60,000</i>
<i>Wetland Restoration/Construction</i>	<i>\$240,000</i>
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$25,000
Wetland Monitoring	
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	\$1,360,500
Travel: Reimburse MLT, Stearns SWCD and Sauk River Watershed District for travel for project focused site visits, landowner meetings and partnership meetings	\$9,000
Additional Budget Items:	
MLT Easement Stewardship (8 Projects at \$24,000 each)	192,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	2,247,520

V. OTHER FUNDS *(This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)*

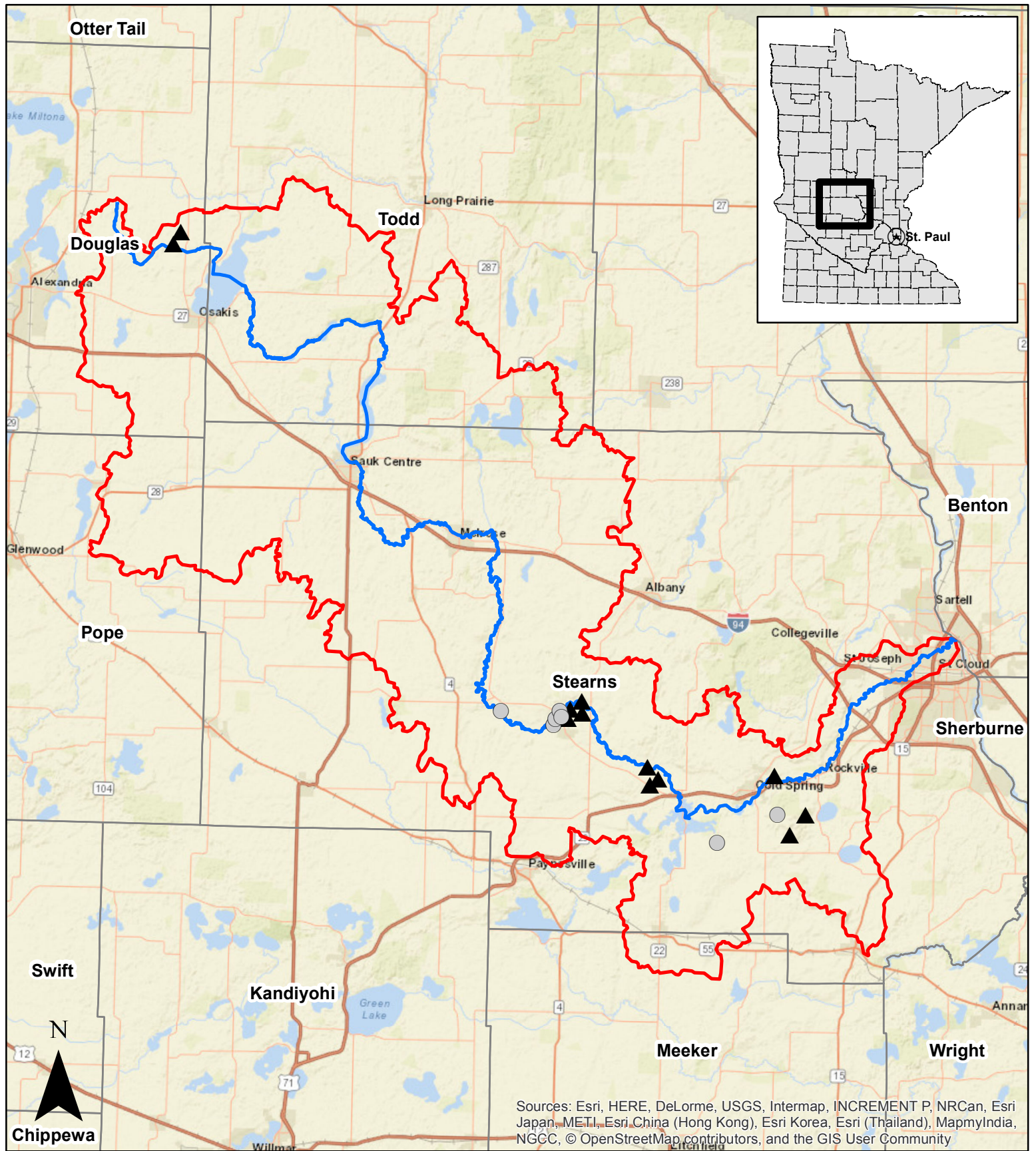
SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$100,000	<i>Awarded pending agreement</i>
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$ -	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Assumes estimated donated value of easement acquisition on the part of the landowner, through the bid process, to be 20% (100 acres)	\$277,300	<i>Pending landowner negotiation</i>
Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:	\$ -	
Other Funding History:	\$ -	

Attachment C:
Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
M.L. 2019 Acquisition/Restoration Parcel List Spreadsheet
Project Title: Priority habitat protection and wetland restoration for surface water, groundwater, and source water resiliency in the Sauk River watershed
Legal Citation:
Project Manager: Scott Henderson
Organization: Sauk River Watershed District
College/Department/Division:
M.L. 2019 ENRTF Appropriation:
Project Length and Completion Date: 5 Years, 2024
Today's Date: April 11, 2018



#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates (preferably from the center of the parcel) Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		Estimated Cost	Estimated Annual PILT Liabilities	County	Site Significance (please include what ecosystem (e.g., prairie, forest, wetland, savanna) is represented as well as the ecological significance, site importance, conservation value, and public benefits)	Activity Description (e.g. fee title acquisition, conservation easement acquisition, site preparation, restoration)	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner (private individual or trust, non-profit organization, for-profit entity)	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status of work (e.g. engaged in landowner negotiations, no longer in consideration, restoration activities underway)
		Latitude	Longitude										
1	FRANK LINDELL TRUST	45° 27' 57.34" N	094° 24' 09.67" W	\$ 150,000	\$ -	Stearns	Wetland complex with rare calcarious fen, drinking water supply management area (DWSMA) River floodplain	Easement acquisition	70	0.5	private	MLT	engaging LO and resto
2	GRESSER FAMILY LLP	45° 25' 59.86" N	094° 23' 47.49" W	\$ 200,000	\$ -	Stearns	Forested, Boarder's ecological significate shallow lake	Easement acquisition	100	0.5	private	MLT	engaging LO
3	BRINK DOUGLAS T & PEGGY S	45° 25' 54.54" N	094° 21' 59.76" W	\$ 150,000	\$ -	Stearns	Forested and wetland complexes, Moderate biological significance, wetland restorations, site buffers ecological significant shallow lake	Easement acquisition	150	0	private	MLT	Engaging LO and resto
4	RAUSCH RAYMOND L & SHIRLEY	45° 26' 44.75" N	094° 35' 24.72" W	\$ 160,000	\$ -	Stearns	Restored and native prairie, Oak savanna and weltand complex	Easement acquisition	80	0.25	private	MLT	engaging LO
5	Kennith & Judith Klehr trust	45.479244	-94.574086	\$ 150,000	\$ -	Stearns	Native prairie and contains a glacial esker, River frontage and floodplain	Easement acquisition	120	1	private	MLT	engaging LO
6	HEURUNG ROBERT T	45° 31' 30.75" N	094° 39' 11.33" W	\$ 160,000	\$ -	Stearns	Wetlands, River frontage/floodplain, restored grassland and forest, wetland resto oppurtunity	Easement acquisition	80	0.25	private	MLT	engaging LO and resto planning
7	SCHMITT PETER & JODI L	45° 31' 20.90" N	094° 40' 41.82" W	\$ 40,000	\$ -	Stearns	Wetlands, River frontage/floodplain, Oak forest	Easement acquisition	30	0.25	private	MLT	engaging LO
8	LIESER CARL J & RUTH I	45° 30' 54.85" N	094° 40' 23.39" W	\$ 80,000	\$ -	Stearns	Wetland, River frontage/floodplain, Oak forest	Easement acquisition	40	0.5	private	MLT	engaging LO
9	JOHN W MAILE REV TRUST	45° 30' 41.69" N	094° 40' 37.89" W	\$ 120,000	\$ -	Stearns	Native prairie, river frontage/floodplain, Oak forest, Moderate biodiversity	Easement acquisition	65	0.5	private	MLT	Engaging LO and resto
10	MOLITOR TIMOTHY J & SHANNON L	45° 24' 45.57" N	094° 23' 09.98" W	\$ 40,000	\$ -	Stearns	Wetland complex and mature forest	Easement acquisition	20	0	private	MLT	Engaging LO
NOTES:													

Sauk River Watershed Potential Protection & Restoration Sites



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), MapmyIndia, NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

● Potential Easement Site

▲ Potential Easement & Restoration Site

— Sauk River

— Sauk River Watershed

0 3 6 12 Miles

Scale = 1:500,000

ENRTF ID: 260-6

Sauk River Watershed Program

-Minnesota Land Trust Easement Sign-Up Criteria-



The Sauk River Watershed (SRW) program will protect and restore lands within the SRW that are important for drinking water supply management areas (DWSMA), source water, and wildlife habitat, providing multiple conservation benefits for watershed residents and wildlife. The Minnesota Land Trust (Land Trust) employs perpetual conservation easements in collaboration with private landowners to protect source water areas, important wildlife habitat (wetlands, and adjacent uplands) and their associated wildlife.

Through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, landowners within targeted priority areas submit an application for participation in the SRWD program. Submitted projects are initially scored based on two primary factors: 1) ecological significance, and 2) cost.

Ecological Significance is determined through an analysis of three subfactors:

- Quantity – the size of habitat, area within a DWSMA, and/or length of shoreline associated with a parcel, and abundance of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and Threatened & Endangered (T&E) species;
- Quality – the condition of the associated habitat and populations of SGCN and T&E species;
- Landscape Context – the extent and condition of natural habitat surrounding the parcel, and the degree and magnitude to which adjacent property has been protected.

Cost is determined in large part by the bid amount proposed by the landowner, and ultimately substantiated through an appraisal process. Landowners are given additional credit through whole or partial donation of appraised easement value.

These two factors inform an initial score that is used to initially rank a proposed parcel relative to others. Subsequent discussions with each landowner participating in the RFP allow the Land Trust to gain a better sense of the landowner's desires for and expected uses of the property, and to ground-truth the parcel's ecological condition. These post-proposal evaluations may result in proposed parcels moving up or down on the prioritization list. This additional evaluation allows for the Land Trust to most effectively target priority lands for protection.

The Land Trust has set certain minimum criteria for inclusion into the program:

- Lands must be located within the SRW Program area.
- Lands must have a maximum of 20% of total proposed easement area in agricultural use unless such areas are targeted for restoration; consideration to exceed this cap may be warranted if the easement is donated.
- Lands must contain high quality examples of native plant communities (wetlands, prairies, forests, etc.), acreage within a DWSMA, shoreland along rivers and streams, or rare and threatened species; or, consideration may be given to lands not containing high quality examples that lie adjacent to critically important protected properties if restoration is a required element of the easement.
- Lands cannot be enrolled previously in permanent protection programs (e.g., RIM).

Additional requirements are stipulated within the body of each conservation easement, as pertinent to the special characteristics of the land and the particular situation of the landowner.

The Land Trust's ranking and selection system is informed by ranking and prioritization modules used by the Minnesota DNR, The Nature Conservancy, and nationally by the Natural Heritage Data Center Network. Utilizing a ranking system that prioritizes projects based upon ecological value and cost enables the Land Trust to secure conservation easements that effectively and efficiently protect Minnesota's wildlife resources.

Initial Ranking of Applications									
Existing Ecological Significance	Units Affected	Scoring framework for prioritizing conservation value among applicants through an RFP process.							
	1. Size/Abundance of Habitat Protected by Easement (Maximum 100 pts)								
	0	Total acres of native plant community or extent of target feature within proposed easement							
		Total acres of DWSMA within proposed easement							
	0	Feet of shoreline to be protected by an easement							
	2. Diversity/Quality of Natural Resources to be Protected by the Easement (Maximum 100 pts)								
	0	Average quality of existing native plant communities							
	0	Number and quality of rare species on parcel; rarity of the species							
	3. Landscape Context (Maximum 100 pts)								
	0	Location of parcel relative to biodiversity "hotspots" or priority areas delineated in conservation plans							
	0	Location of parcel relative to other conservation lands							
	0	Location of parcel relative to existing moderate-high quality native plant communities; degree of habitat fragmentation							
	Total Score (Maximum 300 pts)								
Cost	Score								
	4. Cost								
	0	Bid amount (\$)/acre							
	0	Estimated Donative value (\$)/acre							
Revised Scoring of Applications Following Assessment of Site Restoration Potential (where applicable) and Discussion with Landowner									
Potential Impacts by Landowner	Score Adjustments (+/-)	Enhancement or downgrade of existing biodiversity significance scores based on easement rights retained by the landowner, easement actions required of the landowner, and their potential impact on existing biodiversity.							
	5. Size/Abundance of Habitat Protected by Easement								
	0	Total acres of native plant community or extent of target feature impacted by retained rights or proposed actions if exercised.							
	6. Diversity/Quality of Natural Resources to be Protected by the Easement								
	0	Estimated potential impact on diversity/quality of native plant community or extent of target feature by retained rights or proposed actions if exercised.							
	0	Estimated potential impact on number/quality of rare species resulting from retained rights or proposed actions if exercised.							
0	REVISED BIODIVERSITY SIGNIFICANCE SCORE								



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Project Manager

Sauk River Watershed District

The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) is a local unit of state government established in 1986 for the purpose of improving water quality in the Sauk River watershed. The SRWD's mission is to apply its unique abilities and authorities in ways that protect and enhance the waters and natural resources for today and tomorrow. With 30 plus years in project management and grant facilitation of state and federal funds, the SRWD is proficient in administering grant funds. Public outreach is a daily focus of the SRWD and will be involved in the landowner outreach efforts for this restoration project. The SRWD has administered over \$9.4 million in State and Federal grant funds and over \$10.6 million in State loan funds since 1994.

Local Partners

The Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation (SWCD) District is a local unit of government that manages and directs natural resource management programs at the local level. The SWCD works in both urban and rural settings, with landowners and with other units of government, to carry out a program for the conservation, use, and development of soil, water, and related resources.

The Minnesota Land Trust protects and restores Minnesota's most vital natural lands in order to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences and scenic beauty for generations to come. Minnesota Land Trust holds 530 conservation easements protecting 52,000 acres of habitat across Minnesota 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.

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, they create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together.

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