

# FINAL REPORT

AUG 13 2001

1999 Project Abstract  
For the Period Ending June 30, 2001

**TITLE:** Conservation-Based Development Program  
**PROJECT MANAGER:** Kris William Larson  
**ORGANIZATION:** Minnesota Land Trust  
**ADDRESS:** 2356 University Avenue W., Suite 400  
St. Paul, MN 55114

**WEB SITE ADDRESS:** [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org)  
**FUND:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
**LEGAL CITATION:** ML 1999, Chap. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 8(e).

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT:** \$150,000

## Overall Project Outcome and Results

The Conservation-Based Development Program was designed to improve conservation design practices for new development throughout Minnesota. This Program has three primary results:

1. Promote environmentally-sound development practices through education:
  - Gave 40 presentations to more than 2,000 local officials, planners, and developers
  - Held individual meetings with approximately 200 people in the development arena
  - Organized or presented at 19 conferences or workshops:  
10 Regional; 5 State-wide; and 4 National
  - Featured Conservation Development in slide shows, in several articles and in the *Conservation Design Portfolio* which highlights model developments
2. Assist in the design of model conservation developments
  - Consulted in the design of approximately 30 different conservation-development related projects.
  - Worked with 7 local units of government to explore conservation districts and review ordinances.
3. Secure conservation easements in conservation developments:
  - 2 easements were secured, 5 others are awaiting completion, and 6 easements that we reviewed will be held by local units of government. Total area protected by these 13 projects exceeds 600 acres and includes Lake Superior shoreline, buffers to the BWCA, prairie restoration, and other significant features.

## Project Results Use and Dissemination

We feel the Program's results will help give Minnesota landowners and local governments throughout the state more choices when it comes to developing property. While the Land Trust will no longer have a separate program focused on conservation development, we will continue to apply conservation planning and design techniques in all our work throughout the state. In addition, other organizations will continue to utilize materials developed under this Program in their education efforts. More than 3,000 copies of the *Portfolio* will be distributed by the Metropolitan Council, the DNR, Dakota County SWCD, Hennepin Conservation District, Biko Associates, Tree Trust and others. The *Portfolio* will also be on the Minnesota Land Trust's web page: [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org).

July 1, 2001  
LCMR Final Work Program Report

AUG 13 2001

## **I. PROJECT TITLE: Conservation-Based Development Program**

**Project Manager:** Kris William Larson

**Affiliation:** Minnesota Land Trust

**Mailing Address:** 2356 University Avenue West, Suite 400, St. Paul, MN 55114

**Telephone Number:** 651-647-9590; **E-Mail:** klarson@mnland.org **Fax:** 651-647-9769

**Web Page Address:** mnland.org

### **Total Biennial Project Budget:**

\$LCMR:	150,000.00	\$Match:	65,000.00
-\$LCMR Amount Spent:	<u>135,000.00</u>	-\$Match Spent:*	<u>65,000.00</u>
=\$LCMR Balance:	15,000.00	=\$Match Balance:	0.00

### **A. Legal Citation: ML 1999, Chap. 231, Sec. 16, Subd. 8(e).**

#### **Appropriation Language: e) Conservation-Based Development Program**

**\$75,000 the first year and \$75,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minnesota Land Trust to design four model developments and acquire conservation easements within new developments that enhance the natural, rural landscape. This appropriation must be matched by at least \$65,000 of nonstate money.**

**B. Status of Match Requirement:** Spent \$65,000 through The McKnight Foundation, as part of a multi-year Blufflands Alliance grant to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, fiscal agent, in March 1998.

## **II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:**

### Overall Project Outcome and Results

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  - Gave 40 presentations to more than 2,000 local officials, planners, and developers

- Held individual meetings with approximately 200 people in the development arena
  - Organized or presented at 19 conferences or workshops:
    - 10 Regional; 5 State-wide; and 4 National
  - Featured Conservation Development in slide shows, in several articles and in the *Conservation Design Portfolio* which highlights model developments
2. Assist in the design of model conservation developments
- Consulted in the design of approximately 30 different conservation-development related projects.
  - Worked with 7 local units of government to explore conservation districts and review ordinances.
3. Secure conservation easements in conservation developments:
- *2 easements were secured, 5 others are awaiting completion, and 6 easements that we reviewed will be held by local units of government. Total area protected by these 13 projects exceeds 600 acres and includes Lake Superior shoreline, buffers to the BWCA, prairie restoration, and other significant features.*

#### Project Results Use and Dissemination

We feel the Program's results will help give Minnesota landowners and local governments throughout the state more choices when it comes to developing property. While the Land Trust will no longer have a separate program focused on conservation development, we will continue to apply conservation planning and design techniques in all our work throughout the state. In addition, other organizations will continue to utilize materials developed under this Program in their education efforts. More than 3,000 copies of the *Portfolio* will be distributed by the Metropolitan Council, the DNR, Dakota County SWCD, Hennepin Conservation District, Biko Associates, Tree Trust and others. The *Portfolio* will also be on the Minnesota Land Trust's web page: [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org).

#### **IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:**

**Result 1:**      **Goal:** Inform/educate 400 development professionals, local government officials and staff, landowners and others regarding the benefits of conservation-based development and the resulting permanent open space.

LCMR Budget:	\$49,500.00	Match:	\$25,000.00
Balance:	\$ 0.00	Match Balance:	\$ 0.00

#### **Results:**

- *Gave 40 presentations to more than 2,000 local officials, planners, developers and others. We feel that the presentations were the most successful and demanded*

product of the Program. We were able to often bring in developers, local officials or planners who have done a conservation development to relay their experience. In addition, we realized early on that the key to successful outreach to local government officials and staff was to visit them at their meetings. Therefore, our outreach strategy included going to planning commission meetings or other venues in local communities and presenting a slide show on conservation development.

- *Held individual meetings with approximately 200 people in the development arena.* In addition to the presentations, we also visited with numerous organizations, local officials or interested citizens one-on-one or in small groups. These informal discussions were able to focus on specific issues germane to that groups' interests.
- *Organized or presented at 19 conferences or forums: 10 Regional; 5 State-wide; and 4 National.* The conferences provided us with an opportunity to present conservation development to a wide range of stakeholders in one setting. Our more successful conferences included the Low Impact Development Conference which focused on development and water resource protection (Dakota County), the Sharing the Northland Conference which focused on land use and conservation development tools (Two Harbors), the Creating Livable Communities Workshop (Bemidji) and the Building in the Green: Conservation Development in the Blufflands Region (Winona). We feel these and our other forums achieved wonderful geographic diversity and addressed development issues in that specific region.
- *Featured conservation design in various publications and outreach materials.* Conservation development-related articles appeared in the Land Trust newsletter, in the Land Trust Alliance national magazine, in several newspaper articles, in a radio show in Grand Rapids, and in east metro local TV.
- *Produced the Conservation Design Portfolio: Preserving Minnesota Landscapes Through Creative Development, which features effective conservation projects from around the state.* 3,500 copies of the Portfolio will be distributed to planners, local officials, and developers via the DNR, Met Council, Tree Trust, several local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and consultants. It will also be viewable on the web at [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org).

**Conclusions:** Overall, we were greatly encouraged by the substantial interest in conservation development, and could have reached even a much larger audience with additional time and resources. People around the state are looking for workable solutions to development issues. There is a great demand for additional educational materials such as a video version of the Portfolio, which would walk viewers through other projects and explain what makes them successful. Fortunately, there are substantially more organizations and units of government that are vested in resolving some of the problems associated with current development practices than there were at the beginning of the Program.

Result 2: **Goal:** Design and pursue governmental approval of at least four conservation-based development projects, to be used as models for study and adaptation to other communities.

LCMR Budget:	\$42,500.00	Match:	\$20,000.00
Balance:	\$ 0.00	Match Balance:	\$ 0.00

**Result:** Consulted in the design of approximately 30 different conservation-development related projects and worked with 7 local units of government to explore conservation districts and review ordinances. The projects include:

*1. Design, Planning and Protection: Conservation Development along Apple Blossom Scenic Drive, La Crescent*

Completed both area-wide conservation planning and site specific conservation development projects for this area of Winona County. We also reviewed conservation development ordinances and did a design for a particular tract to demonstrate what a model project might look like for a sensitive site. The landowner of this tract is currently pursuing local approval of the design.

*2. Implementing Greenways through Conservation Development: City of St. Michael.*

Completed reviews and re-designs of several development proposals and conducted a study of conservation design for the City's lake district.

*3. River Corridor Preservation and Affordable Conservation Development; Lester River, Duluth.*

We assisted an affordable housing non-profit, the Northern Communities Land Trust (NCLT), to determine the feasibility combining affordable housing and conservation of a highly sensitive trout-stream property.

*4. Preserving working forest lands through conservation development: Hovland/Magney State Park.*

We partnered with the owner of 1,500 acres of forest lands to determine the best location for three clustered housing sites, rather than spread development in 20-acre parcels throughout the working forest. The Nature Conservancy will continue to work with the landowner to implement the conservation approach.

*5. North Shore Limited Development: Park Bay.*

Worked with landowner to design a limited development of 2 homes and 30 acres of open space along Lake Superior and Scenic Hwy 61, rather than parcel off the site in 11 small properties on highly-erodible slopes. The parcel development has been approved and completed.

*6. Lake Shore development in northern lakes area: Upper Cullen Lake, Nisswa*

Worked with landowner to identify a substantial preservation area on this relatively undeveloped lake, while still incorporating four building sites for his children. He is currently pursuing approval of this cluster plan with the local government.

**Conclusion:** While we had great success in consulting on various projects around the state, this is another area where our time and resources could not keep up with demand. We could have promoted our services more and achieved even greater results with additional staff and funding. In addition to resource limitations, there were several other obstacles in helping to design model projects: 1) time—the design, approval, and construction process takes much longer than the grant period. As such, we do not yet know the outcome of many of our design recommendations; 2) sensitivity of the development process—determining an appropriate neutral role for the Land Trust and its state funding was always a consideration in the projects; 3) role of the non-profit—we had to learn how to position the Land Trust in the often volatile development process. Our preferred arrangement was to work on behalf of the local unit of government; and 4) leverage—while we had many suggestions and a lot of involvement in development projects, in the end, the Land Trust had no authority or leverage with either developers of local governments to require that our recommendations become implemented.

**Result 3:** **Goal:** Assure the long-term protection of designated open space within conservation-based development projects, by holding conservation easements on any projects (included in Result 2 or otherwise) during the biennium.

LCMR Budget:	\$58,000.00	Match:	\$20,000.00
Balance:	\$15,000.00	Match Balance:	\$ 0.00

**Results:** During the grant period, we secured 2 easements two easements in conservation developments with another 5 awaiting completion. In addition, 6 open space projects that we reviewed will be held by local governments. Total area protected by these 13 projects exceeds 600 acres and includes Lake Superior shoreline, buffers to the BWCA, prime farmland, prairie restoration, and other significant features. The two completed easements are: Hunters Ridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition in Washington County and the Park Bay limited development on the north shore of Lake Superior. The five pending projects are Cardinal Ridge in Lake Elmo, Windsor Park in Elk River, Wild Meadows in Medina, a limited development on Upper Cullen Lake near Brainerd and a limited development on White Iron Lake near Ely.

While we completed most of the work on these pending projects, the easements were not signed at the close of the project. This was often due to the schedules of the developer or local government. Therefore, we did not spend \$15,000 of the \$20,000 that had been appropriated for stewardship funding for the projects.

**Conclusions:** Many local governments have passed ordinances requiring that a qualified entity hold a conservation easement on the open spaces in conservation developments. The Land Trust currently holds approximately 12 easements in such projects. However, the Land Trust will become more selective in the future in its involvement in conservation development easements, due to a need to prioritize its efforts around the state. Therefore, we expect more local units of government will become involved in holding easements related to these ordinances. While we found success in this area of the program, it also places a burden on the Land Trust to hold all requested development easements, especially when there are no financial resources that accompany these requests. However, we hope to be involved in trainings and other outreach to local governments that may hold conservation development easements in the future.

## **V. DISSEMINATION:**

Promotional materials in the form of fact sheets, the *Conservation Design Portfolio*, a slideshow and website page were produced. In addition, newspaper stories, radio and TV exposure was sought. Other organizations have access to the Land Trust's materials to use in ongoing education and dissemination efforts.

## **VI. CONTEXT:**

**A. Significance:** Minnesota is a state with a wonderful variety of natural and cultural resources that are threatened by increasing population and changing land development patterns. While there is and will continue to be a need for residential and commercial development, there is growing concern over the long term impacts of this development on our state's resources. Many local governments and citizens are searching how to sensitively balance our growth with our open space needs. This project addressed this critical balance in a comprehensive fashion and extended the land preservation expertise of the Minnesota Land Trust into a more public forum.

**B. Time:** While the Land Trust will no longer have a separate program focused on conservation development, we will continue to apply conservation planning and design techniques in all our work throughout the state. It has become incorporated as one of the many conservation tools we have to offer landowners and local governments. In addition, other organizations will continue to utilize materials developed under this Program in their education efforts related to conservation development.

**C. Budget Context:** The Land Trust's budget for the Program was as follows:

<b>1. BUDGET:</b>		
<b>Personnel:</b>		<b>\$104,700</b>
Kris Larson	70%	
Land Protection Specialists	30%	
Administrative Assistant	30%	
Communications Staff	10%	
Interns		
Project Consultants/Partners		
<b>Equipment:</b>		<b>\$ 4,500</b>
TV/VCR Combination, Slide		
Projector, Computer Software and		
Hardware		
<b>Acquisition:</b>		<b>\$ 20,000</b>
Stewardship, legal and title costs		
associated with the four model projects		
<b>Development:</b>		<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Other:Space Rental, Maintenance, Utilities</b>		<b>\$ 2,000</b>
<b>Printing/Advertising</b>		<b>\$ 4,500</b>
<b>Communications</b>		<b>\$ 1,500</b>
<b>Contracts</b>		<b>\$ 8,300</b>
<b>Travel</b>		<b>\$ 2,500</b>
<b>Office Supplies</b>		<b>\$ 2,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$150,000</b>

**2. BUDGET DETAIL: See Attachment A**

**VII. COOPERATION:** In addition to the Builders Association of the Twin Cities and Robert Engstrom Companies listed in the initial Work Program, the following entities cooperated with us at some point in our efforts (they are in no specific order):

University of Minnesota: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Design Institute, and College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture; Winona County; City of La Crescent; Dresbach Township; DNR Blufflands Coordinator; City of St. Michael; Metro DNR; Tree Trust; NRCS (Brainerd area); Northern Communities Land Trust; Lindberg Ekola Associates, Inc.; the Nature Conservancy; Lake County; MPCA (Duluth Office); City of Red Wing; Hennepin Conservation District; Washington County; Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District; Low Impact Development Center, Inc.; and numerous developers, planners and others.



**VIII. LOCATION:** We were very happy with the geographic diversity of the Program. Communities affected by either our project or education work include: Brainerd, Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Two Harbors, Duluth, St. Cloud, numerous Metro area communities, St. Michael, Faribault, Red Wing, Winona, Rochester, Owatonna, Lake City, Little Falls, Ely, Hovland and many others.

**Attachment A**  
**Deliverable Products and Related Budget**

<b>LCMR Project Biennial Budget</b>		<b>Objective/Result</b>	
<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Result 1 Inform/Educate</b>	<b>Result 2 Model Developments</b>	<b>Result 3 Permanent Protection</b>
<b>Wages/Salaries/Benefits</b>	<b>\$33,700</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>
<b>Space Rental/Maint./Util.</b>		<b>\$ 2,000</b>	
<b>Printing/Advertise</b>	<b>\$ 3,000</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>
<b>Contracts-Professional</b>	<b>\$ 8,300</b>		
<b>Contracts - Other</b>			
<b>Local Auto Mileage</b>	<b>\$ 1,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>	
<b>Other Travel</b>			
<b>Travel Outside MN</b>			
<b>Office Supplies</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>	<b>\$ 500</b>
<b>Other Supplies</b>			
<b>Tools &amp; Equip.</b>			
<b>Office Equip./Computers</b>	<b>\$ 2,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,500</b>	
<b>Other Capital Equip.</b>			
<b>Other Direct Operating Costs</b>			
<b>Land Acquisition</b>			
<b>Land Rts. Acquisition (includes legal fees)</b>			<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>Bldg./Other Land Imp.</b>			
<b>Legal Fees</b>			
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>\$49,500</b>	<b>\$42,500</b>	<b>\$58,000</b>