

## **M.L. 2018 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2020

**PROJECT TITLE: Protecting Mississippi River Headwaters Lands through Local, State and Federal Partnership**

**PROJECT MANAGER: Josh Doty, Community Development Director**

**AFFILIATION: City of Baxter**

**MAILING ADDRESS: 13190 Memorywood Drive**

**CITY/STATE/ZIP: Baxter, MN 56425**

**PHONE : (218) 454-5111**

**E-MAIL : jdoty@baxtermn.gov**

**WEBSITE: <http://www.baxtermn.gov>**

**FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

**LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 09g**

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$700,000**

**AMOUNT SPENT: \$330,322**

**AMOUNT REMAINING: \$369,678**

### **Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results**

The project preserved 200 acres of forest on the upper Mississippi River. After the grant was awarded, the project grew to ultimately preserve 1,338.4-acres locally. Of this total, Baxter now has 880-contiguous acres (including the project 200 acres) of high-quality natural resource property preserved within Baxter.

### **Overall Project Outcome and Results**

The project was completed, and the property was purchased by the City of Baxter on June 30, 2020. Along with this 198.5-acre Baxter Overlook Park addition, TCF, Baxter, and Camp Ripley partners were also able to protect 1,338.4-acres of additional forestlands from Potlatch in this area in this same negotiation to also be permanently protected utilizing LSOHC and Department of Defense funding, totaling more than \$3,700,000. Multiple public partners, including Baxter, Cass County, Crow Wing County, and Sylvan Township now hold those properties for public use and wildlife habitat benefits. The scope of the project grew over time and achieved a greater outcome than the partners anticipated in 2018. Additional non-federal funding was needed for match in the larger project, and the additional LCCMR match allowed for \$2.1 million in DoD funding to be applied over the entire project scope.

#### **Final Report Summary:**

The 200-acres targeted for this protection project were at risk of being sold for development along the city limits of Baxter and the scenic rolling hills of the Mississippi River. Another downfall of development of the land beyond the conservation impacts are the encroachment that hinders training of soldiers at Camp Ripley. Camp Ripley has prioritized protecting lands near the military base to continue their important training mission without negatively impacting citizens near the base. The major project objective was to purchase and permanently protect the 200-acres that are directly adjacent to Baxter Overlook Park to the west. This land would also become part of Forestview Middle School's outdoor classroom.

After discussions with Potlatch, as well as Sylvan Township, Cass County, and Crow Wing County, it became apparent that this project could utilize more funding and have broader local government support and protect more forestland in a larger context. This Baxter Overlook Park project appraised less than anticipated at the project outset, and utilized \$400,000 in Department of Defense funding, and \$330,322 in LCCMR funding for a total cost of \$730,322 (55% DoD funding; 45% LCCMR funding). Additional non-federal funding was needed for match in the larger project, and the increased LCCMR match allowed for \$2.1 million in DoD funding and \$1.29 million in LSOHC to be applied over the entire project scope of 1,546.84-acres.

This protection project will grant Minnesotans the ability to recreate, hunt, and enjoy the public lands that encompass the entire project area, even beyond the City of Baxter. It will also allow for hundreds of middle school students to learn about Minnesota's forests each year, and perhaps inspire future generations to cherish and continue to protect our shared natural resources.

**Project Results Use and Dissemination**

In addition to published articles (listed below) regarding the project, the City notified the public of the environmental, educational, open-space recreational opportunities of the property with an article in the local Baxter newsletter, which is sent to all residents. City staff also joined Camp Ripley Environmental staff, and The Conservation Fund staff by going on-air on WJJY radio to discuss the environmental project and opportunities. Lastly, on November 2, 2021, the City Council authorized City staff to execute a contract with SRF Consulting to guide the City through an Open Space Master Plan study. A significant portion of the study is public outreach and civic engagement to help the City develop an open space master plan for the property.

<https://www.minnpost.com/environment/2020/08/how-the-city-of-baxter-in-minnesota-lakes-country-added-638-acres-of-woods-to-its-footprint/>

<https://www.brainerddispatch.com/sports/outdoors/6560997-Partners-announce-protection-of-700-acres-around-Camp-Ripley>

<https://www.conservationfund.org/projects/camp-ripley-sentinel-landscape-minnesota>

<https://www.conservationfund.org/impact/press-releases/2251-forestland-protected-near-camp-ripley-in-minnesota>



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

## M.L. 2018 ENRTF Work Plan Final Report (Main Document)

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**Today's Date:** November 22, 2021

**Final Report**

**Date of Work Plan Approval:** 06/05/2018

**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2020

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**PROJECT TITLE:** Protecting Mississippi River Headwaters Lands through Local, State and Federal Partnership

**Project Manager:** Josh Doty, Community Development Director

**Organization:** City of Baxter

**College/Department/Division:** Community Development

**Mailing Address:** 13190 Memorywood Drive

**City/State/Zip Code:** Baxter, MN 56425

**Telephone Number:** (218) 454-5111

**Email Address:** [jdoty@baxtermn.gov](mailto:jdoty@baxtermn.gov)

**Web Address:** <http://www.baxtermn.gov>

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**Location:** See attached map: Baxter, MN

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**Total Project Budget:** \$700,000

**Amount Spent:** \$330,322

**Balance:** \$369,678

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**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 09g

**Appropriation Language:** \$700,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the city of Baxter, in cooperation with Brainerd Public Schools and the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Program, to acquire about 200 acres of forested land on the upper Mississippi River adjacent to Mississippi River Overlook Park for multiple public benefits, including being an outdoor classroom for local schools. To be eligible for reimbursement, costs for real estate transactions must be specific to this acquisition and documented as required in subdivision 15, paragraph (k).

## **I. PROJECT STATEMENT:**

A partnership among the City of Baxter, Brainerd Public Schools Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape program and The Conservation Fund will acquire 200 acres of riparian forest on the upper Mississippi River. This team identified synergistic priorities in the subject parcels, including development of a forest classroom, preservation of a high biodiversity forest and wetlands, protection of critical drinking water quality, and protection of the Camp Ripley training mission from incompatible land use.

Acquisition timing is critical due to landowner willingness to sell, impending threat of development, availability of matching funds, and alignment with the City of Baxter's long-range open space plan goals.

This 200-acre acquisition adjoins the 60-acre Mississippi River Overlook Park already owned by the City of Baxter, and is within walking distance of Forestville Middle School, one of the largest middle schools in the state. Acquisition of this property will protect a riparian forest, a top priority goal of both the Crow Wing County water plan and the Mississippi Headwaters Board comprehensive plan, all while providing the unique educational opportunities of a forest classroom for more than 2000 local middle school students each year. Additionally, this acquisition will allow Baxter to extend its existing operational capacity efficiently, by managing the new acreage within its existing park maintenance program.

## **II. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:**

### **First Update January 31, 2019**

First update not submitted.

### **Second Update June 30, 2019**

The Conservation Fund has engaged the Potlatch Corporation in negotiations to purchase the property. The appraisal has been completed and reviewed as of April 2019. The partners are waiting to hear back from the seller if the offer will be acceptable. Federal Department of Defense funding remains in-hand.

Amendment Request June 19, 2019

Request to change the outcome completion date for Activity 1 from December 2018 to December 2019 because the process is taking longer than originally planned for.

Amendment Approved July 1, 2019

### **Third Update January 31, 2020**

Amendment Request May 7, 2020

Request to change the outcome completion date for Activity 1 from December 2019 to August 2020. The property is under a binding contract and expected to close in mid-June 2020. If there are delays, we are requesting that the funds be extended one fiscal year per ML 2018, Chapter 214, Article 4, Section 2, Subd. 13.

### **Final Update June 30, 2020**

The project was completed, and the property was purchased by the City of Baxter on June 30, 2020. Along with this 198.5-acre Baxter Overlook Park addition, TCF, Baxter, and Camp Ripley partners were also able to protect 1,338.4-acres of additional forestlands from Potlatch in this area in this same negotiation to also be permanently protected utilizing LSOHC and Department of Defense funding, totaling more than \$3,700,000. Multiple public partners, including Baxter, Cass County, Crow Wing County, and Sylvan Township now hold those properties for public use and wildlife habitat benefits. The scope of the project grew over time and achieved a greater outcome than the partners anticipated in 2018. Additional non-federal funding was needed for match in the

larger project, and the additional LCCMR match allowed for \$2.1 million in DoD funding to be applied over the entire project scope.

**Final Report Summary:**

The 200-acres targeted for this protection project were at risk of being sold for development along the city limits of Baxter and the scenic rolling hills of the Mississippi River. Another downfall of development of the land beyond the conservation impacts are the encroachment that hinders training of soldiers at Camp Ripley. Camp Ripley has prioritized protecting lands near the military base to continue their important training mission without negatively impacting citizens near the base. The major project objective was to purchase and permanently protect the 200-acres that are directly adjacent to Baxter Overlook Park to the west. This land would also become part of Forestview Middle School’s outdoor classroom.

After discussions with Potlatch, as well as Sylvan Township, Cass County, and Crow Wing County, it became apparent that this project could utilize more funding and have broader local government support and protect more forestland in a larger context. This Baxter Overlook Park project appraised less than anticipated at the project outset, and utilized \$400,000 in Department of Defense funding, and \$330,322 in LCCMR funding for a total cost of \$730,322 (55% DoD funding; 45% LCCMR funding). Additional non-federal funding was needed for match in the larger project, and the increased LCCMR match allowed for \$2.1 million in DoD funding and \$1.29 million in LSOHC to be applied over the entire project scope of 1,546.84-acres.

This protection project will grant Minnesotans the ability to recreate, hunt, and enjoy the public lands that encompass the entire project area, even beyond the City of Baxter. It will also allow for hundreds of middle school students to learn about Minnesota’s forests each year, and perhaps inspire future generations to cherish and continue to protect our shared natural resources.

**III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:**

**ACTIVITY 1:**

**Description:** Fee acquisition of 198.5-acres

**ENRTF BUDGET:** \$700,000

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Fee acquisition – landowner (up to 25% of the land cost based on certified appraisal (75% is from the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape funding - National Guard Bureau)	December 2019

**IV. DISSEMINATION:**

**Description:**

In addition to published articles (listed below) regarding the project, the City notified the public of the environmental, educational, open-space recreational opportunities of the property with an article in the local Baxter newsletter, which is sent to all residents. City staff also joined Camp Ripley Environmental staff, and The Conservation Fund staff by going on-air on WJJY radio to discuss the environmental project and opportunities. Lastly, on November 2, 2021, the City Council authorized City staff to execute a contract with SRF Consulting to guide the City through an Open Space Master Plan study. A significant portion of the study is public outreach and civic engagement to help the City develop an open space master plan for the property.

<https://www.minnpost.com/environment/2020/08/how-the-city-of-baxter-in-minnesota-lakes-country-added-638-acres-of-woods-to-its-footprint/>

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**V. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:**

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape will provide federal matching funds to the maximum extent authorized, up to 75% of the land cost, approximately \$1,875,000. This funding will be coordinated via a Cooperative Agreement (CA) between Camp Ripley (National Guard Bureau) and The Conservation Fund (TCF). Only organizations in the CA can receive these CRSL funds. TCF will facilitate the real estate transaction between the seller, Potlatch Corporation, and the buyer, the City of Baxter. Baxter would be appropriated 25% of the project costs from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF), and would own and manage the 200 acres acquired from Potlatch.

**A. Preliminary ENRTF Budget Overview:** See attached budget spreadsheet

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:** NA

**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** NA

**Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:** 0

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours:	Divide by 2,080 = TOTAL FTE:
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**Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation:** NA

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours:	Divide by 2,080 = TOTAL FTE:
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**B. Other Funds:**

SOURCE OF AND USE OF OTHER FUNDS	Amount Proposed	Amount Spent	Status and Timeframe
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>			
Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape (DOD federal)			
Baxter 198.5 Acres (Subject LCCMR Site)	\$400,000	\$ 400,000	Secured
Baxter 433 Acres	\$1,234,477	\$1,234,477	Secured
Baxter 60 Acres	\$204,790.4	\$204,790.4	Secured
Baxter 120 Acres recent DOD donation to City	N/A	N/A	Secured
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>			
	\$ NA	\$	

<b>Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b>			
Baxter 198 Acres (Subject LCCMR Site)	\$700,000	\$330,322	Secured
Baxter 60 Acres (2006 LCCMR Funding)	N/A	N/A	06-035-001
<b>Other Funding History:</b>			
	\$	\$	

**VI. PROJECT PARTNERS:**

**A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding**

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
City of Baxter		City	Land owner

**B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding**

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
Brainerd Public Schools		District 181	Partner/education

**VII. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:** The acquisition will enable development of a forest classroom, preservation of a high biodiversity forest and wetlands, protection of critical drinking water quality, and protection of the Camp Ripley training mission from incompatible land use. Acquisition of this property will protect a riparian forest, a top priority goal of both the Crow Wing County water plan and the Mississippi Headwaters Board comprehensive plan, all while providing the unique educational opportunities of a forest classroom for more than 2000 local middle school students each year. Additionally, this acquisition will allow Baxter to extend its existing operational capacity efficiently, by managing the new acreage within its existing park maintenance program.

**VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

- The project is for 2 years, will begin on 7/1/2018, and end on 6/30/20.
- Periodic project status update reports will be submitted month/day and month/day of each year.
- A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2020.

**IX. SEE ADDITIONAL WORK PLAN COMPONENTS:**

- A. Budget Spreadsheet
- B. Visual Component or Map
- C. Parcel List Spreadsheet
- D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements

**Attachment D: Additional Work Plan Information for Acquisition:**

**Description of parcel selection process:**

The preservation of this land represents a significant step toward meeting state goals to protect Minnesota’s native plant and animal communities. The communities mapped on this land include Central Rich Dry Pine Woodland (FDc24). All subtypes within FDc24 are classified S1, critically impaired, or S3, vulnerable to extirpation.

The diverse forest mosaic includes upland oak/aspen/pine, flood plain forest, scrub-shrub wetland, and jack pine. In the open upland areas, native savanna remnant species exist. Animal species of special concern that are dependent on this habitat include red-shouldered hawk, Blanding’s turtle, and eastern hog-nosed snake. Federal Threatened and Endangered Species include the northern long-eared bat and the gray wolf. Camp Ripley

is a host site for extensive statewide research on these two species. Critical to the long-term recovery of both is protecting the habitat bordering Camp Ripley.

Brainerd Public Schools has recently drafted a Comprehensive Long-Range Facilities Plan that cites an up to 10% student enrollment increase over the next ten years. 64% of that increase is comprised of middle school and high school students who will benefit from near access to a School Forest managed jointly with Baxter.

Population forecasts anticipate an increase of 29% for Crow Wing County by 2035, or 14,238 people. The City of Baxter represents almost one quarter of that growth (Baxter Comprehensive Plan 2015). The city Comprehensive Plan analysis emphasizes the anticipated development pressure while the school study shows student growth anticipated in the facility closest to this acquisition of forest land.

**State, regional and local plan alignment:**

MN Wildlife Action Plan: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mnwap/index.html>

Mississippi Headwaters Board Comprehensive Plan:

<http://mississippiheadwaters.org/comprehensiveManagementPlan.asp>

Crow Wing County Water Plan: <https://crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/4695>

City of Baxter Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.baxtermn.gov/departments/community-development/comprehensive-plan/>

Camp Ripley Landscape Stewardship Plan: [https://mn.gov/frc/docs/North-Central\\_Landscape-Plan\\_Public-Review-DRAFT.pdf](https://mn.gov/frc/docs/North-Central_Landscape-Plan_Public-Review-DRAFT.pdf)

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Plan:

[https://sentinellandscapes.org/media/1214/sl\\_camripley\\_factsheet\\_23dec16.pdf](https://sentinellandscapes.org/media/1214/sl_camripley_factsheet_23dec16.pdf)

**Restoration/Management Plan:**

1. The forest management plan when complete will be a city approved by resolution document managed by the Public Works/Parks and Trails department. Annual budgeting will account for ongoing stewardship and management of the property. Plans and site information are public accessible on the Baxter City Website. All current and future reporting responsibilities are assigned to the Community Development Director.
2. Long-term implementation of the management plan goals includes budgeting for annual stewardship of the site in the city general operating budget. In addition, the partnership between the Brainerd Public Schools and DNR School Forest program will be sought to include outdoor classroom student education and outreach. This public/public partnership will likely include onsite tree planting and other forestry practices as recommended in the plan.
3. Primary funding for maintenance will be a component of the city annual operating budget and local levy. It is estimated that annual budget amount will approach \$30,000 dollars. The city of Baxter Park Department would be assigned site maintenance and stewardship responsibilities.



**Final Attachment A:  
 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
 Final M.L. 2018 Budget Spreadsheet**

**Project Title: Protecting Mississippi River Headwaters Lands through Local, State and Federal Partnership**

**Legal Citation: M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 09g**

**Project Manager: Josh Doty**

**Organization: City of Baxter**

**College/Department/Division: Community Development**

**M.L. 2018 ENRTF Appropriation: \$700,000**

**Project Length and Completion Date**

**Date of Report: October 6, 2021**



<b>ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>			
<b>Fee Title Acquisition</b> - Landowner payment (up to 25% of the land cost based on certified appraisal (75% is from the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape funding - National Guard Bureau)	\$659,000	\$295,000	\$364,000
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b> - Payment to "The Conservation Fund" at \$140 per hour for services to facilitate the acquisition transaction	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b> - Real estate transaction expenses such as appraisal (est. \$5,000), environmental assessment (est. \$10,000), title insurance (est. \$6,000), survey, recording fees	\$21,000	\$15,322	\$5,678
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>\$700,000</b>	<b>\$330,322</b>	<b>\$369,678</b>

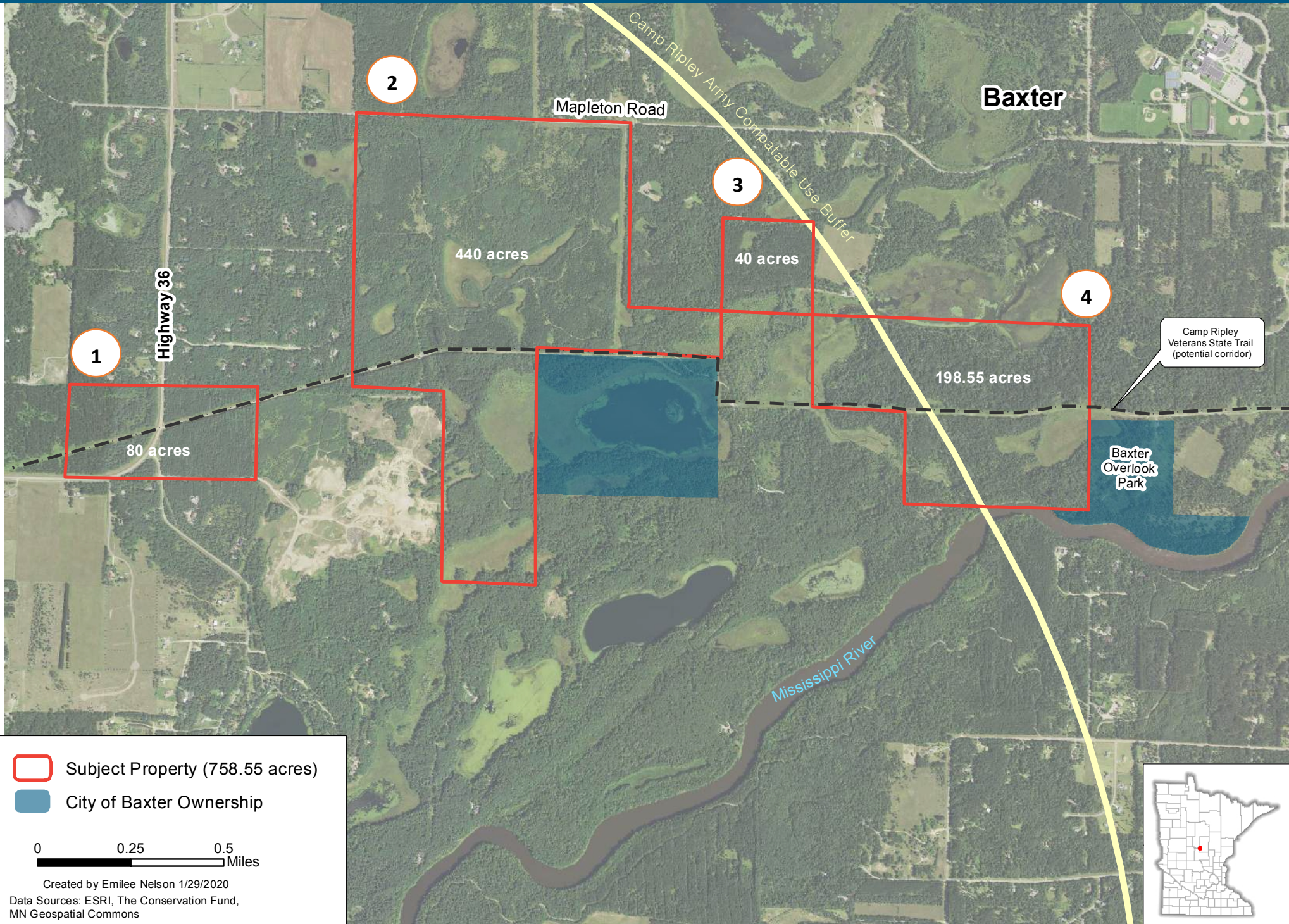


Acquired June 2020  
 Upcoming Acquisition  
 Protected Lands

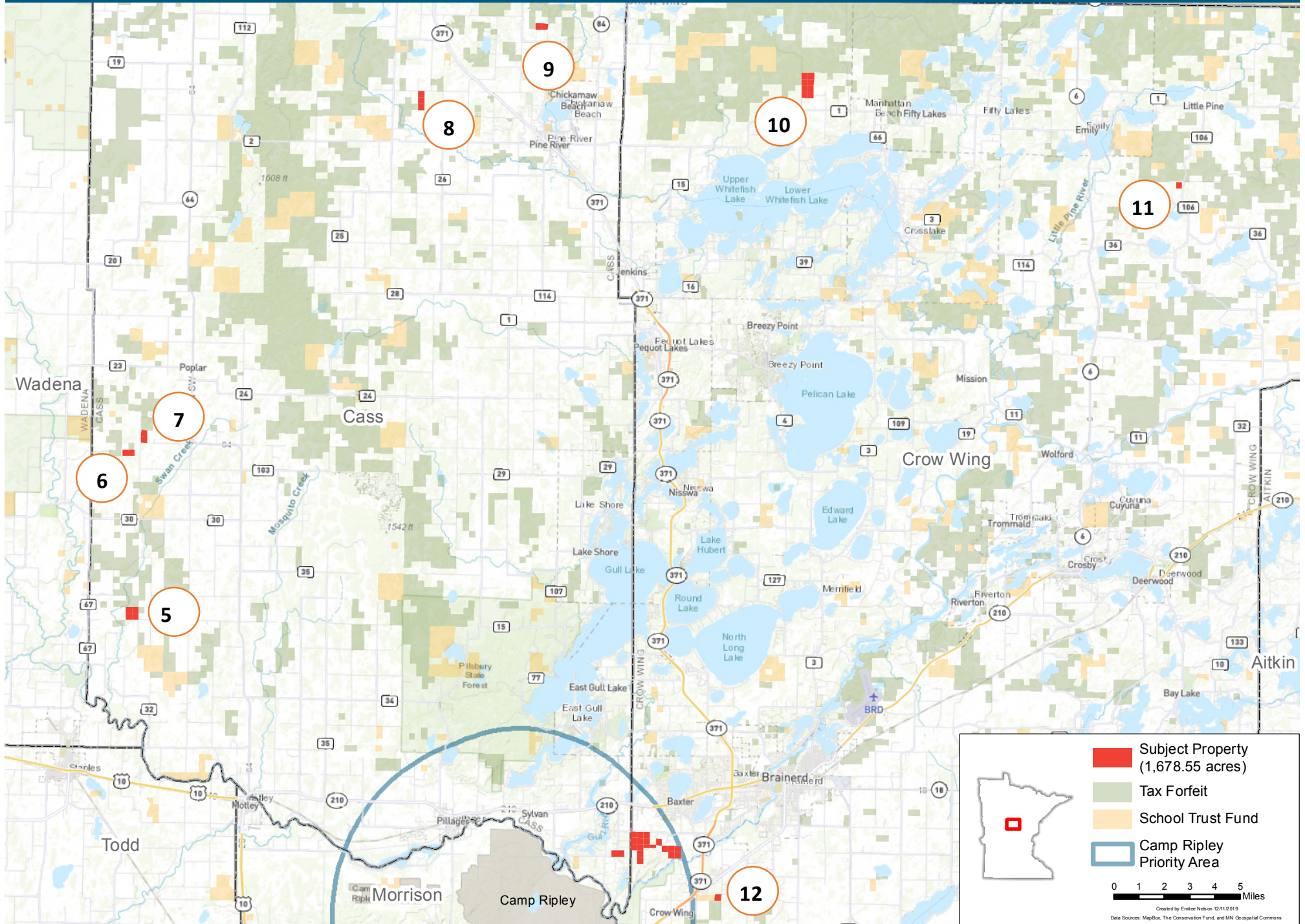
0      0.25      0.5  
 Miles

Created by Emilee Nelson 6/23/2020  
 Data Sources: ESRI, The Conservation Fund, MN Geospatial Commons





# Camp Ripley/Baxter/Cass/Crow Wing Minnesota



**Legend**

- Subject Property (1,678.55 acres)
- Tax Forfeit
- School Trust Fund
- Camp Ripley Priority Area

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles

Created by Emily Nels on 12/1/2019  
Data Sources: MapBox, The Conservation Fund, and MN Geospatial Commons