



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V

Laws of Minnesota 2015 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/03/2026

Project Title: Minnesota Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase V

Funds Recommended: \$4,544,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2015, First Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(f)

Appropriation Language: \$4,544,000 in the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements to protect and enhance habitat by expanding the clean water fund riparian buffer program for at least equal wildlife benefits from buffers on private land. Up to \$728,000 (from \$72,500 amend in ML 2017) is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Martin, Wilkin, Jackson, Renville, Redwood, Rock, Meeker, Mower, Nobles, Sibley, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Clay, Yellow Medicine, Brown, Stearns, Dodge and Lac qui Parle.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Prairie

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Clean Water Fund (CWF) and Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) were used together to secure easements on buffer areas. 71 easements have been recorded for a total of 1,083.9 acres and are reported in the output tables for the final report (acre total does not include Clean Water Fund acres). The total acreage from both CWF and OHF sources for recorded easements is 2,105.0 acres. Only the OHF acres are being reported in this final report to be consistent with the approved accomplishment plan.

Process & Methods

The sites enrolled were generally farmed sites adjacent to a sensitive water feature or drained and farmed floodplain wetlands and associated upland habitat. Expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts were also enrolled. These sites originally offered limited ecological benefits. Through a combination of a scoring and ranking process and eligibility screening, each application was evaluated, with the applications that provided the greatest habitat and environmental benefits after restoration and protection being selected for funding. Factors considered during site selection included: linear corridor connectivity, length and width of the filter strip, adjacency to a public water, size of the site offered for enrollment, additional wildlife benefits, highly erodible land or partially highly erodible land, threatened and endangered species, and addressing water quality concerns.

MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary, federal-state funded natural resource conservation program that uses a science based approach to target environmentally sensitive land in 54 Counties in southern and western Minnesota. This is accomplished through permanent protection by establishing conservation practices via payments to farmers and agricultural landowners. Landowners enrolled in the federally-funded CRP for 14-15 years; CRP is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture-Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA). It uses agricultural land for conservation benefits, rather than farming or ranching; The same land was also enrolled into a state-funded perpetual conservation easement through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program, administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Private ownership continues and the land is permanently restored and enhanced for conservation benefits.

The RIM payment rates were consistent throughout most (2018 - 2022) of this appropriation but CRP annual rental rates fluctuated, so the state's contribution to the overall easement cost varied in reaction to the CRP rate.

The largest easement funded in this project was a floodplain easement in Nobles county (53-01-19-01). The total easement was 209.2 acres (104.6 acres funded with this project) and protects portions of both sides of Kanaranzi Creek and its floodplain areas. This easement is adjacent to an 80.9 acre MN CREP easement funded with ML2016 RIM Buffers Phase VI and a 60.1 acre MN CREP easement funded with ML2017 RIM Buffers Phase VII. These three easements total 350.2 acres of protection along Kanaranzi Creek.

How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

Project selection criteria for the buffer program is designed to compliment historic investments to protect wildlife habitat in the degraded prairie region of the state. Providing connections between and adjacent to these previous habitat investments is a key factor in realizing the best return on investment found in wildlife population models. Riparian areas are logical corridors found between these historical habitat areas. Buffers targeting expiring CRP and near existing complexes of greater than 200 acres were given preference.

How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

BWSR uses the Ecological Ranking Tool, MN Nutrient Management Strategy, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) for the clean water focus. Wildlife benefits are summarized from numerous models (e.g., Habitat and Population Evaluation Team; HAPET) and incorporated into our wildlife score sheet. Factors considered during site selection included: linear corridor connectivity, length and width of the filter strip, adjacency to a public water, size of the site offered for enrollment, additional wildlife benefits, highly erodible land or partially highly erodible land, threatened and endangered species, and addressing water quality concerns.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

RIM Buffers is a local-state-federal partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and BWSR. The MN CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-FSA, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies. This phase of the RIM Buffers Program was supported by Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership which includes BWSR, NRCS, DNR, SWCDs, PF and local partners. The program was delivered locally through SWCDs and administered by BWSR.

Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

The Council approved the following amendment changes at the October 7, 2021 Council meeting:

- reduced OHF funded acres from 1,793 to 1,036
- reduced # of easements from 224 to 78
- reduced federal leverage from \$22.7 million to \$13.6 million
- decreased contracts and stewardship in line with the revised number of easements
- increased easement acquisition dollars by \$616,000

What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring of RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its easements. Easements are inspected each of the the first five years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings of each site inspection conducted and report to BWSR . A non-compliance procedure is implemented when problems or potential violations are identified. Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs were calculated at \$6,500 per easement at the time this accomplishment plan was approved and funded. This value was based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner communication and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed

for Easement Stewardship cover costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight and future enforcement if necessary.

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$100,400	\$406,200	\$381,900	\$100,400	-	-	\$200,800	\$381,900
Contracts	-	\$205,800	\$180,100	-	\$180,100	Clean Water Fund	-	\$360,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$4,304,800	\$3,605,900	\$3,540,700	\$4,304,800	\$8,019,900	Clean Water Fund, USDA-FSA-CRP	\$8,609,600	\$11,560,600
Easement Stewardship	\$72,500	\$253,500	\$253,500	\$72,500	\$253,500	Clean Water Fund	\$145,000	\$507,000
Travel	\$7,600	\$7,900	\$1,900	\$7,600	-	-	\$15,200	\$1,900
Professional Services	\$43,500	-	-	\$43,500	-	-	\$87,000	-
Direct Support Services	-	\$50,000	\$33,800	-	-	-	-	\$33,800
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$7,600	\$11,300	\$2,200	\$7,600	-	-	\$15,200	\$2,200
Supplies/Materials	\$7,600	\$3,400	\$3,500	\$7,600	-	-	\$15,200	\$3,500
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$4,544,000	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600	\$4,544,000	\$8,453,500	-	\$9,088,000	\$12,851,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	3.0	\$64,700	-	-	\$64,700
Easement Processing	0.125	3.0	\$283,500	-	-	\$283,500
Eco and Engineering Services	0.25	3.0	\$33,700	-	-	\$33,700

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

BWSR calculates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The federal match is likely more than reported. The total leverage listed includes CWF, as well as all CRP contract payments but CRP practice payments may not be fully paid yet via FSA. If the acquisition line excluded CWF, title and practice payments, the federal to state match for CRP contract payments vs the RIM Buffers Phase V portion of the easement payment to the landowner was approximately 1.34:1. The CWF match is also likely more than reported. We were unable to fully quantify the personnel CWF for this program, but know it exists.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

Clean Water Fund

Other : USDA Farm Bill Program funding-CRP/MN CREP

How were the funds used to advance the program?

CWF dollars were used to support MN CREP buffer projects within the 54 county MN CREP area. In addition, federal funds were provided to landowners in the form of annual CRP payments, incentive payments, and cost share for practice installation per the MN CREP agreement.

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Amend)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	600	1,084	0	0	0	0	600	1,036	1,084
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	600	1,084	0	0	0	0	600	1,036	1,084

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600	-	-	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600	-	-	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Amend)	Total (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	51	120	0	0	0	480	1,033	0	0	600	1,036	1,084
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	51	120	0	0	0	480	1,033	0	0	600	1,036	1,084

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	\$206,900	\$908,800	-	-	-	\$3,635,200	\$4,190,700	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	\$206,900	\$908,800	-	-	-	\$3,635,200	\$4,190,700	-	-	\$4,544,000	\$4,397,600

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

27.29 miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

The amended acreage goal was successfully met.

Outcomes

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *No easements were obtained in the forest-prairie transition region with this funding.*

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *Scoring and ranking was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. Adding buffers provides improved water quality and upland, as well as increased infiltration and decreased runoff. Easements and restoration of perennial native grasslands secured with this funding were focused on lands with expiring CRP contracts and cropland sites adjacent to critical water bodies. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

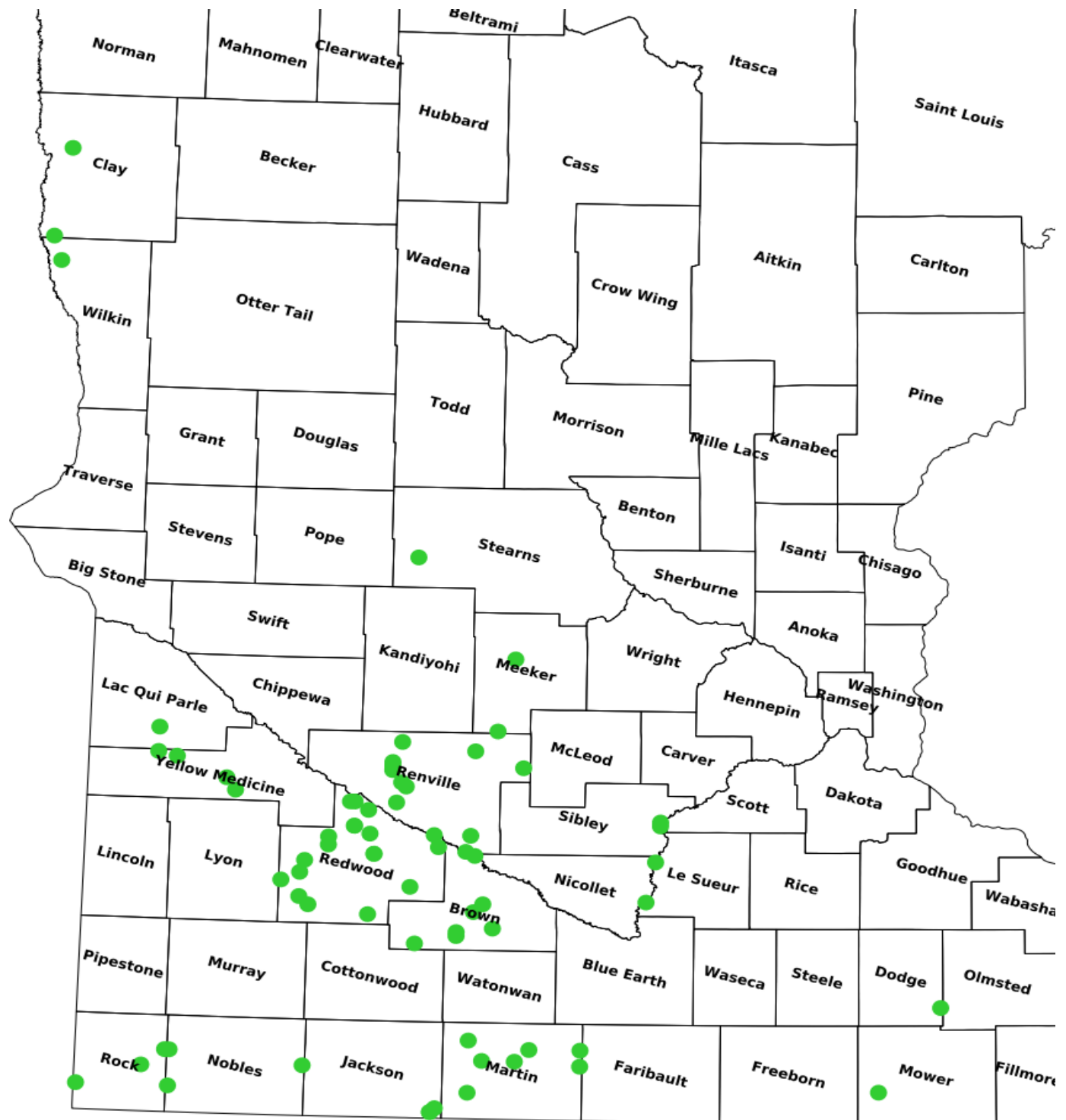
[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
08-01-22-01--	Brown	10833216	69	\$209,596	No
08-02-19-01--	Brown	10833209	20	\$68,138	No
08-04-19-01--	Brown	10835225	6	\$26,590	No
08-05-19-01--	Brown	10832202	6	\$21,116	No
08-06-19-01--	Brown	10932218	20	\$65,031	No
08-07-19-01--	Brown	10932204	10	\$33,329	No
14-01-18-01--	Clay	14047207	6	\$11,115	No
14-01-21-01--	Clay	13748234	10	\$19,289	No
20-01-19-01--	Dodge	10516212	40	\$120,020	No
32-01-17-01--	Jackson	10134223	2	\$5,285	No
32-02-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	5	\$27,522	No
32-12-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	4	\$13,757	No
32-13-19-01--	Jackson	10134227	6	\$25,545	No
37-02-20-01--	Lac qui Parle	11644203	11	\$17,276	No
40-02-21-01--	Le Sueur	11026232	46	\$111,670	No
46-01-17-01--	Martin	10433225	1	\$3,357	No
46-01-18-01--	Martin	10233236	4	\$18,943	No
46-01-19-01--	Martin	10330206	17	\$63,705	No
46-02-19-01--	Martin	10331222	29	\$88,080	No
46-03-19-01--	Martin	10329201	44	\$170,834	No
46-07-19-01--	Martin	10329225	5	\$22,679	No
46-13-19-01--	Martin	10332221	12	\$55,021	No
47-01-17-01--	Meeker	11732236	4	\$21,307	No
47-01-21-01--	Meeker	12031233	11	\$7,070	No
50-02-17-01--	Mower	10218226	3	\$4,360	No
52-01-22-01--	Nicollet	11126210	6	\$18,141	No
52-05-21-01--	Nicollet	11132206	4	\$8,739	No
53-01-17-01--	Nobles	10339236	8	\$22,056	No
53-01-19-01--	Nobles	10243231	105	\$476,697	No
53-01-21-01--	Nobles	10343218	26	\$57,693	No
64-01-19-01--	Redwood	11039207	70	\$216,920	No
64-01-21-01--	Redwood	10936220	10	\$22,726	No
64-02-18-01--	Redwood	11238214	2	\$5,000	No
64-03-17-01--	Redwood	11336208	2	\$1,840	No
64-04-17-01--	Redwood	11234226	1	\$3,179	No
64-05-17-01--	Redwood	11035214	1	\$3,778	No
64-06-17-01--	Redwood	11136204	1	\$1,141	No
64-07-17-01--	Redwood	11136204	1	\$889	No
64-08-17-01--	Redwood	11039235	3	\$7,470	No
64-09-17-01--	Redwood	11337235	4	\$7,868	No
64-10-17-01--	Redwood	11337235	4	\$7,654	No
64-13-18-01--	Redwood	11236208	25	\$106,347	No
64-15-17-01--	Redwood	11437235	4	\$6,030	No
64-17-17-01--	Redwood	11437234	8	\$11,978	No
64-18-17-01--	Redwood	11139235	2	\$5,073	No
64-19-17-01--	Redwood	11139213	1	\$1,589	No
64-20-17-01--	Redwood	11238226	1	\$1,204	No
64-21-17-01--	Redwood	10938207	1	\$3,456	No
65-01-17-01--	Renville	11233235	4	\$6,899	No

65-01-18-01- -	Renville	11435204	1	\$3,500	No
65-02-18-01- -	Renville	11233212	3	\$5,374	No
65-02-19-01- -	Renville	11234210	100	\$258,853	No
65-02-20-01- -	Renville	11435210	39	\$130,480	No
65-03-18-01- -	Renville	11535207	4	\$14,704	No
65-03-20-01- -	Renville	11531214	24	\$84,395	No
65-03-21-01- -	Renville	11632230	2	\$6,014	No
65-04-18-01- -	Renville	11535219	13	\$65,470	No
65-05-18-01- -	Renville	11535218	3	\$16,953	No
65-09-18-01- -	Renville	11435232	1	\$2,476	No
65-10-17-01- -	Renville	11635216	1	\$3,821	No
67-01-19-01- -	Rock	10247235	26	\$112,503	No
67-04-21-01- -	Rock	10344213	27	\$68,525	No
67-05-17-01- -	Rock	10244206	7	\$33,810	No
72-01-21-01- -	Sibley	11326223	50	\$83,171	No
72-02-19-01	Sibley	11326226	2	\$3,661	No
73-01-20-01- -	Stearns	12435225	37	\$84,333	No
84-03-20-01- -	Wilkin	13648235	12	\$19,232	No
87-01-19-01- -	Yellow Medicine	11441221	3	\$9,922	No
87-01-22-01- -	Yellow Medicine	11543208	16	\$53,933	No
87-02-22-01- -	Yellow Medicine	11441206	16	\$60,892	No
87-10-19-01- -	Yellow Medicine	11544203	12	\$34,996	No

Parcel Map



0 12 24 36 mi

- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ✚ Other