



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase VI

Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/03/2026

Project Title: RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase VI

Funds Recommended: \$6,708,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2(g)

Appropriation Language: \$6,708,000 the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements and restore habitat under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.515, to protect, restore, and enhance habitat by expanding the clean water fund riparian buffer program for at least equal wildlife benefits from buffers on private land. Of this amount, up to \$1,079,000 (from \$130,000 - amended in ML 2017) is to establish 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

Manager's Name: Dusty Van Thuyne

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Location Information

County Location(s): Nicollet, Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Cottonwood, Jackson, Martin, McLeod, Freeborn, Lac qui Parle, Mower, Lyon, Meeker, Brown, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock, Renville, Sibley, Chippewa, Swift, Traverse, Wilkin, Wright, Waseca, Watonwan, Le Sueur and Carver.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Southeast Forest

Activity types:

Protect in Easement

Restore

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. 84 easements have been recorded for a total of 1,441 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 2,793.2 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.

Note that one easement (64-18-18-01) listed on the parcel list was split into two easements as a result of an ownership split but is still reported as one easement in the parcel list; accounting for the difference of one easement in the text compared to the parcel list.

The largest easement funded in this project was a floodplain easement in Rock county (67-05-19-01). The total

easement was 181.9 acres (91.0 acres funded with this project) and protects portions of both sides of Champepadan Creek and its floodplain areas. This easement is adjacent to a 101.2 acre MN CREP easement funded with ML2016 RIM Buffers Phase VI and less than a tenth of a mile away from a 82.3 acre MN CREP easement funded with ML2017 RIM Buffers Phase VII. These three easements total 365.4 acres of protection along Champepadan Creek. A few other MN CREP and RIM easements are within 2 miles of this area, building on to the habitat complex and corridor connectivity along Champepadan 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 3,655 to 1,390
- reduced # of easements from 332 to 84
- reduced federal leverage from \$33.5 million to \$18.6 million
- decreased personnel, contracts and stewardship in line with the revised number of easements
- increased easement acquisition dollars by \$1.36M

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	\$111,300	\$267,000	\$259,700	\$111,300	-	Clean Water Fund	\$222,600	\$259,700
Contracts	\$124,000	\$257,400	\$243,000	\$124,000	\$225,500	Clean Water Fund	\$248,000	\$468,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$6,295,700	\$5,803,300	\$5,746,500	\$6,295,700	\$10,702,400	Clean Water Fund, USDA FSA- CRP	\$12,591,400	\$16,448,900
Easement Stewardship	\$130,000	\$273,000	\$273,000	\$130,000	\$260,000	Clean Water Fund	\$260,000	\$533,000
Travel	\$11,800	\$11,800	\$1,900	\$11,800	-	-	\$23,600	\$1,900
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$13,400	\$73,800	\$13,500	-	-	-	\$13,400	\$13,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$16,800	\$16,700	\$13,000	\$16,800	-	-	\$33,600	\$13,000
Supplies/Materials	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,500	\$5,000	-	-	\$10,000	\$5,500
DNR IDP	-	-	-	\$13,400	-	-	\$13,400	-
Grand Total	\$6,708,000	\$6,708,000	\$6,556,100	\$6,708,000	\$11,187,900	-	\$13,416,000	\$17,744,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Easement Staff	4.51	5.0	\$259,700	-	Clean Water Fund	\$259,700
Engineering/Eco Services	0.35	3.0	-	-	Clean Water Fund	-

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 VI portion of the easement payment to the landowner was approximately 1.03:1. 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 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 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	792	1,441	0	0	0	0	792	1,390	1,441
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	792	1,441	0	0	0	0	792	1,390	1,441

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	-	-	\$335,400	-	-	-	-	-	\$335,400	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$6,372,600	\$6,556,100	-	-	-	-	\$6,372,600	\$6,556,100
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$6,708,000	\$6,556,100	-	-	-	-	\$6,708,000	\$6,556,100

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	79	8	79	0	79	0	555	1,433	0	0	792	1,390	1,441
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	79	8	79	0	79	0	555	1,433	0	0	792	1,390	1,441

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	\$33,500	-	\$33,500	-	\$33,500	-	\$234,900	-	-	-	\$335,400	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$637,300	\$36,400	\$637,300	-	\$637,300	-	\$4,460,700	\$6,519,700	-	-	\$6,372,600	\$6,556,100
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$670,800	\$36,400	\$670,800	-	\$670,800	-	\$4,695,600	\$6,519,700	-	-	\$6,708,000	\$6,556,100

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

35.9 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 aspen parklands and riparian areas ~ *No easements were obtained in the forest-prairie transition region with this funding.*

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *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.*

Programs in prairie region:

Expiring CRP lands are permanently protected ~ *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.

Programs in southeast forest region:

Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat ~ *No easements were obtained in the southeast forest region with this funding.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

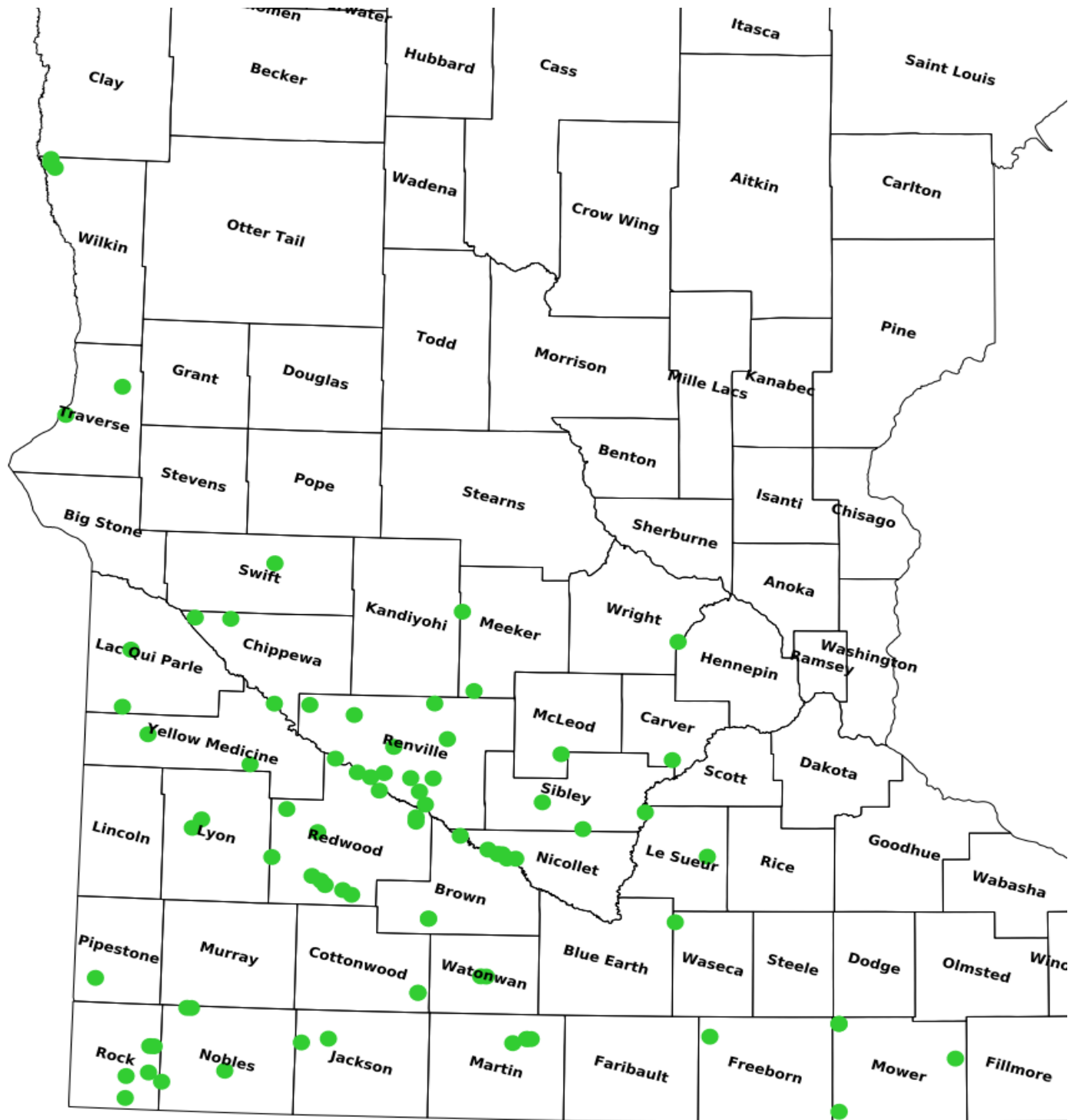
[Yes - Sign up criteria is attached](#)

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
08-05-18-01--	Brown	10834213	2	\$7,249	No
08-06-18-01--	Brown	10834213	6	\$23,655	No
10-01-19-01--	Carver	11425212	4	\$15,354	No
12-01-20-01--	Chippewa	11942207	75	\$168,053	No
12-02-19-01--	Chippewa	11941209	9	\$14,991	No
12-03-19-01--	Chippewa	11639218	20	\$57,712	No
17-06-19-01--	Cottonwood	10534210	3	\$13,542	No
17-08-19-01--	Cottonwood	10534210	19	\$97,313	No
24-07-18-01--	Freeborn	10423228	4	\$10,603	No
32-02-18-01--	Jackson	10338208	4	\$15,867	No
32-07-19-01--	Jackson	10337205	12	\$47,117	No
37-01-18-01--	Lac qui Parle	11645228	56	\$60,059	No
37-02-18-01--	Lac qui Parle	11845223	38	\$66,144	No
40-02-18-01--	Le Sueur	11123232	2	\$4,483	No
42-01-18-01--	Lyon	11242233	5	\$19,636	No
42-02-23-01--	Lyon	11142207	38	\$238,016	No
46-09-19-01--	Martin	10330206	16	\$51,428	No
46-14-19-01--	Martin	10430234	29	\$94,804	No
46-15-19-01--	Martin	10430235	42	\$137,462	No
46-16-19-01--	Martin	10430234	6	\$21,071	No
43-01-19-01--	McLeod	11429202	5	\$10,607	No
47-05-19-01--	Meeker	11732227	11	\$65,083	No
47-06-18-01--	Meeker	12032230	3	\$3,844	No
50-01-18-01--	Mower	10418208	12	\$29,141	No
50-01-23-01--	Mower	10118220	49	\$319,672	No
50-02-18-01--	Mower	10418208	10	\$24,938	No
50-03-18-01--	Mower	10314222	8	\$27,132	No
52-02-18-01--	Nicollet	11131234	8	\$31,871	No
52-03-18-01--	Nicollet	11131230	4	\$17,376	No
52-03-19-01--	Nicollet	11131233	1	\$3,622	No
52-04-18-01--	Nicollet	11030206	13	\$48,035	No
52-04-19-01--	Nicollet	11031202	48	\$239,917	No
52-05-19-01--	Nicollet	11131233	5	\$23,118	No
52-07-19-01--	Nicollet	11132207	37	\$128,673	No
53-02-19-01--	Nobles	10241216	5	\$23,076	No
53-03-19-01--	Nobles	10442206	22	\$99,280	No
53-05-19-01--	Nobles	10443201	1	\$2,757	No
53-06-19-01--	Nobles	10243231	40	\$174,323	No
59-01-18-01--	Pipestone	10546203	3	\$12,379	No
64-07-19-01--	Redwood	11436232	12	\$21,632	No
64-08-18-01--	Redwood	11234228	6	\$22,252	No
64-09-18-01--	Redwood	11234221	2	\$6,863	No
64-11-18-01--	Redwood	11039207	63	\$203,068	No
64-12-19-01--	Redwood	10936219	20	\$80,716	No
64-14-19-01--	Redwood	10937207	17	\$65,948	No
64-15-19-01--	Redwood	11239215	77	\$344,353	No
64-16-18-01--	Redwood	10938201	3	\$9,581	No
64-16-19-01--	Redwood	10937214	12	\$53,752	No
64-18-18-01--	Redwood	11138211	3	\$8,310	No

64-20-18-01--	Redwood	11038234	3	\$16,117	No
65-06-18-01--	Renville	11633207	3	\$5,361	No
65-06-19-01--	Renville	11335219	21	\$55,914	No
65-06-20-01--	Renville	11234202	6	\$18,962	No
65-08-18-01--	Renville	11636230	3	\$9,806	No
65-08-19-01--	Renville	11535234	6	\$21,828	No
65-09-19-01--	Renville	11336202	29	\$110,331	No
65-12-18-01--	Renville	11435232	1	\$3,437	No
65-15-18-01--	Renville	11533222	1	\$2,864	No
65-16-18-01--	Renville	11334222	8	\$34,636	No
65-17-18-01--	Renville	11334205	5	\$17,822	No
65-18-18-01--	Renville	11333206	3	\$10,502	No
65-24-18-01--	Renville	11638216	13	\$26,843	No
65-28-18-01--	Renville	11437216	36	\$141,994	No
67-02-18-01--	Rock	10344222	51	\$143,525	No
67-02-19-01--	Rock	10244222	39	\$248,193	No
67-03-18-01--	Rock	10245226	49	\$311,089	No
67-05-19-01--	Rock	10344223	91	\$253,084	No
67-09-19-01--	Rock	10145223	28	\$208,042	No
72-02-18-01--	Sibley	11329231	4	\$11,432	No
72-05-18-01--	Sibley	11228234	5	\$13,318	No
72-06-19-01--	Sibley	11226212	2	\$4,376	No
76-03-18-01--	Swift	12139206	9	\$30,046	No
78-01-18-01--	Traverse	12845220	9	\$23,089	No
78-02-19-01--	Traverse	12747229	20	\$63,867	No
81-02-19-01--	Waseca	10824218	8	\$28,632	No
83-02-19-01--	Watsonwan	10632224	15	\$51,565	No
83-08-19-01--	Watsonwan	10631219	19	\$58,675	No
84-08-18-01--	Wilkin	13648215	12	\$29,773	No
84-09-19-01--	Wilkin	13648204	3	\$8,095	No
84-10-19-01--	Wilkin	13648209	9	\$21,879	No
86-01-18-01--	Wright	11924230	1	\$6,715	No
87-01-23-01--	Yellow Medicine	11440229	30	\$212,263	No
87-06-18-01--	Yellow Medicine	11544228	9	\$17,968	No

Parcel Map



0 11 22 33 mi

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