



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor

Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 09/30/2025

Project Title: Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor

Funds Recommended: \$2,458,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(a)

Appropriation Language: \$2,458,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Minnesota Land Trust to acquire permanent conservation easements in Washington County. Of this amount, up to \$30,000 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 proposed permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Additional Legislative Changes: ML 22 Legislative Extension until 2025;
ML 20 Legislative Extension of time to 2022

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Wayne Ostlie

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Location Information

County Location(s): Washington.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Forest

Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

Through the Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor grant, Minnesota Land Trust protected via permanent conservation easement 39 acres of priority forest and wetland habitat in Washington County, Minnesota. In addition, the grant facilitated the protection of an additional 80 of forest, grassland and wetland habitat adjacent to the 39-acre property; this 80-acre easement, valued at \$889,700, was procured by Washington County with assistance from Minnesota Land Trust and the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Four major efforts to protect the primary focus of this grant - the Terrapin Lake Site - were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving the desired results.

Process & Methods

Washington County's Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor has long been a conservation target of Washington County, Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Land Trust (MLT), and other conservation organizations due to its expansive and diverse forest habitat and abundant clear lakes. The Corridor contains:

- Extensive, high-quality oak and maple-basswood forest with undisturbed canopy and significant age;
- Extensive shoreline and riparian habitat along a number of deepwater and shallow lakes, some of the most pristine in Minnesota;
- High biodiversity for approximately 77 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN); and
- High-quality water discharge and recharge areas which help maintain aquatic habitat and water quality.

Through this grant, MLT in partnership with Washington County intended to protect 735 acres at the core to this Corridor (the "Terrapin Lake site") – lands owned by Manitou Fund (Warner Nature Center) and Wilder Foundation. Four successive, albeit unsuccessful, attempts were made to realize protection of this habitat core over the course of the grant:

Phase 1: MLT and Washington County pursued an ambitious plan to protect both properties through a combination of perpetual conservation easements and fee acquisition over 369 acres of Manitou Fund and 366 acres of adjacent Wilder Foundation property in fee. The project was 90% complete when Manitou Fund walked away from the project in fall 2017.

Phase 2: In early 2018, Manitou Fund again approached the Land Trust about reigniting the project. After initial conversations, Manitou Fund, again, backed away.

Phase 3: In early 2019, Washington County, MLT, and The Food Group sought to protect the Wilder Foundation property through a combination of fee and conservation easement acquisition. The Food Group sought funding through Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to enable the purchase of agricultural land. The overall project stalled when that attempt failed, and no additional sources of funding were available.

Phase 4: Washington County, Science Museum of Minnesota, and MLT made a concerted run at the Wilder Foundation property in 2020, securing a Letter of Intent for its purchase of the property. Funding was in place and the project moving to completion when May Township placed a moratorium restricting changes to terms

governing the use of the property. Due to the resulting delay and Wilder Foundation's decision to not extend the LOI, the project was discontinued.

With efforts stalled, MLT and Washington County focused on other high-quality properties in the Corridor. Out of that came the protection of two contiguous properties through conservation easement, totaling 119 acres:

1. Maple Island (Bancroft) – A 39-acre property protected by MLT that supports high-quality deciduous forest, wetlands, and shoreline along several ponds.
2. Maple Island (Scott) – An 80-acre property protected by Washington County that supports high-quality forests, grasslands, lakes, and ponds. The acquisition of this conservation easement (valued at \$889,700) was contingent upon the closing of the Maple Island (Bancroft) easement by MLT.

Both properties support numerous SGCN, including red-shouldered hawk, bald eagle, sandhill crane, common loon, American woodcock, milksnake, Blanding's turtle, and eastern fox snake.

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?

The extensive upland forests, grasslands, deep and shallow lakes, ponds, and bogs of the Carnelian Creek Conservation Corridor form one of the most biologically important systems in the Twin Cities Metro area, providing habitat for some 77 SGCN. The protection of these habitats has been identified in numerous plans as a conservation priority for Minnesota, including the Minnesota Biological Survey, the State Conservation and Preservation Plan, Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Plan, and the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program. The two properties protected through conservation easement protected 119 acres of high-quality forest, lake, and wetland habitat that support many of these SGCN, and connected disparate public land units, forging corridors between them that allow unabated movement of wildlife.

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.

The Carnelian Creek Corridor is an important natural land conservation wildlife corridor in northern Washington County. The Corridor encompasses an area rich in high-quality Sites of Biodiversity Significance (as identified by Minnesota Biological Survey) and among the most pristine lakes in Minnesota. It connects with other large natural areas in the County, including Big Marine Park Reserve, Keystone Woods WMA, and Long Lake Conservation Area on the north and west, and the County's High Priority Tanglewood Corridor that extends to the St. Croix River, a National Scenic Riverway managed by the National Park Service and an Important Bird Area identified by Audubon. In total, well over 7,000 acres of protected conservation land occurs within and nearby the Corridor.

Both contiguous properties protected through conservation easement form a protected corridor connecting Washington County's Long Lake Conservation Area - its acquisition through the Outdoor Heritage Fund by Trust for Public Land - to Big Marine Regional Park and ultimately Keystone Woods WMA (also funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund).

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Minnesota Land Trust worked with an array of partners during the course of this grant, including Washington County, Science Museum of Minnesota, The Food Group, Washington Conservation District, and Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District. Though the efforts of all involved did not produce the results we desired, they were nonetheless heroic and persistent in the face of numerous obstacles. Our efforts were strongly supported by the May Township Board and many local community members who saw value in the work proposed.

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

The varied efforts to protect the Terrapin Lake Site - the core focus of this grant - were exceptionally complex. Due to the size and cost of the project, multiple partners and funding sources needed to be assembled. In addition, Wilder Foundation was interested in selling their property, so we needed to use a variety of acquisition tools including both fee and conservation easement acquisition and line up ultimate owners for that property. Complex negotiations were centerstage with these endeavors. Twice, we were very close to making this mammoth project happen, but neither were completed. The scale and significance of the project demanded we relentlessly pursue the protection of this land. Though we were unsuccessful, we are confident that we made every effort to ensure permanent protection for this valuable resource.

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

Other : Washington County Land and Water Legacy Fund

How were the funds used to advance the program?

Washington County committed funds through all phases of the program toward the protection of targeted projects within the Corridor and for staff time in moving those projects forward. Ultimately, their funds were used to purchase the Maple Island (Scott) conservation easement facilitated by this grant. Their contributions were far in excess of what is shown in the Leverage portion of the Budget Table. Since the Maple Island (Scott) conservation easement was not directly funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund (though the habitat management plan and environmental site assessment were), no NOFR was placed on the property and as a result, the project (valued at \$899,700) is not shown as leverage in the Budget table. That said, this project and associated leverage are indeed direct outcomes of this grant.

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

Land protected through conservation easement will be sustained through the best standards and practices for conservation easement stewardship by Minnesota Land Trust. Minnesota Land Trust is a nationally-accredited and insured land trust 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 in case of a true violation. Funding for these easement stewardship activities is included in the project budget.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2025 and in perpetuity	MLT Stewardship and Enforcement Fund	Annual monitoring of easement in perpetuity	Enforcement as necessary	-

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$40,000	\$136,000	\$112,100	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$112,100
Contracts	\$10,000	\$42,000	\$16,500	-	-	-	\$10,000	\$16,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,359,800	\$2,009,500	\$589,000	\$2,359,800	-	-	\$4,719,600	\$589,000
Easement Stewardship	\$30,000	\$72,000	\$24,000	-	-	-	\$30,000	\$24,000
Travel	\$2,500	\$4,000	\$400	-	-	-	\$2,500	\$400
Professional Services	\$9,500	\$150,000	\$48,800	-	\$96,900	Washington County	\$9,500	\$145,700
Direct Support Services	\$6,200	\$37,000	\$26,400	\$6,200	-	-	\$12,400	\$26,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	\$7,500	\$7,500	-	-	-	-	\$7,500
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,458,000	\$2,458,000	\$824,700	\$2,366,000	\$96,900	-	\$4,824,000	\$921,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection and Legal Staff	0.0	0.0	\$112,100	-	-	\$112,100

Direct Support Services

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

In a process that was approved by the DNR on March 17, 2017, Minnesota Land Trust determined our direct support services rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget, which is similar to the Land Trust's proposed federal indirect rate. We will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

No budget challenges were encountered.

Total Revenue: -

Revenue Spent: -

Revenue Balance: -

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

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

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 (Final)
Restore	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
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	369	39	0	0	369	39
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	369	39	0	0	369	39

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	-	-	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700

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 (Final)
Restore	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
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	369	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	369	39
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	369	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	369	39

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	\$2,458,000	\$824,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$2,458,000	\$824,700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,458,000	\$824,700

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

0.44 miles

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

Minnesota Land Trust and its partners were unsuccessful in protecting the land which was the primary focus of the original proposal - the Terrapin Lake Site owned by Manitou Fund and Wilder Foundation - despite four focused efforts. As such, outputs associated with the grant were significantly below what was proposed - both in terms of acreage and leverage received.

Ultimately, the grant resulted in the protection of 119 acres of priority forest and wetland habitat, 39 acres directly funded by this grant and shown in the Output Tables; 80 additional acres were protected through a complementary project.

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *Acres protected; feet of shoreline protected within priority conservation corridors.*

Parcels

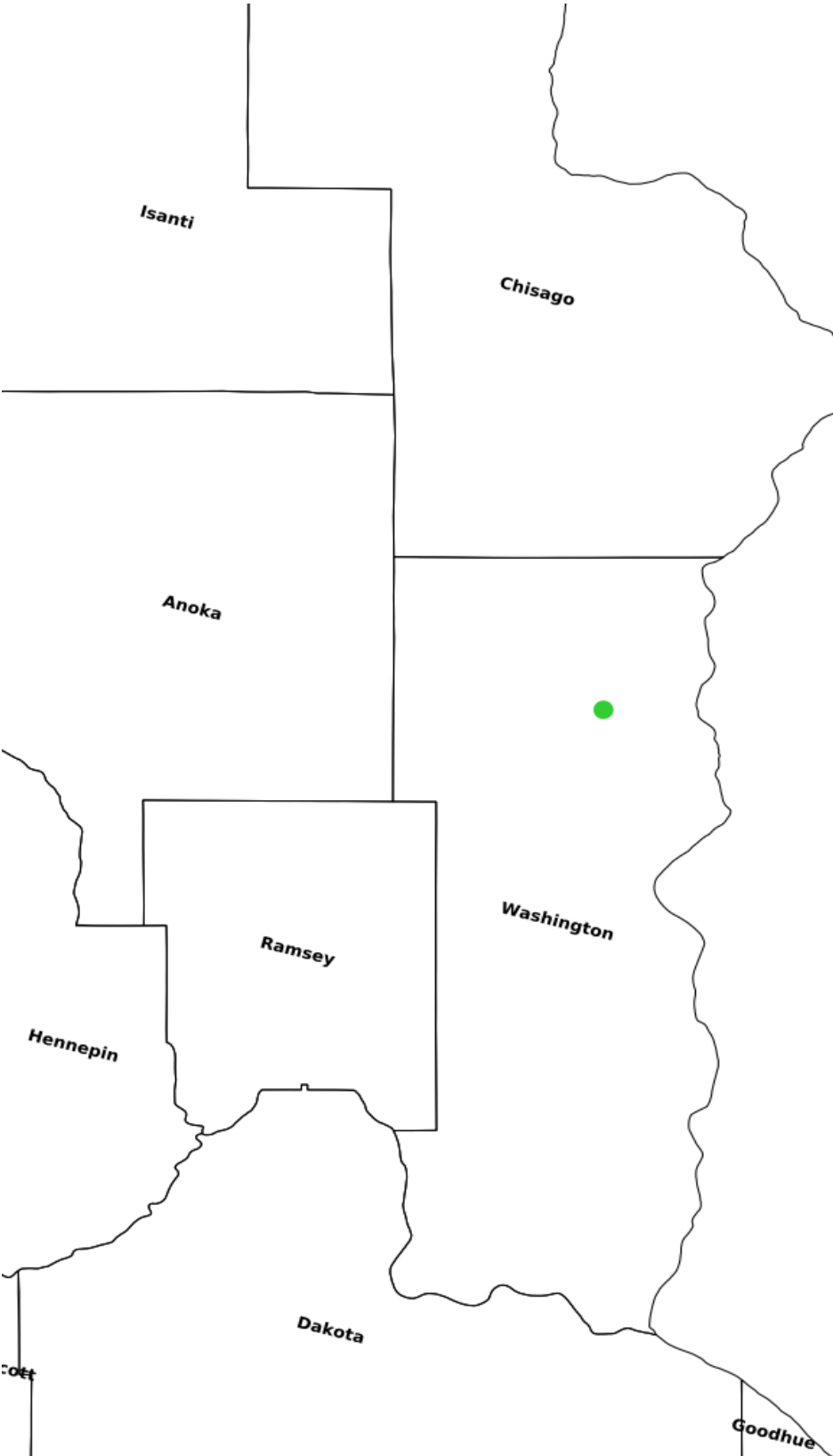
Sign-up Criteria?

No

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Maple Island (Bancroft)	Washington	03120209	39	\$589,000	No

Parcel Map



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

