



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Cannon River Watershed Habitat Complex - Phase VIII

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 09/29/2025

Project Title: Cannon River Watershed Habitat Complex - Phase VIII

Funds Recommended: \$1,345,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 2(e)

Appropriation Language: \$1,345,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Trust for Public Land, in cooperation with Great River Greening, to acquire lands in fee in the Cannon River watershed for wildlife management under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8; to acquire lands in fee for scientific and natural areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5; to acquire lands in fee for state forests under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 7; and to restore lands in the Cannon River watershed. Of this amount, \$945,000 is to The Trust for Public Land and \$400,000 is to Great River Greening. Subject to evaluation criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 6136.0900, priority must be given to acquiring lands that are eligible for the native prairie bank under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.96, or lands adjacent to protected native prairie. A list of proposed land acquisitions and restorations must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: DJ Forbes

Title: Program Manager

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

Address: 2610 University Ave. #300

City: St. Paul, MN 55114

Email: dj.forbes@tpl.org

Office Number: 651-999-5325

Mobile Number:

Fax Number:

Website: www.tpl.org

Location Information

County Location(s): Dakota, Rice, Goodhue, Le Sueur and Steele.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Metro / Urban

Southeast Forest

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Restore

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Forest

Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Cannon River Watershed partnership has successfully concluded its activities with the ML18 grant. We met and exceed our protection, restoration, and enhancement goals. Trust for Public Land permanently protected 242 acres (151% of our goal) throughout the Cannon River Watershed, resulting in two additions to existing WMAs and an addition to a SNA. Great River Greening restored and enhanced 201 acres (107% of our goal) throughout the watershed on five WMAs and one County Park.

Process & Methods

The Cannon River Watershed Phase VIII program acquired 242 acres of high-quality habitat throughout the Cannon River Watershed. The program also restored and enhanced 201 acres of Big Woods forest, oak woodland, wet prairie, oak savanna, and bluff prairie habitat by removing invasive and weedy species, seeding diverse prairie and forest seed mixes, and managing sites after seeding.

This program was designed to address the following issues: the degradation and loss of diverse habitat throughout the Cannon River Watershed, and the lack of available public lands for hunting and angling opportunities. This phase is a part of a multi-year conservation effort, focusing on the Cannon River Watershed, that includes acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of core parcels of land that will contribute to larger complexes of restored prairies, grasslands, wetlands, and forests. The acquisitions were prioritized toward protecting existing large wetland/upland complexes and rare communities (Big Woods forest, oak savanna, tamarack swamp). Protection of these lands provides critical habitat for game species, including migratory waterfowl, upland birds, white tail deer, and fish. Protection will also provide access for a diversity of recreational experiences including hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation.

Specifically, three acquisitions were completed with this grant:

Aurora WMA Addition - Steele County: TPL acquired/conveyed 260 acres to the MN DNR as an addition to the Aurora WMA. We purchased this property using funds from both the ML17 and ML18 Cannon River grants. 23 acres are attributed to the ML18 grant.

Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA - Goodhue County: TPL acquired/conveyed 205 acres to the MN DNR as an addition to the Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA. We purchased this property using funds from the ML18 Cannon River grant, all 205 acres are attributed to the ML18 grant.

Shields Lake Overlook (Boyd Sartell WMA Addition) - Rice County: TPL acquired/conveyed 137 acres to MN DNR as an addition to the Boyd Sartell WMA. We purchased this property using funds from both the ML18 and ML20 Cannon River grants. 14 acres are attributed to the ML18 grant.

Great River Greening restored and enhanced habitat on the following sites:

Sunktokeca Creek WMA – Rice County: Seeded and restored 7 acres of wet prairie and 30 acres of hardwood Big Woods forest; enhanced 11 acres of Siberian elm-infested forest surrounding the seeding areas.

Edward Velishek WMA – Le Sueur County: Enhanced 28 acres of oak savanna via invasive and weedy species removal.

Dora Lake WMA – Le Sueur County: Enhanced 17 acres of oak savanna via invasive and weedy species removal and understory seeding.

Diamond Lake WMA – Le Sueur County: Seeded and restored 21 acres of prairie on formerly brome-infested fields.

John Peter Hoffman Spring Brook Valley WMA – Goodhue County: Enhanced 27 acres of prairie (including historic bluff prairie) and 17 acres of oak woodland via removal of invasive and weedy trees and shrubs.

Lake Byllesby Regional Park – Dakota County: Enhanced 43 acres of prairie through native seedings and plantings along with tree and shrub removal.

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 areas protected through this appropriation were identified and prioritized through, state, regional and local natural resource plans due to their high biodiversity, connectivity and ability to preserve habitat for both game species and species of greatest conservation need. Specifically, the shoreline zones protected are one of the most essential, and one of the most threatened, habitat resources in the state. They provide a range of benefits for fisheries, migratory waterfowl and upland game species. Restoration and enhancement activities improved habitat for numerous species by restoring food and nesting habitat and adding greater vegetative diversity. Project staff worked closely with DNR staff to ensure activities did not negatively impact any SGCNs, threatened, listed, or endangered species.

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.

Our science-based targeting utilized the Minnesota Wildlife Action Network's data along with other state data sets, including the MN County Biological Survey, to identify priority areas for permanent fish and wildlife protection within the Cannon River Watershed. The Wildlife Action Network was developed to help implement the 2015-2025 MN Wildlife Action Plan, which identified species of greatest conservation need and rare, threatened and endangered species. The program's geographic targeting also considered specific areas of species richness and/or biodiversity importance and areas where aquatic and terrestrial habitats have been compromised. These identified

priority areas were the primary focus geography in selecting parcels for permanent land protection using fee-title acquisition.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

These acquisitions and restoration/enhancement activities were supported by a number of partners, including but not limited to; the MN DNR, Rice County, Steele County, Goodhue County, Dakota County, respective Township Boards, and Clean River Partners. Great River Greening also secured cash and in-kind match through numerous partners including Dakota County, The Mortenson Family Foundation, General Mills, community volunteers, and farmer cooperative agreements.

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

The Cannon River Watershed is unique in that its' geography overlaps between three different MN DNR regions. This makes sense in that the Cannon River is located an hour south of the Twin Cities and meanders east from prairie/cropland areas through the historic mill towns (Big Woods area) of Faribault, Northfield, and Red Wing before it empties into the Mississippi River in the southeast bluffs area. However, this unique geography can make coordination with our MN DNR partners more challenging as the regions have different priorities/processes at times. For restoration and enhancement, droughts, heavy rainfall, and ATV vandalism were challenges for some of the seed and planting sites, but the impacted sites were reseeded and repaired through partner assistance and remaining budgets. Buckthorn was showing signs of resistance to herbicide in Goodhue County and required alternative methods of removal.

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

N/A

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

The Cannon River Watershed Habitat Complex lands have been acquired and conveyed to the DNR who have completed the initial site development and restoration work. Costs for this work are included in the IDPs attached to the completed parcel reports. The properties will be managed for the long term as WMAs and will be maintained by the Minnesota DNR according to their WMA guidelines. Restored and enhanced sites were managed to a state where the landowning partner, DNR or County, could more easily manage the site into future years. Management plans were developed by or for the partners to provide recommendations for continued management.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021 and ongoing	DNR Land Management Funds	Property owned by the DNR via TPL acquisitions will be managed according to DNR land management policies	DNR land acquired in fee-title will remain permanently protected and open to the public.	On-going DNR management
2021 and ongoing	Permanent Public Stewards	Monitor and assess restoration and enhancement projects	Target actions to maintain habitat and coordinate with public stewards.	Take restorative action to correct damage

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$128,000	\$122,300	\$124,100	\$48,300	\$68,500	Greening Private Funds, Volunteers, Foundations	\$176,300	\$192,600
Contracts	\$266,700	\$275,800	\$273,500	-	-	-	\$266,700	\$273,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$788,400	\$788,400	\$788,400	-	-	-	\$788,400	\$788,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$7,500	\$7,100	\$6,000	-	\$1,000	-, TPL Private Funds	\$7,500	\$7,000
Professional Services	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$40,000
Direct Support Services	\$17,900	\$17,900	\$19,300	\$21,900	\$23,300	Greening Private Funds, TPL Private Funds	\$39,800	\$42,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$19,900	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$19,900
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$12,500	\$6,500	\$6,500	-	-	-	\$12,500	\$6,500
Supplies/Materials	\$44,000	\$47,000	\$47,200	-	\$3,100	Dakota County	\$44,000	\$50,300
DNR IDP	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$19,900	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$19,900
Grand Total	\$1,345,000	\$1,345,000	\$1,344,800	\$70,200	\$95,900	-	\$1,415,200	\$1,440,700

Partner: Great River Greening

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$76,300	\$70,600	\$72,800	\$48,300	\$68,500	Greening Private Funds, Volunteers, Foundations	\$124,600	\$141,300
Contracts	\$256,700	\$265,800	\$263,500	-	-	-	\$256,700	\$263,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$6,500	\$6,100	\$6,000	-	-	-	\$6,500	\$6,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	Greening Private Funds	\$12,000	\$12,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$12,500	\$6,500	\$6,500	-	-	-	\$12,500	\$6,500
Supplies/Materials	\$44,000	\$47,000	\$47,200	-	\$3,100	Dakota County	\$44,000	\$50,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$56,300	\$79,600	-	\$456,300	\$479,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Crew	0.2	3.0	-	-	-	-
GRG Staff	-	3.0	\$72,800	\$68,500	Greening Private Funds, Volunteers, Foundations	\$141,300
Project Manager	0.14	3.0	-	-	-	-
Volunteer Manager	0.01	3.0	-	-	-	-
Director of Conservation Programs	0.04	3.0	-	-	-	-
Director of Finance	0.02	3.0	-	-	-	-
Finance Ops Manager	0.02	3.0	-	-	-	-
Grant Management Assistant	0.07	3.0	-	-	-	-

Partner: The Trust for Public Land

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$51,700	\$51,700	\$51,300	-	-	-	\$51,700	\$51,300
Contracts	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	-	-	-	\$10,000	\$10,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$788,400	\$788,400	\$788,400	-	-	-	\$788,400	\$788,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$1,000	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000	TPL Private Funds	\$1,000	\$1,000
Professional Services	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	-	-	-	\$40,000	\$40,000
Direct Support Services	\$13,900	\$13,900	\$15,300	\$13,900	\$15,300	TPL Private Funds	\$27,800	\$30,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$19,900	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$19,900
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$19,900	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$19,900
Grand Total	\$945,000	\$945,000	\$944,800	\$13,900	\$16,300	-	\$958,900	\$961,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection and Legal Staff	0.14	3.0	\$51,300	-	-	\$51,300

Direct Support Services

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

TPL's DSS request is based upon our federal rate which has been approved by the DNR. Great River Greening determined its DSS rate to include all of the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget; this process has been approved by the DNR. We will apply this DNR-approved rate only to personnel expenses to determine the total amount of direct support services. The rate is 9% of personnel expenses.

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Our budget was successful. Of the \$40,000 that was budgeted and released for DNR Land Acquisition and IDP costs, only \$200 was not spent. This will be returned to the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

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	45	0	40	7	35	30	0	0	120	37
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	40	48	40	35	40	114	40	45	160	242
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	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	68	119	0	45	0	0	68	164
Total	85	48	148	161	75	189	40	45	348	443

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	\$110,100	-	\$95,300	\$18,000	\$73,800	\$76,800	-	-	\$279,200	\$94,800
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$236,200	\$187,100	\$236,300	\$137,000	\$236,300	\$445,000	\$236,200	\$175,700	\$945,000	\$944,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	\$120,800	\$216,700	-	\$88,500	-	-	\$120,800	\$305,200
Total	\$346,300	\$187,100	\$452,400	\$371,700	\$310,100	\$610,300	\$236,200	\$175,700	\$1,345,000	\$1,344,800

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	45	0	0	0	35	0	40	37	0	0	120	37
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	80	205	80	37	0	0	160	242
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	43	0	0	0	44	68	77	0	0	68	164
Total	45	43	0	0	115	249	188	151	0	0	348	443

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Fores t/ Prairi e (AP)	Fores t/ Prairi e (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Fores t (AP)	N. Fores t (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	\$110,100	-	-	-	\$73,800	-	\$95,300	\$94,800	-	-	\$279,200	\$94,800
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	\$472,500	\$850,400	\$472,500	\$94,400	-	-	\$945,000	\$944,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	\$51,200	-	-	-	\$107,400	\$120,800	\$146,600	-	-	\$120,800	\$305,200
Total	\$110,100	\$51,200	-	-	\$546,300	\$957,800	\$688,600	\$335,800	-	-	\$1,345,000	\$1,344,800

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1 Mile

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

We accomplished and exceeded our acreage goals. In regards to protecting land in fee, we acquired 242 acres when our target was 160 acres (151% of goal). We restored and enhanced 201 acres when our target was 188 acres (107% of goal).

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *Existing wetlands, Big Woods, and oak savannas were enhanced and extended with newly restored acres in publicly accessible WMAs and a regional park within easy access of the metropolitan region. GRG staff visited sites throughout the project and monitored species germination and successful invasive species removal while utilizing adaptive management as needed.*

Programs in prairie region:

Key core parcels are protected for fish, game and other wildlife ~ *The protected parcel in the Prairie region (Shields Lake Overlook - Boyd Sartell WMA) was identified as a core parcel priority with the DNR. These lands are now permanently protected and accessible for public use; thus increasing habitat for waterfowl, upland birds and species of greatest conservation need. GRG managed four sites within the Prairie ecoregion, enhancing biodiversity and habitat for SGCN throughout Big Woods and prairies through undesirable woody species management and herbaceous invasive species control. GRG also restored degraded habitat via hardwood and prairie seedings and planting, creating more acres of forage and nesting for pollinators.*

Programs in southeast forest region:

Healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species
~ *The protected parcel in the southeast forest region (Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA) was identified as a high priority riparian and forested parcel in partnership with the DNR. This land, and its shoreline is now permanently protected from parcelization and accessible for public use. GRG staff enhanced prairie and oak woodland bluffs via woody invasive removal and control in pursuance of reestablishment of remnant prairie and woodland species.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Lake Byllesby	Dakota	11218211	43	\$53,500	Yes	prairie and wetland enhancement
John Peter Hoffman Spring Brook Valley	Goodhue	11215207	44	\$107,100	Yes	prairie
Diamond Lake WMA	Le Sueur	11023221	21	\$49,200	Yes	tree remove/BT/oak savanna
Dora Lake WMA	Le Sueur	11023211	17	\$27,600	Yes	burn/oak savanna
Edward Velishek WMA	Le Sueur	11023212	28	\$67,500	Yes	burn/oak savanna
Sunktokeca Creek WMA	Rice	11021214	48	\$93,400	Yes	Cropland reforestation

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Cannon River Turtle Preserve SNA	Goodhue	11315221	205	\$581,300	No
Boyd Sartell WMA	Rice	11122202	14	\$79,134	No
Aurora WMA	Steele	10619219	23	\$106,393	No

Parcel Map

