



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase VIII

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 08/18/2026

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

Funds Recommended: \$5,000,000

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

Appropriation Language: \$5,000,000 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 riparian buffer program under the clean water fund for at least equal wildlife benefits from buffers on private land. Of this amount, up to \$745,000 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 permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

Manager Information

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Location Information

County Location(s): Cottonwood, Rock, Pipestone, Wright, Brown, Martin, Waseca, Mower, Nicollet, Renville, Stearns, Clay, Blue Earth, Watonwan, Jackson and Lincoln.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Forest / Prairie Transition

Prairie

Metro / Urban

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. 25 easements have been recorded for a total of 672.1 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 1,152.4 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 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.

One of the largest easements funded in this project was a floodplain easement in Renville county (65-13-20-01). The total easement was 139.1 acres (69.5 acres funded with this project) and protects portions of the Minnesota River and Unnamed Stream (M-055-129.2-001) and the floodplain areas. This easement is adjacent to a 57.3 acre MN CREP easement funded with ML2016 RIM Buffers Phase VI and adjacent to Cold Springs Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Cedar Rock WMA: South East Unit, which is adjacent to Cedar Rock Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) and Cedar Rock WMA: North West Unit, is across the Minnesota River in Redwood County. These easements,

WMAs, and SNA total 1,268+ acres of habitat. A few other RIM easements are within 2 miles of this area, building on to the habitat complex and corridor connectivity along the Minnesota River, Rice Creek, and Unnamed Stream (M-055-129.3).

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.

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

The accomplishment plan for this program was drafted and approved near the beginning of MN CREP enrollment, which began in May 2017. The approved accomplishment plan had an amendment approved October 2021 for an extension of time due to the program receiving federal funds. The number of anticipated easements, acres, and federal leverage through the USDA-FSA CRP included in the original and amended accomplishment plans were based on early projections that nearly half of the of the acres enrolled in the MN CREP were going to fall within the filter strip conservation practice (buffers). Pauses in the opportunity to enroll into CRP, thus pausing CREP enrollment, coupled with reduced CRP annual rental rates, resulted in all easement and stewardship funds not able to be utilized and anticipated easements and acres not able to be met.

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	\$413,600	\$413,600	\$222,500	\$413,600	-	-	\$827,200	\$222,500
Contracts	\$514,700	\$514,700	\$32,000	\$514,700	\$27,000	Clean Water Fund	\$1,029,400	\$59,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$3,247,500	\$3,247,500	\$2,870,800	\$24,214,700	\$5,307,600	Clean Water Fund, USDA-FSA-CRP	\$27,462,200	\$8,178,400
Easement Stewardship	\$744,300	\$744,300	\$87,800	\$744,300	\$74,800	Clean Water Fund	\$1,488,600	\$162,600
Travel	\$8,700	\$8,700	\$1,000	\$8,700	-	-	\$17,400	\$1,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$14,400	\$55,000	-	-	\$110,000	\$14,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$12,500	\$12,500	-	\$12,500	-	-	\$25,000	-
Supplies/Materials	\$3,700	\$3,700	-	\$3,700	-	-	\$7,400	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$3,228,500	\$25,967,200	\$5,409,400	-	\$30,967,200	\$8,637,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.25	5.0	\$28,800	-	-	\$28,800
Easement Processing	2.94	3.0	\$128,900	-	-	\$128,900
Engineering/Eco Services	0.24	3.0	\$64,800	-	-	\$64,800

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 VIII portion of the easement payment to the landowner was approximately 1.11:1. 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	1,900	672	0	0	0	0	1,900	1,900	672
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1,900	672	0	0	0	0	1,900	1,900	672

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	-	-	\$402,200	-	-	-	-	-	\$402,200	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$4,597,800	\$3,228,500	-	-	-	-	\$4,597,800	\$3,228,500
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$5,000,000	\$3,228,500	-	-	-	-	\$5,000,000	\$3,228,500

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	190	8	190	0	190	0	1,330	664	0	0	1,900	1,900	672
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	190	8	190	0	190	0	1,330	664	0	0	1,900	1,900	672

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	\$40,200	-	\$40,200	-	\$40,200	-	\$281,600	-	-	-	\$402,200	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$459,800	\$38,400	\$459,800	-	\$459,800	-	\$3,218,400	\$3,190,100	-	-	\$4,597,800	\$3,228,500
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$500,000	\$38,400	\$500,000	-	\$500,000	-	\$3,500,000	\$3,190,100	-	-	\$5,000,000	\$3,228,500

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

11.3

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

The number of anticipated easements and acres included in the original and amended accomplishment plans were based on early projections that nearly half of the acres enrolled in the MN CREP were going to fall within the filter strip conservation practice (buffers). This projected enrollment of acres into the filter strip practice was not realized. Instead, we experienced a considerably higher interest by landowners in the wetland restoration practices during every batching period. The easements secured were significantly larger than what was assumed in development of the accomplishment plan. This resulted in unspent funds in stewardship and personnel.

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

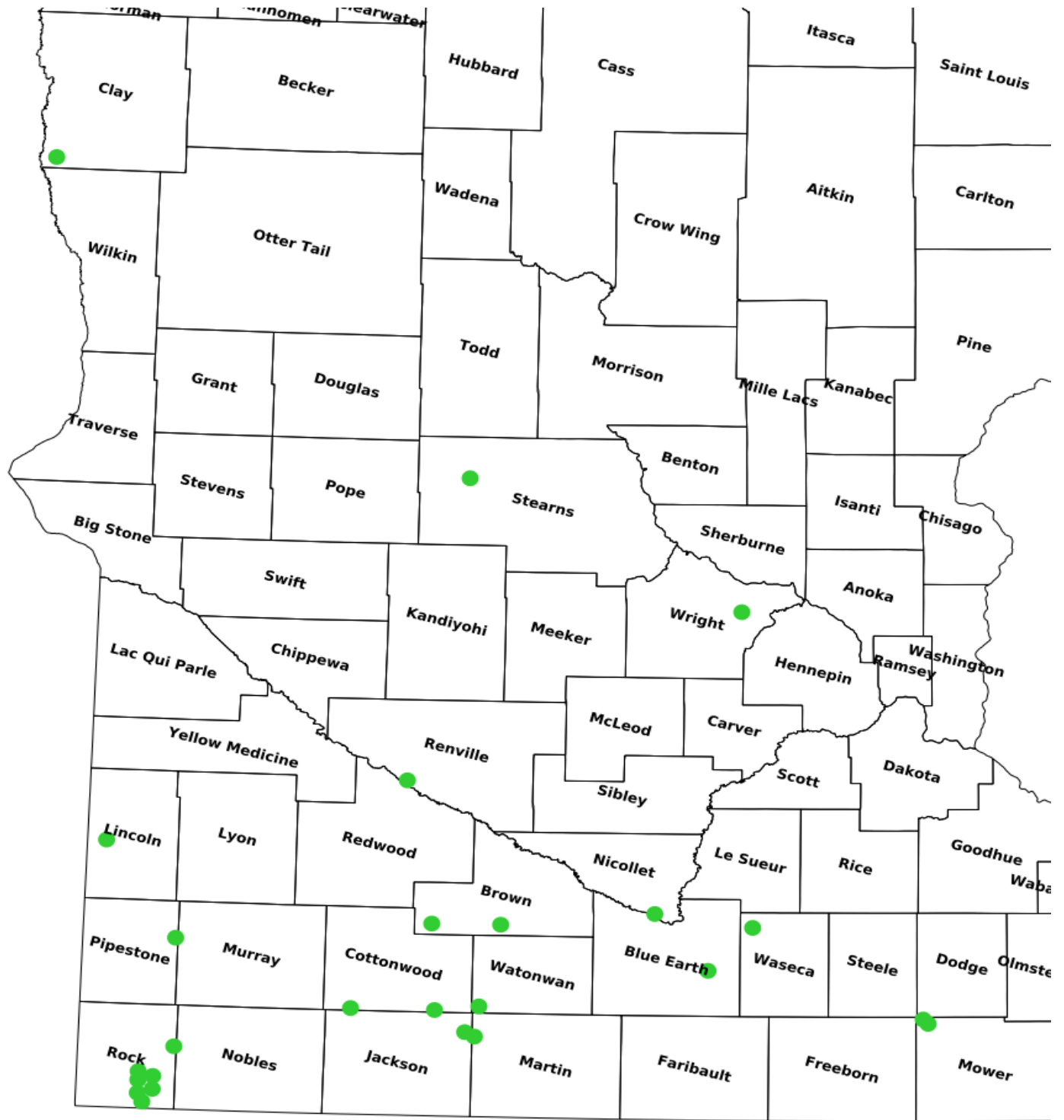
Sign-up Criteria?

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

Easement Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
07-03-20-01- -	Blue Earth	10626212	6	\$32,913	No
08-05-20-01- -	Brown	10835222	52	\$229,499	No
08-07-20-01- -	Brown	10833224	74	\$295,903	No
14-01-20-01- -	Clay	13748222	10	\$19,736	No
17-02-20-01- -	Cottonwood	10538236	12	\$50,196	No
17-07-20-01- -	Cottonwood	10535235	23	\$101,070	No
32-02-21-01- -	Jackson	10434226	69	\$243,905	No
41-01-22-01- -	Lincoln	11146227	122	\$474,708	No
46-06-20-01- -	Martin	10433231	18	\$67,813	No
50-02-20-01- -	Mower	10418205	12	\$28,060	No
50-03-20-01- -	Mower	10418209	3	\$8,429	No
52-01-21-01- -	Nicollet	10827206	17	\$84,841	No
59-02-20-01- -	Pipestone	10744213	12	\$44,904	No
65-13-20-01- -	Renville	11336202	70	\$258,478	No
67-01-20-01- -	Rock	10244229	17	\$109,638	No
67-01-21-01- -	Rock	10245235	9	\$60,634	No
67-02-21-01- -	Rock	10144208	4	\$24,363	No
67-03-21-01- -	Rock	10145214	7	\$46,697	No
67-04-20-01- -	Rock	10145225	20	\$150,480	No
67-05-20-01- -	Rock	10344224	25	\$71,347	No
67-07-20-01- -	Rock	10245223	20	\$130,250	No
73-01-21-01- -	Stearns	12534214	30	\$89,056	No
81-02-20-01- -	Waseca	10824221	21	\$50,080	No
83-02-20-01- -	Watonwan	10533229	11	\$44,568	No
86-02-20-01- -	Wright	12025213	8	\$32,170	No

Parcel Map



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