

FINAL REPORT

2003 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2005

TITLE: Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition and Development

PROJECT MANAGER: Bob Djupstrom

ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

ADDRESS: Division of Ecological Services
Box 25, 500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

WEB SITE ADDRESS: www.dnr.state.mn.us then go to SNA

FUND: Environmental Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: ML 2003, Ch.128., Art. 1, Sec.9, Subd. 5 (d) Acquisition and Development of Scientific and Natural Areas.

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$480,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Funding to acquire scientific and natural areas (SNA) was used to purchase a state significant tract of land with oak forest and tamarack bog plant communities. The site also provides habitat for red-shouldered hawks, a rare species. A total of twenty-nine (29) landowners were contacted concerning protection. Eight (8) agreed to have an appraisal conducted. Three landowners were willing to sell. Only one site was acquired, however, due to funding limitations. LCMR funds were used to acquire 50 acres of land, known as the Avon Hills Forest SNA in Stearns County. An additional 210 acres of land from the same landowner was acquired with RIM, critical habitat license plate and bond funds.

Two parcels appraised during this project maybe acquired in the future contingent on the availability of new funds. One of these parcels is available for sale at the appraised offer. An offer on the second parcel will be made pending funding availability. In addition, a third site in Redwood County, appraised with LCMR funds, was acquired with other funds. Landowner contacts as a result of this LCMR project are resulting in follow-up calls from landowners in the vicinity of projects.

Funding also permitted the development of SNAs using crews, Sentence to Service personnel, & volunteers. A total of over seventy-five development activities were carried out. These included burning 220 acres of prairie at 6 sites, constructing 2 miles of fence, treating woody encroachment on 50 acres at nine sites, putting in 5.5 miles of fire breaks, carrying out prairie improvements at 21 sites including collecting and planting seeds and treating exotic species, sealing one well, restoring woodlands at 3 sites and at 25 sites installing visitor use, wood routed, or boundary signs, gates or carrying out site clean-up.

In summary, funds provided through the LCMR have been successfully used to protect a state significant tract of land as a State Scientific and Natural Areas for native plant communities and rare animals and to improve numerous SNAs by carrying out over seventy-five management projects. In addition, contacts made with landowners are resulting in new requests for appraisals that in turn will result in the future protection of additional lands with state significant examples of plant communities, rare species habitat or unique natural features.

LCMR 2003 Work Program

Date of Report: August 17, 2005

Date of Next Status Report: LCMR Final Work Program Report

Date of Work program Approval: June 25, 2003

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2005

I. PROJECT TITLE: Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition and Development

Project Manager: Bob Djupstrom

Affiliation: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget:

LCMR Appropriation: \$ 480,000

Minus Amount Spent: \$ 480,000

Equal Balance: \$ -0-

Legal Citation: ML 2003, Art.1, Chap. 128, Sec. 9, Subd. 5 (d) Acquisition and Development of Scientific and Natural Areas.

Appropriation Language \$240,000 the first year and \$240,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire and develop lands with natural features of state ecological or geological significance in accordance with the scientific and natural area program long-range plan. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources.

II. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY

Funding to acquire scientific and natural areas (SNA) was used to purchase a state significant tract of land with oak forest and tamarack bog plant communities. The site also provides habitat for red-shouldered hawks, a rare species. A total of twenty-nine (29) landowners were contacted concerning protection. Eight (8) agreed to have an appraisal conducted. Three landowners were willing to sell. Only one site was acquired, however, due to funding limitations. LCMR funds resulted in 50 acres of

land acquired as the Avon Hills Forest SNA in Stearns County. An additional 210 acres of land was acquired with RIM, critical habitat license plate and bond funds.

Two parcels appraised during this project may be acquired in the future contingent on the availability of funds. One of these parcels is available for sale at the appraised offer. An offer on the second parcel will be made pending funding availability. In addition, a third site in Redwood County, appraised with LCMR funds, was acquired with other funding sources. Landowner contacts as a result of this LCMR project are resulting in follow-up calls from landowners in the vicinity of projects.

Funding also permitted the development of SNAs using crews, Sentence to Service personnel, & volunteers. A total of over seventy-five development activities were carried out during the project period. These included burning 220 acres of prairie at 6 sites, constructing 2 miles of fence, treating woody encroachment on 50 acres at nine sites, putting in 5.5 miles of fire breaks, carrying out prairie improvements at 21 sites including collecting and planting seeds and treating exotic species, sealing one well, restoring woodlands at 3 sites and at 25 sites installing visitor use, wood routed, or boundary signs, gates or carrying out site clean-up.

In summary, funds provided through the LCMR have been successfully used to protect a state significant tract of land as a State Scientific and Natural Areas for native plant communities and rare animals and to improve numerous SNAs by carrying out over seventy-five management projects. In addition, contacts made with landowners are resulting in new requests for appraisals that in turn will result in the future protection of additional lands as SNAs.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Acquisition of Significant Habitat

Description: 50 acres of land was acquired at a new site in Stearns County with LCMR funding. Called Avon Hills Forest, the site contains one of the best native forest communities left in the county. The forest is predominately oak and provides habitat for red-shouldered hawks and other species. An additional 210 acres of land at the site was acquired from the same landowner with bonding, RIM and critical habitat license plate funds. The Avon Hills Forest site has over a ¼ mile of frontage on the Lake Wobegon Trail and presents a significant opportunity for visitor use and interpretation. Eight appraisals were completed with LCMR funds during the project. As a result these appraisals, the above parcel and another in Redwood County called Cedar Mountain were acquired. Two other offers to purchase land, one at St. Wendel's Bog and another at Avon Hills, both in Stearns County, are on hold pending future appropriations for acquisition. All other landowners rejected the state's offers based on appraisals. A total of twenty-nine landowners were contacted with the project funds. Though not all landowners contacted were interested in an appraisal or declined the states' offer at this time, it has been our experience that some landowners come back years later to determine if we are still interested in acquiring their land. This provides an opportunity to protect the land before changes

in ownership or changes in land use take place. In addition, neighbors that we may not have contacted, sometimes approach us to determine if we might be interested in their land. Another important benefit from the project is that landowners contacted become aware of the unique significance of their property and in turn often contact us before considering a sale on the open market. One key aspect of our land protection efforts that has worked very well is to target the key tract(s) at any project site as the first contact. If we are not able to acquire the key tract(s), it makes little ecological sense to protect the small and less significant lands around them.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle in land protection is expecting landowners to wait up to a year or more before the state can make them an offer. Landowner expectations and experiences are that they can quickly get an offer and strike a deal with private parties to sell land. They have a difficult time understanding why a state land purchase takes so long since land values and other factors can change in this period of time. There is no simple solution to this dilemma but it does deserve some consideration relative to appraisal standards, state law requirements, shortages of qualified appraisers, legislative expectations, and other factors.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1:

LCMR Budget	\$408,685
Balance	\$ -0-

Completion Date: June 30, 2005.

Result 2: Development of SNA acquired lands through the use of crews, Sentence to Service personnel, & volunteers will take place.

Development of scientific and natural areas is accomplished through the use of labor crews, Sentence to Service personnel, & volunteers. A total of over seventy-five development activities were carried out during the project period. These included burning 220 acres of prairie at 6 sites, constructing 2 miles of fence, treating woody encroachment on 50 acres at nine sites, putting in 5.5 miles of fire breaks, carrying out prairie improvements at 21 sites including collecting and planting seeds and treating exotic species, sealing one well, woodland restoration at 3 sites and installing visitor use, wood routed, or boundary signs, gates and/or carrying out site clean-up, at 25 sites. Sites improved through LCMR funds included Des Moine River & Holthe Prairies, Jackson County; Glynn Prairie, Lyon County; Prairie Coteau, Pipestone County; St. Croix Savanna, Lost Valley Prairie, Grey Cloud Dunes, & Falls Creek, Washington County; Felton Prairie, Clay County; Spring Creek Prairie, Cannon River Turtle Preserve, and River Terrace Prairie, Goodhue County; Wolsfeld Woods and Wood-Rill, Hennepin County; Rock Ridge Prairie, Cottonwood County; Shooting Star Prairie, Wild Indigo Prairie, and Racine Prairie, Mower County; Zumbro Falls Woods and Kellogg Weaver Dunes, Wabasha County; Savage Fen, Scott County; Sedan Brook, Stearns County; Yellow Banks Hills, Blue Devil Valley, & Swedes Forest, Yellow Medicine County; Gneiss Outcrops, Chippewa County; Iron Horse Prairie, Dodge County; Egret Island, Pope County; Two Rivers Aspen

Prairie Parkland, Roseau County; Chamberlain Woods, LeSueur County; Helen Allison, Anoka County; Pin Oak Prairie, Fillmore County; Oronoco Prairie, Olmsted County; Lake Alexander Woods, Morrison County; Prairie Creek Woods, Rice County; and Mississippi River Islands, Wright and Sherburne Counties.

Without LCMR funding, the rare resources on acquired SNA lands would not be adequately protected or managed since LCMR funds have provided the ability to carry out essential management and protection activities over and above that possible with existing funding resources. Additional benefits could be achieved with LCMR funds if the SNA Program had field crews in out state locations. This is something the SNA Program needs to strive for as funding increases in the future.

Summary Budget Information for Result 2:

LCMR Budget	\$71,315
Balance	\$ -0-

Completion Date: June 30, 2005.

V. TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Balance</u>
All Results: Personnel:	38,250	\$ -0-
All Results: Equipment:	-0-	-0-
All Results: Development:	\$23,864	-0-
All Results: Acquisition:	\$408,685	-0-
All Results: Other:	<u>\$ 9,201</u>	<u>-0-</u>
Total	\$480,000	-0-

VI. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE SPENDING:

A. Past Spending:

SNA Acquisition: 2001 LCMR - \$455,000
 Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition and Development: 2000 Bonding - \$500,000
 Volunteer and Sentence to Service Crews, 2001: 6000 hours of labor services

B. Current Spending:

2003 LCMR funding for the Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors project provides \$264,000 for SNA acquisition in the project areas identified; \$500,000 of Bonding funds under the Laws of 2003 (\$300,000 acquisition & \$200,000 development); & RIM Critical Habitat Match Funding will be directed to several SNA sites for enhancement and restoration: \$185,979.

C. Required Match (if applicable)

D. Future Spending: General funds for management purposes will be spent on an annual basis to conduct very limited prescribed burning and other management activities e.g. noxious weeds, trespass.

VII. Project Partners:

A. Partners Receiving LCMR Funds None

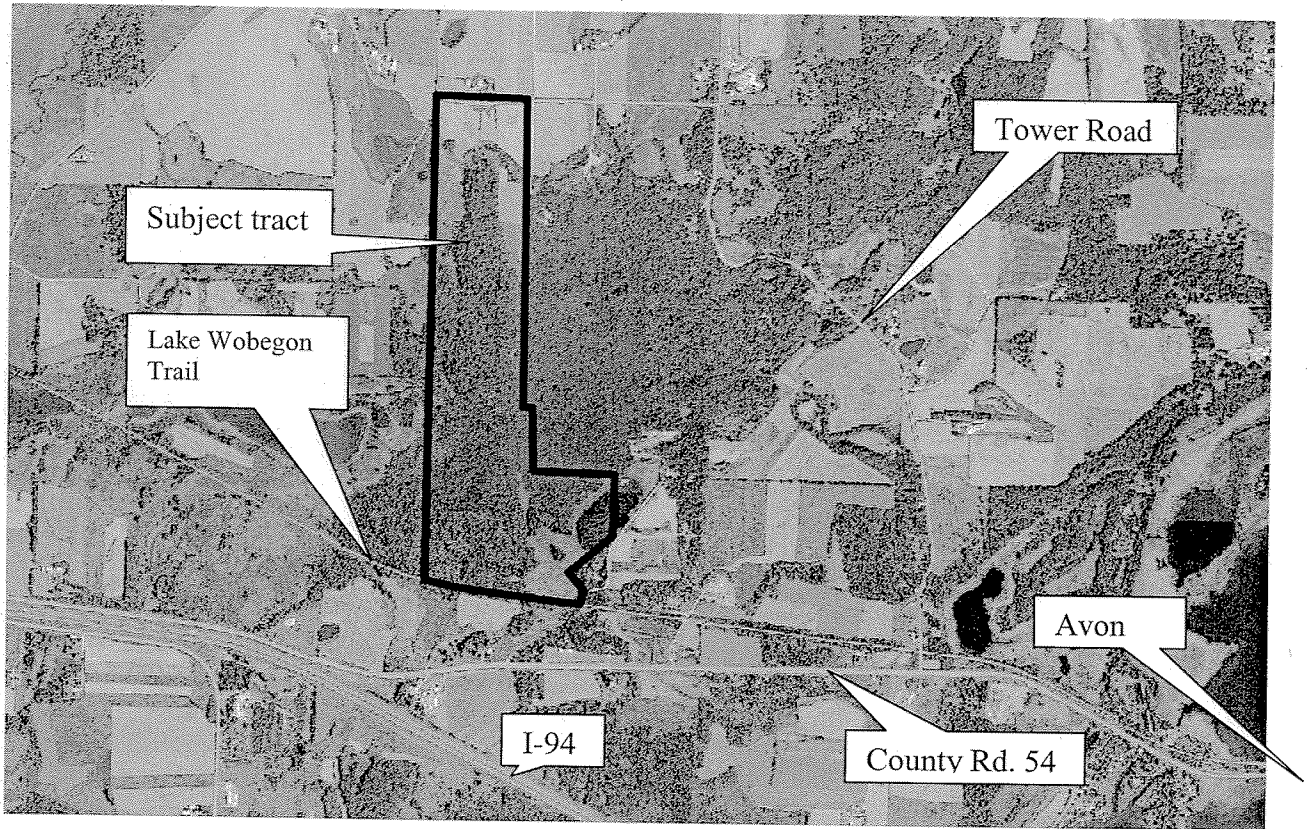
VIII. DISSEMINATION:

Information on SNA sites is posted on the DNR website www.dnr.state.mn.us. New sites will be added to updates of the Guide to Scientific and Natural Areas.

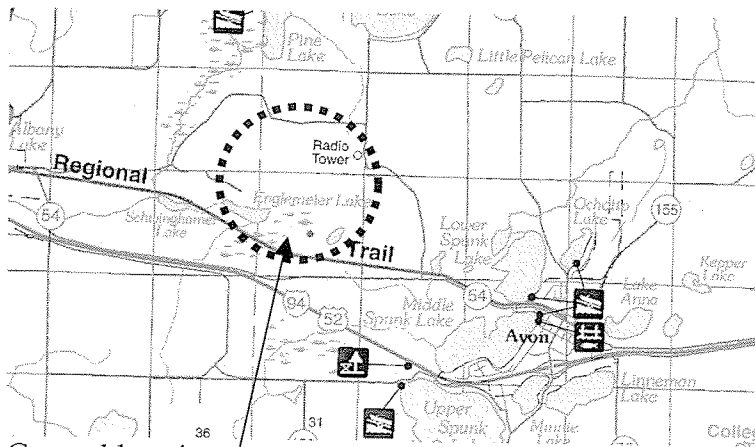
IX. LOCATION: See the attached list of prospective sites for acquisition.

X. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than February 1, 2004; September 1, 2004; February 1, 2005 & June 30, 2005.

AVON HILLS FOREST SCIENTIFIC AND NATURAL AREA
(portions acquired with LCMR Trust Fund Appropriations)



Sections 18 and 19, T125N, R30W
Stearns County



General location

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2003 Projects - Summary and a Budget page for each partner
 Acquisition & Development of Lands as Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA); 5 (d)
 Bob Djupstrom

\$480,000

2003 LCMR Proposal Budget	Result 1 Budget:	Amount Spent	Balance (date)	Result 2 Budget:	Amount Spent	Balance (date)	Result 3 Budget:	Amount Spent	Balance (date)	
	<i>Acquisition</i>	<i>(date)</i>		<i>Development</i>	<i>(date)</i>		<i>Fill in your result title here.</i>	<i>(date)</i>		
BUDGET ITEM										TOTAL FOR BUDGET ITEM
PERSONNEL: Staff Expenses, Wages, salaries & benefits for .95 FTE acquisition/development personnel- Acquisition Specialist - .2FTE; (\$14,000); Labor Crew- .75FTE; (\$54,000); to carry out restoration and enhancement projects on SNAs. Personnel are not a part of the DNR compliment. These personnel are employed only to work on projects. Since they also work on bonding projects, they are in the classified service as mandated by state law.										
Amended PERSONNEL	0			47,537	38,250					47,537
Professional/technical (appraisal costs, abstracting, recording fees, attorney generals, etc)										
Space rental: NOT ALLOWED	X			X			X			X
Other direct operating costs (for what? - be specific)										
Equipment / Tools (what equipment? Give a general description and cost)										
Office equipment & computers (be specific)										
Other Capital equipment (list specific items)										
Land acquisition (how many acres)										
Amended Land Acquisition	400,000									400,000
Land Costs		307,892								
Professional services	80,800	100,793								
Communications, telephone, mail, etc.										
Amended Communications, tel., mail, etc				0						
Other Supplies (list specific categories)										
Travel expenses in Minnesota										
Amended Travel expenses in Minnesota				12,063	9,201					12,063
Construction (for what?)										
Other land improvement (posting, survey, fencing, restoration, etc)				20,400	23,864					20,400
Other										
COLUMN TOTAL	400,000	408,685	0	80,000	71,315					480,000