

## **2005 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2008

**TITLE:** Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors – Phase II  
Protecting Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements - 3.2

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Jane Prohaska, President

**ORGANIZATION:** Minnesota Land Trust

**ADDRESS:** 2356 University Avenue West, Suite 240  
St. Paul, MN 55114

**WEB SITE ADDRESS:** [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org)

**FUND:** Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund

**LEGAL CITATION:** ML 2005, First Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Sec. 11, Subd. 5(b)

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT:** \$230,000

### **OVERALL PROJECT OUTCOME AND RESULTS**

During the second phase of the Metro Corridors project, the Minnesota Land Trust continued to work with landowners throughout the greater metropolitan region to permanently protect lands that are key components of Minnesota's remaining natural areas in the region. Contact was initiated with approximately 30 landowners and 10 perpetual conservation easements were completed. Collectively, these conservation easements protect 526 acres of land and more than 3,910 feet of shoreline. Two easements were purchased, one at a bargain price. The remaining 8 easements were donated.

An additional seven easements protecting 298 acres of land in conservation-oriented residential developments also were completed. The general locations of our completed projects are identified on the attached map.

These conservation easements (not counting the conservation developments) have a known value that exceeds \$1,690,000, with a known donated value of more than \$1,361,000. The cost to the State of Minnesota under this grant to complete these projects was just over \$800 per acre (other State funds came from the Metro Greenways program to purchase one of the easements).

Additionally, the Land Trust prepared baseline property reports for each easement, detailing the condition of the property for future monitoring and enforcement. To fund this required perpetual obligation, the Land Trust dedicated funds to its segregated Stewardship and Enforcement Fund.

The Land Trust's work on this project demonstrates the cost effectiveness of working with conservation easements to protect natural and scenic resources within developed and developing areas, as the cost to the State was well below the cost to purchase land in the Twin Cities region. This grant continued to generate interest among landowners, and therefore, ongoing funding will be important to sustained success. Additionally, the Land Trust's experience with this grant also demonstrated that funds to purchase easements likely will be necessary in the future if land values continue to escalate and work becomes more targeted and selective.

### **PROJECT RESULTS USE AND DISSEMINATION**

The Land Trust continued to gain more experience with conservation easements, easement management, and issues unique to protecting land in a metropolitan area. This experience and information was shared with our partner organizations, other easement holders, local communities, as well as policy makers.

The Land Trust disseminated information about the specific land protection projects completed under this grant through our newsletter, annual report, web site, and press releases.

## LCCMR 2005 Work Program Final Report

**Date of Report:** June 30, 2008  
LCCMR 2005 Work Program Final Report

**I. PROJECT TITLE:** Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors – Phase II  
Protecting Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation  
Easements - 3.2

**Project Manager:** Jane Prohaska  
**Affiliation:** Minnesota Land Trust  
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**Location:** Mapped areas within the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Isanti, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, and Washington.

<b>Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget:</b>	<b>LCMR Appropriation:</b>	\$230,000
	<b>Amount Spent:</b>	\$230,000
	<b>Balance:</b>	\$ 30

**Legal Citation:** ML 2005, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 2, Section 11, Subdivision 5b.

**Appropriation Language:** Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors – Phase II. \$1,765,000 the first year and \$1,765,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the second biennium for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with the Trust for Public Land, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Friends of the Mississippi River, Great River Greening, Minnesota Land Trust, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc., Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Friends of the Minnesota Valley for the purposes of planning, improving, and protecting important natural areas in the metropolitan region, as defined by Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2 and portions of the surrounding counties, through grants, contracted services, conservation easements, and fee acquisition. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Expenditures are limited to the identified project areas as defined in the work program. This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work program. Any land acquired in fee title by the commissioner of natural resources with money

from this appropriation must be designated: (1) as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07; or (2) as provided in Minnesota Statutes, sections 89.018, subdivision 2, paragraph (a); 97A.101; 97A.125; 97C.001; and 97C.011. The commissioner may similarly designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2008, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

## **II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:**

During the second phase of the Metro Corridors project, the Minnesota Land Trust continued to work with landowners throughout the greater metropolitan region to permanently protect lands that are key components of Minnesota's remaining natural areas in the region. Contact was initiated with approximately 30 landowners and 10 perpetual conservation easements were completed. Collectively, these conservation easements protect 526 acres of land and more than 3,910 feet of shoreline. Two easements were purchased, one at a bargain price. The remaining 8 easements were donated.

An additional seven easements protecting 298 acres of land in conservation-oriented residential developments also were completed. The general locations of our completed projects are identified on the attached map.

These conservation easements (not counting the conservation developments) have a known value that exceeds \$1,690,000, with a known donated value of more than \$1,361,000. The cost to the State of Minnesota under this grant to complete these projects was just over \$800 per acre (other State funds came from the Metro Greenways program to purchase one of the easements).

Additionally, the Land Trust prepared baseline property reports for each easement, detailing the condition of the property for future monitoring and enforcement. To fund this required perpetual obligation, the Land Trust dedicated funds to its segregated Stewardship and Enforcement Fund.

The Land Trust's work on this project demonstrates the cost effectiveness of working with conservation easements to protect natural and scenic resources within developed and developing areas, as the cost to the State was well below the cost to purchase land in the Twin Cities region. This grant continued to generate interest among landowners, and therefore, ongoing funding will be important to sustained success. Additionally, the Land Trust's experience with this grant also demonstrated that funds to purchase easements likely will be necessary in the future if land values continue to escalate and work becomes more targeted and selective.

## **IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:**

**Result 1:** Protecting Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements - 3.2

**Description:**

Protect critical habitat in various counties in the focus area by:

- Accepting permanent conservation easements on up to 250 acres of land.
- Dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring, management and enforcement of the easements.

<b>Summary Budget Information for Result 1:</b>	LCMR Budget:	\$230,000
	Spent:	\$230,000
	Balance:	\$ 30

**Completion Date:** June 30, 2008

**Final Report Summary:**

The Land Trust is pleased that we were able to far exceed our project goals by completing 10 conservation easements protecting 526 acres of land and more than 3,900 feet of shoreline.

We believe our results demonstrate that conservation easements continue to be an incredibly cost effective way to protect natural lands in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, as the cost to the State of Minnesota was just over \$800 per acre.

At the end of our 2003 grant we reported that an increasing amount of our work in the metropolitan region was directly related to working with local communities and developers as they looked for ways to combine the need for residential housing with their desire to protect natural resources and preserve community character through conservation developments. Our work with conservation developments continued through the first two years of this 2005 grant, and in addition to the easements reported above, we also completed seven conservation easements that protect 298 acres of land in five residential conservation developments in Washington County. In the conservation development projects all the costs were covered by the developers, but the nearly 300 acres of land protected that resulted from these projects greatly enhances the protection provided by Environmental Trust Fund funding. With the recent decline in the housing market, our work with conservation developments fell off sharply in 2007, and we do not expect to return to the prior level of activity for some time.

Our average parcel size was approximately 52 acres for parcels completed under this grant (not counting parcels within developments). This represents a slight increase in average parcel size from our 2003 grant, which we believe is due to the fact that many of our projects were located in “collar counties” rather than “core counties.” It is important to note, however, that this average size of Metro projects is still half the size of average Minnesota Land Trust projects, meaning that it is more expensive to protect land in the Metro area.

And finally, we continue to encounter a greater number of landowners who cannot

afford to donate the value of the development rights they are willing to give up. This means that while conservation easements remain a cost effective land protection tool, they nevertheless will be more expensive in the future and more funding will be necessary to protect the same amount of land.

All of the projects completed by the Land Trust under this project are discussed in detail below and also are summarized on the attached map.

### **Descriptions and Results by Areas:**

#### **Northwest Area: Sherburne, Isanti and Anoka Counties**

Acres protected: 173

Easements completed: 3

We completed two easements at the Tamarack Big site covering approximately 158 acres of land in Sherburne County not far from the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. The land features a large tamarack bog that provides habitat for species such as the sandhill crane.

We also completed one easement in Anoka County that adding 15 acres of land to an existing 65-acre easement. This project is directly adjacent to the Lamprey Pass Wildlife Management Area and provides an important buffer to the WMA from the increasing surrounding development.

#### **Central Area: Hennepin and Ramsey Counties**

Acres protected: 27

Easements completed: 2

We completed two conservation easements in western Hennepin County, one in the City of Orono and one in the City of Medina. The Tomann Park site is a 16-acre parcel that includes wetlands and open areas. The landowner intends to give the land to the City of Medina for a future city passive nature park.

The Long Lake project protects 11 acres of open space and wetlands that flow directly into Long Lake via Long Lake Creek. The property is located within a corridor that also includes Wood-Rill SNA and Wolsfeld Woods SNA.

#### **East Area: Chisago and Washington Counties**

Acres protected: 79

Easements completed: 1

This project protects 80 acres of high-quality, mixed hardwood forest adjacent to Wild River State Park in Chisago County. This easement was purchased at a bargain price using funds from the DNR's Metro Greenways program. The property also is adjacent to another property protected by a Minnesota Land Trust easement and represents the sixth project completed at the Wild River State Park site.

In addition, we completed seven conservation easements associated with five conservation development projects in Washington County. The developments are located in Baytown Township, Afton, Lake Elmo, Bayport, and Stillwater and together protect a total of 298 acres of open space. For all conservation development projects, the costs associated with completing the project were covered by the developers.

**Southwest Area: Carver, Scott, Sibley, LeSueur, Nicollet Counties**

Acres protected: 67  
Easements completed: 2

We completed two easements with landowners from the same family at the High Island Creek site in Sibley County. Together, these two projects protect 67 acres of land. A deep valley and forested bluffs make these properties very scenic. Additionally, High Island Creek runs along the boundary of one of the properties.

**Southeast Area: Dakota and Goodhue Counties**

Acres protected: 180  
Easements completed: 2

The Red Wing project in Goodhue County adds 100 acres of protected land to an adjacent 2,700-acre property protected previously by the Minnesota Land Trust. The property consists primarily of floodplain forest and emergent marsh native plant communities, which provide habitat for a variety of birds including bald eagles, herons, and egrets.

The Bullard Creek project involved purchasing a conservation easement to protect 80 acres of land along Bullard Creek in Goodhue County. Bullard Creek is a Minnesota DNR-designated trout stream. While a portion of the property is used for agriculture, the land also includes native prairie and forest. The project is located just outside of Red Wing and lies within a scenic bluffland corridor.

**V. TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:**

	<u>Final</u>
<b>All Results: Personnel:</b>	<b>\$ 30,400</b>
<b>All Results: Acquisition:</b>	<b>\$149,100</b>
<b>All Results: Other-Travel:</b>	<b>\$ 1,500</b>
<b>All Results: Other-Easement Stewardship:</b>	<b>\$ 49,000</b>
 <b>TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:</b>	 <b>\$230,000</b>

## **VI. OTHER FUNDS & PARTNERS:**

**A. Project Partners:** See overall proposal and report.

**B. Other Funds being spent during the Project Period:** By working to acquire donated conservation easements, the Minnesota Land Trust has been able to protect lands at a fraction of what it would cost to purchase comparable lands in fee. This funding leverages millions of dollars of value in easements on lands protected through this grant. Additional funds have been spent by the Minnesota Land Trust to cover costs associated with the project not covered by the grant.

**C. Required Match (if applicable):** NA

**D. Past Spending:** In past years, the Minnesota Land Trust has expended substantial financial resources to secure conservation easements in the project areas of this grant. This includes a \$230,000 2003 grant from LCMR for Phase 1 of the Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors project.

The donated conservation easements accepted by the Land Trust during these two grants are worth millions of dollars.

**E. Time:** 3 years, until June 30, 2008.

**VII. DISSEMINATION:** Metro Corridors will periodically distribute information about the program through the widely broadcasted emails to people on the Regional Greenways Collaborative (RGC) database, through the RGC quarterly meetings, and jointly held county meetings. As projects are completed, results will be disseminated by the Minnesota Land Trust in our publications and on our web page ([www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org)). We will work to publicize completed projects in the media, targeting communities in which the lands are located.

**VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:** Periodic work program progress reports were submitted not later than February 1, 2006, August 1, 2006, February 1, 2007, August 1, 2007, and February 1, 2008. A final work program report will be submitted by July 1, 2008.

**IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS:** NA

## Minnesota Land Trust Completed Projects LCCMR Metro Corridors Phase II

**Audubon:** This 38-acre site in Washington County includes two protected parcels that provide open space for the Audubon conservation development in Bayport. The protected land features woodlands, open fields and wetlands in close proximity to the Bayport Wildlife Management Area and the St. Croix Savanna Scientific and Natural Area. The development will consist of 39 single-family homes on 31 acres near the protected land.

**Bullard Creek:** This 80-acre property in Goodhue County is located near the City of Red Wing. Bullard Creek (a DNR designated trout stream) is located on the south side of the property, where it essentially begins its run to the Mississippi River. The northern portion of the property is forest and native prairie.

**Cedar Bluff Homestead:** This project in Washington County protects 72 acres of land adjacent to the Cedar Bluff Homestead residential development in Afton. The preservation of the woodlands and grasslands on the property will help maintain wildlife habitat and plant communities in a developing area.

**Farms of Lake Elmo:** The 47 acres of protected property in this conservation development in Lake Elmo include woodlands, open fields, ponds and wetlands bordered by the Lake Elmo Regional Park Preserve. The Farms of Lake Elmo development will consist of 33 single-family homes on 25 acres adjacent to the protected land.

**High Island Creek:** These two projects in Sibley County protect 67 acres of land. High Island Creek runs along the western border of one of the projects. The deep valley and rolling forested bluffs of the properties make this particular area very scenic. The forests and grassland of the properties provide the only respite in the area for terrestrial wildlife and plants that cannot survive in a landscape dominated by cultivated land.

**Lamprey Pass:** This 15-acre property in Anoka County is adjacent to approximately 65 acres already protected by a conservation easement. The property also is adjacent to Lamprey Pass WMA and helps buffer the wildlife area from surrounding development.

**Miller Farms:** This 89-acre property in Washington County consists of woodlands, open fields and wetlands that provide open space for the adjacent Miller Farms residential development. The protected land also is near the Bayport WMA and in close proximity to the St. Croix Savanna SNA.

**Long Lake:** This 11-acre property in Hennepin County consists primarily of wetlands that flow directly into Long Lake, a 320-acre lake. The property lies within the Lake Minnetonka Area Greenway and is located near the Wolsfeld Woods SNA and the Wood-Rill SNA.

**Red Wing:** This 100-acre project in Goodhue County is adjacent to 2,700 acres of land that have already been protected by a conservation easement held by the Land Trust. The protected land is dominated by floodplain forest and emergent marsh native plant communities. Numerous rare species have been identified in this area. A heron and egret rookery and bald eagle nest are also located on the property.

**Tamarack Bog:** This 158-acre site in Sherburne County near Elk River includes two parcels of protected land located in close proximity to the Sand Dunes State Forest and the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. The protected land is mostly grassland and includes a large tamarack bog.

**Tomann Park:** This 16-acre parcel in Hennepin County near Medina includes a small pond, a cattail marsh and open land. The landowner has planted a wide variety of trees on the property and intends for it to be a future City of Medina park.

**Victory Pass:** This 52-acre site in Washington County includes two parcels that provide open space for the Victory Pass conservation development in Stillwater. The protected property consists of open fields, wetlands, grass meadows and cultivated land. The Victory Pass development will consist of 11 single-family homes located on 28 acres adjacent to the protected land.

**Wild River State Park:** This 79-acre project in Chisago County adjacent to Wild River State Park consists of mixed hardwood forest that lies within a larger block of natural oak forest. Approximately 5,000 trees have been planted on the property over the past 10 years, mostly Norway and White Pine.

# Minnesota Land Trust

## Completed Projects

### LCCMR Metro Corridors Phase II



**Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2005 Metro Corridors Project-Phase 2, Minnesota L**

**Project Title: Protecting Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements-3**

**Project Manager Name: Jane Prohaska**

<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>	<b>Second Amended Budget</b>	<b>Approximate Amount Spent as of 6/30/08</b>
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
Staff expenses, wages, salaries, & benefits	\$30,400.00	\$ 30,400.00
<b>ACQUISITION</b>		
Land acquisition transaction costs		\$ 149,070.00
<b>ACQUISITION - SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 149,100.00</b>	<b>\$ 149,070.00</b>
<b>OTHER</b>		
Easement stewardship	\$49,000.00	\$ 49,000.00
Travel expenses in Minnesota	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
<b>OTHER - SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$50,500.00</b>	<b>\$ 50,500.00</b>
<b>TOTAL LCMR Funding</b>	<b>\$ 230,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 229,970.00</b>