

2007 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2009

TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors – Phase III
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

FUND: Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: Minnesota Laws 2007, Chapter 30, Section 2, Subdivision 4(c)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$134,000

OVERALL PROJECT OUTCOME AND RESULTS

During the third phase of the Metro Corridors project, the Minnesota Land Trust continued to work with landowners throughout the greater metropolitan area to permanently protect lands that are key components of Minnesota's remaining natural areas in the region. Contact was initiated with approximately 39 landowners, and 9 perpetual conservation easements were completed. Collectively, these conservation easements protect 519 acres of land and more than 15,000 feet of shoreline. Two easements were purchased, both at a bargain price. The remaining 7 easements were donated. The general locations of our completed projects are identified on the attached map.

These conservation easements have a known value of \$2,768,500, with a known donated value of \$2,399,500. The cost to the State of Minnesota under this grant to complete these projects was just over \$976 per acre (other State funds came from the Metro Greenways program to purchase two 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 for several completed projects. For these projects, we estimated the anticipated annual expenses of each project and the investment needed in order to generate annual income sufficient to cover these expenses in perpetuity – all in accordance with our internal policies and procedures as approved by LCCMR. We also have provided LCCMR with a letter documenting our commitment to protect the conservation values of these projects in perpetuity and will report to LCCMR annually on the status of the Stewardship and Enforcement Fund and the easements acquired with funds from this grant.

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, our experiences during this phase of the grant continue to indicate that funds to purchase easements will be necessary in the future if work becomes more targeted, selective, and focused on building complexes of protected land.

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

Trust Fund 2007 Work Program Final Report

Date of Report: June 15, 2009

Trust Fund 2007 Work Program Final Report

I. PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors - Phase III
Acquire Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements (3.2)

Project Manager: Jane Prohaska, President and Executive Director
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Location: Within mapped corridors (shown on the attached map) in the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Isanti, LeSueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, Washington and Wright.

Total Trust Fund Project Budget:	Trust Fund Appropriation:	\$	134,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$	134,000
	Equal Balance:	\$	0

Legal Citation: ML 2007, Chapter 30, Section 2, Subd. 4(c)

Appropriation Language: 4 (c) Metro Conservation Corridors- Phase III \$2,500,000 is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with The Trust for Public Land; Friends of the Mississippi River; Great River Greening; Minnesota Land Trust; Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.; Trout Unlimited; and Friends of the Minnesota Valley for the purposes of planning, restoring, 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. Expenditures are limited to the identified project corridor 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. All conservation easements must be perpetual and have a natural resource management plan. 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.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

During the third phase of the Metro Corridors project, the Minnesota Land Trust continued to work with landowners throughout the greater metropolitan area to permanently protect lands that are key components of Minnesota's remaining natural areas in the region. Contact was initiated with approximately 39 landowners, and 9 perpetual conservation easements were completed. Collectively, these conservation easements protect 519 acres of land and more than 15,000 feet of shoreline. Two easements were purchased, both at a bargain price. The remaining 7 easements were donated. The general locations of our completed projects are identified on the attached map.

These conservation easements have a known value of \$2,768,500, with a known donated value of \$2,399,500. The cost to the State of Minnesota under this grant to complete these projects was just over \$976 per acre (other State funds came from the Metro Greenways program to purchase two 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 for several completed projects. For these projects, we estimated the anticipated annual expenses of each project and the investment needed in order to generate annual income sufficient to cover these expenses in perpetuity – all in accordance with our internal policies and procedures as approved by LCCMR. We also have provided LCCMR with a letter documenting our commitment to protect the conservation values of these projects in perpetuity and will report to LCCMR annually on the status of the Stewardship and Enforcement Fund and the easements acquired with funds from this grant.

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, our experiences during this phase of the grant continue to indicate that funds to purchase easements will be necessary in the future if work becomes more targeted, selective, and focused on building complexes of protected land.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: Protect Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements – 3.2

Description:

The Minnesota Land Trust protected critical habitat in several of the focus areas by 1) identifying and contacting interested landowners; 2) negotiating and completing 3-5 permanent conservation easements on up to 125 acres of land; and 3) dedicating funds for the perpetual monitoring, management and enforcement of the easements.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1:	Trust Fund Budget:	\$ 134,000
	Amount Spent:	\$ 134,000
	Balance:	\$ 0

Deliverable

1. Identify and contact landowners
2. Negotiate, draft, and complete 3-5 easements, including completion of baseline documentation
3. Dedicate funds for easement stewardship

Final Completion Date: June 30, 2009

Final Report Summary:

The Land Trust is pleased that we were able to far exceed our project goals by completing 9 conservation easements protecting 519 acres of land and more than 15,000 feet of shoreline. Four of the projects were located in the Northwest Area, four in the Central Area, and one in the East Area. No projects were completed in the Southwest or Southeast areas.

Our average parcel size was approximately 57 acres for parcels completed under this phase of this grant, which tracks similar to our accomplishments under the previous phase. 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 continues to be more expensive to protect land in the Metro area.

As noted in our Phase II Final Report, 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. Under this phase of the grant, two of our projects were bargain purchases, bringing up the cost to the State of Minnesota to just over \$976 per acre (compared to \$800 in the prior phase).

This means that while conservation easements remain an incredibly cost effective land protection tool, it also is increasingly important to have acquisition funding available to protect select and targeted sites.

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: Wright, Sherburne, Isanti and Anoka Counties

Acres protected: 245

Easements completed: 4

Project: Rum River

Description: This 53-acre property is located along the Rum River in Isanti County. The property is relatively flat to gently rolling, with the exception of some steeper slopes near the Rum River. The property primarily contains a mixed hardwood forest, with white oak and maple as the two dominant tree types. This forested area on the property is contiguous with DNR-owned land to the south. There are several wetlands and some natural springs on the property. Additionally, the Marget Lake Wildlife Management Area is located about 1/10 of a mile north of the Hassel property.

The value of this easement is unknown. \$12,000 of LCCMR funds were used to cover stewardship on this project.

Project: Rum River

Description: This 32-acre project is located on the Rum River in Isanti County. The property is primarily forested with oaks, some mixed hardwoods, and a conifer planting. The Rum River flows along the eastern boundary of the property for about 1,500 feet, and there is a large pond on the property. A DNR Stewardship Plan identifies this property as a major link in a riparian buffer strip that borders the Rum River and serves as a wildlife corridor. The Minnesota Land Trust currently holds several easements on the Rum River.

The value of this easement is unknown. \$9,500 of LCCMR funds were used to cover stewardship on this project.

Project: Stanchfield Creek

Description: This project in Isanti County adds 20 acres of land to previously protected parcels and consolidates the easements into one easement covering all 467 acres of land. The 20-acre addition is composed of rolling terrain primarily covered with forest and wetlands. Stanchfield Creek runs through the middle of the property for nearly ¼ mile, and there are some natural springs in the vicinity of the creek. The Minnesota County Biological Survey has identified the property as a site of moderate biodiversity significance due to its large expanse of wetland, including floodplain forest, hardwood swamp, and emergent marsh. The amendment to the easement also prohibits any division of the property and eliminates a building right reserved in one of the original easements.

The value of this easement is unknown. \$9,500 of LCCMR funds were used

to cover stewardship on this project.

Project: Beckman Farm

Description: This 140-acre property in Isanti County consists of restored prairie, upland coniferous forest, wetland, and an unnamed pond. The prairie and forest are key habitats for a variety of species in greatest conservation need, and the wetlands and pond provide wildlife habitat as well as water filtration benefits. The Beckman farm plays a key role in connecting two extensive sites of biodiversity significance in this part of Isanti County, as noted by the Minnesota County Biological Survey. The property is located near several other conservation easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust.

The value of this easement is \$475,000. The Land Trust purchased the easement for \$315,000 using Metro Greenways grant dollars. \$15,000 of LCCMR funds were used to cover stewardship on this project. Additional detail is provided in the attached Summary of Purchased Easements.

Central Area: Hennepin and Ramsey Counties

Acres protected: 134

Easements completed: 4

Project: Gale Woods

Description: This project in Hennepin County consists of a 39-acre peninsula on the south shore of Whale Tail Lake. It lies directly west and across the lake from Gale Woods Park, which was protected by the same landowners in 2000 and is now a unit of the Three Rivers Park District. The protected property is primarily forested with maple-basswood and includes a large wetland area on the tip of the peninsula. The property also has over 6,500 feet of shoreline on Whale Tail Lake.

The donated value of this easement is \$1,500,000.

Project: Henry's Woods

Description: This 39-acre property in the Town of Hassan consists mostly of maple-basswood forest. The parcel has been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as one of the highest quality remnants of the "Big Woods" in the state. The property provides habitat for a variety of animals and plants, including American ginseng, a state species of special concern. The property also features a creek and wetlands scattered throughout the woods. Henry's Woods is an important piece of the Township's park and open space network. A future trail is planned to connect the Henry's Woods property with nearby Elm Creek Park Reserve.

The value of this easement is unknown.

Project: Schendel Lake

Description: This 43-acre property in Hennepin County is a mix of wetlands, grasslands and forest with some small wildlife food plots. The protected land includes 1,368 feet of undeveloped shoreline along an intermittent stream that flows through the property. The wetlands on the property adjacent to Schendel Lake help to maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of the lake.

The value of this easement is unknown. \$8,000 of LCCMR funds were used to cover stewardship on this project.

Project: Rabe Woods

Description: This 13-acre property in Hennepin County is located in a generally rural residential/agricultural setting near the town of Corcoran. This property has been mapped and identified by Hennepin County as part of an important county-wide open space and habitat corridor. The wooded, undeveloped, and natural character of the property provides habitat to a variety of plants and animals common to maple-basswood forests and provides continuity with other forested land to the east.

The donated value of this easement is \$204,500. \$6,000 of LCCMR funds were used to cover stewardship on this project.

East Area: Chisago and Washington Counties

Acres protected: 140

Easements completed: 1

Project: Wild River State Park

Description: This 140-acre property in Chisago County borders Wild River State Park. The protected property features hardwood forested bluffs overlooking the St. Croix River Valley. The high quality forest, seeps, and springs on the protected property provide excellent habitat for resident and migratory wildlife. The property is also a component of the Chisago County Green Corridor, a locally significant natural habitat corridor project area as identified by Chisago County. The property represents the seventh project completed at the Wild River State Park site.

The value of this easement is \$589,000. The Land Trust purchased the easement for \$54,000 using Metro Greenways grant dollars. Additional detail is provided in the attached Summary of Purchased Easements.

V. TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET:

Staff or Contract Services: \$44,589 to cover a portion of the salaries and benefits of staff working on projects funded under this grant, including approximately .50 FTE conservation program staff and .15 FTE conservation, legal and other support staff.

Acquisition, including easements: \$ 30,411 to acquire 9 conservation easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust. This includes transaction costs such as travel, appraisals, surveys, title work, and mapping to acquire donated easements or for easements purchased with funds provided by another partner or through another source.

Stewardship: \$59,000 to be dedicated to the Stewardship and Enforcement Fund. Actual amounts committed for stewardship were calculated on a project-by-project basis depending on the number and nature of specific projects and the availability of other funds. We did not need to use this grant to cover all stewardship costs for completed projects due to landowner and other contributions.

TOTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT BUDGET: \$ 134,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: N/A

VI. OTHER FUNDS & PARTNERS:

A. Project Partners: Metro Conservation Corridor partners (please see overall report for list of project partners) and private landowners, local governments, regional, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and citizen groups.

B. Other Funds Spent during the Project Period: By working to acquire donated conservation easements, the Minnesota Land Trust was able to protect lands at a fraction of what it would cost to purchase comparable lands in fee. This funding leveraged millions of dollars of value in easements on lands protected through this grant. The known donated value of easements completed this phase is \$2,399,500. The DNR Metro Greenways program provided \$372,925 to purchase two easements, both at bargain prices. Additional funds were spent by the Minnesota Land Trust to cover costs associated with the project not covered by the grant.

C. Past Spending: The Minnesota Land Trust has received the following from past Metro Corridors grants: \$ 230,000 in 2003 and \$ 230,000 in 2005.

D. Time: July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2009. This is a continuation of the Minnesota Land Trust's existing Metro Conservation Corridors Partnership project. Components were designed to be overlapping so that activities could continue seamlessly. Some of the projects closed under this phase were initiated under previous phases. Similarly, landowner contacts made under this Phase III will not result in completed projects until a future phase.

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

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Periodic work program progress reports were submitted February 1st and August 1st of each year, starting with February 1, 2008. This is the final work program report.

IX. RESEARCH PROJECTS: N/A

Attachment A: Budget Detail for 2007 Projects

Project Title: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase III: Acquire Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements (3.2)

Project Manager Name: Jane Prohaska

Trust Fund Appropriation: \$ 134,000

	Result 1 Final Adjusted Budget:	Amount Spent as of 6/1/09	Balance as of 6/1/09
BUDGET ITEM			
PERSONNEL: wages and benefits (Includes approximately 0.5 FTE conservation director or land protection staff; 0.05	\$ 44,589	\$ 44,589	\$ -
Land rights acquisition (<i>less than fee</i>)			
Land transaction costs (Costs associated with acquiring donated or purchased conservation easements including mapping, surveys, title work, appraisals, environmental assessments, recording fees, etc.)	\$28,657	\$ 28,657	\$ -
Travel expenses in Minnesota (Mileage and related travel expenses)	\$1,754	\$ 1,754	\$ -
Easement Stewardship (Funds dedicated to perpetually monitoring, managing and enforcing acquired easments.)	\$59,000	\$ 59,000	\$ -
COLUMN TOTAL	\$134,000	\$ 134,000	\$ -

Minnesota Land Trust: Metro Conservation Corridors – 2007 (Phase 3)
 Summary of Purchased Easements

Project	Acres	Funding Type	Funds Use	Funding Amount
Wild River State Park Chisago County	140	ENTF – 2005 Metro Greenways	Purchase price of conservation easement	\$54,000
		Landowner donation	Donation of easement value	\$535,000
		Landowner donation	Stewardship	\$10,000
Beckman Farm Isanti County	140	ENTF - 2007 Metro Greenways	Purchase price of conservation easement	\$315,000
		Landowner donation	Donation of easement value	\$160,000
		ENTF – 2007 Minnesota Land Trust	Stewardship	\$15,000

In addition to the expenses listed above, staff time and professional services expenses covering closing costs, title review, etc. were incurred and covered by the Land Trust’s 2007 Metro Conservation Corridors allocation. The Land Trust does not allocate staff time or professional services expenses to specific conservation projects.

Minnesota Land Trust Completed Projects LCCMR Metro Corridors Phase III

Beckman Farm: This 140-acre property in Isanti County consists of restored prairie, upland coniferous forest, wetland, and an unnamed pond. The prairie and forest are key habitats for a variety of species in greatest conservation need, and the wetlands and pond provide wildlife habitat and water filtration benefits.

Gale Woods: This project in Hennepin County consists of a 39-acre peninsula on the south shore of Whale Tail Lake, encompassing more than 6,500 feet of shoreline along the lake. The property lies directly across the lake from Gale Woods Park.

Henry's Woods: This 39-acre property in the Town of Hassan consists primarily of maple-basswood forest and has been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as a high quality remnant of Big Woods. The property provides habitat for a variety of animals and plants, including American ginseng, a state species of special concern. Henry's Woods also is an important piece of the Township's park and open space network.

Rabe Woods: This 13-acre property in Hennepin County is a component of a larger county-wide open-space and habitat corridor. The property consists of mature maple-basswood forest and a small area of wetland. It also includes approximately 1,016 feet of shoreline along an unnamed creek.

Rum River: This 53-acre property in Isanti County is situated along the Rum River and feature approximately 1,800 feet of river shoreline. The property primarily contains a mixed hardwood forest, with white oak and maple the two dominant tree types. This forested area on the property is contiguous with DNR-owned land to the south. Additionally, there are several wetlands and some natural springs on the property.

Rum River: This 32-acre property in Isanti County is primarily forested with oaks, some mixed hardwoods, and conifers. The Rum River flows along the eastern boundary of the property for approximately 1,500 feet. This project builds upon prior work done by the Minnesota Land Trust at the Rum River site.

Schendel Lake: This 43-acre property in Hennepin County is a mix of wetlands, grasslands, and forest. The property protects 1,368 feet of shoreline along an intermittent stream that flows through the property as well as wetlands adjacent to Schendel Lake that provide important habitat and help maintain the ecological quality of the lake. This property also lies within a corridor that Hennepin County has prioritized for protection.

Stanchfield Creek: This project in Isanti County adds 20 acres of rolling forest and wetlands to two existing easements, protecting in total, 467 acres of land. Stanchfield Creek runs through the middle of the property for nearly ¼ mile, and there are some natural springs in the vicinity of the creek.

Wild River State Park: This 140-acre property in Chisago County features forested bluffs overlooking the St. Croix River Valley. The property's high quality forest, seeps, and springs provide important habitat for resident and migratory wildlife. The property also lies adjacent to Wild River State Park, thereby adding to a larger continuous block of habitat and helping to buffer the park from surrounding development.

Minnesota Land Trust

Completed Projects

LCCMR Metro Corridors Phase III

