

Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Wildlife Management Area Acquisition

2015 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2016

PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Wildlife Management Area Acquisition

PROJECT MANAGER: Patrick Rivers

AFFILIATION: MN Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)

MAILING ADDRESS: 500 Lafayette Road

CITY/STATE/ZIP: St. Paul, MN, 55155

PHONE: (651) 259-5224

E-MAIL: pat.rivers@state.mn.us

WEBSITE: www.mndnr.gov

FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09h

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$400,000

Overall Project Outcomes and Results

The DNR, in partnership with Dakota County, acquired 169.59 acres of high quality habitat along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River on April 27, 2016. The acquisition consists of several disjoint parcels that are inholdings within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Vermillion River Complex. This was a high-priority acquisition for the Department of Natural Resources as the area is classified as an Outstanding Regionally Significant Ecological Area for documented colonial waterbird nesting and red shouldered hawks. The property includes more than one mile of river shoreline, high value wetlands and floodplain forest (red oak- sugar maple- basswood forest; silver maple floodplain forest) important for waterfowl, beaver and mink, whitetail deer and numerous other species including non-game species of special concern. Bald eagles and common snapping turtles are present; lake sturgeon and blue sucker occur in Mississippi River Pool 3 nearby. The acquisition reduced the WMA boundary by approximately one mile and resolves potential for boundary dispute.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

This parcel will soon be designated as part of the statewide WMA system (anticipated in August, 2016). This process involves publishing a designation order in the State Registrar, and a news release announcing this and other recently acquired WMA lands. The news release will mention the use of Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund for the acquisition.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2015 Work Plan Final Report

Date of Report: July 13, 2016

Final Report

Date of Work Plan Approval: June 11, 2015

Project Completion Date: June 30, 2017

I. PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Wildlife Management Area Acquisition

Project Manager: Patrick Rivers

Organization: MN Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR)

Mailing Address: 500 Lafayette Road

City/State/Zip Code: St. Paul, MN, 55155

Telephone Number: (651) 259-5224

Email Address: pat.rivers@state.mn.us

Web Address: www.mndnr.gov

Location: Dakota County

Total ENRTF Project Budget:

ENRTF Appropriation: \$400,000

Amount Spent: \$400,000

Balance: \$0

Legal Citation: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09h

Appropriation Language:

\$400,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for Phase VIII of the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership to acquire in fee at least 82 acres along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River in Dakota County within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards. This appropriation may not be used to purchase habitable residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work plan. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2018, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

II. PROJECT STATEMENT:

The project includes one strategic acquisition of an estimated 82 acres of high quality habitat along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River. The acquisition consists of several disjoint parcels that are inholdings within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Vermillion River Complex. This is a high-priority for the Department of Natural Resources and the landowner is a willing seller. The area is classified as an Outstanding Regionally Significant Ecological Area for documented colonial waterbird nesting and red shouldered hawks. The property includes more than one mile of river shoreline, high value wetlands and floodplain forest (red oak-sugar maple- basswood forest; silver maple floodplain forest) important for waterfowl, beaver and mink, whitetail deer and numerous other species including non-game species of special concern. Bald eagles and common snapping turtles are present; lake sturgeon and blue sucker occur in Mississippi River Pool 3 nearby. The acquisition would also reduce the WMA boundary by approximately one mile and resolve potential for boundary dispute.

The MeCC accelerates protection and restoration of remaining high-quality natural lands in the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area by strategically coordinating and focusing conservation efforts within a connected network of critical lands. The corridor stretches from the area's urban core to its rural perimeter, including portions of 16 counties. Acquiring these parcels in Dakota County addresses the partnership's priorities, which are guided by the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan's recommendations to: protect priority land habitats, protect critical shorelands of streams and lakes, and improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation. Dakota County, a MeCC partner, is in support of this acquisition.

The landowner is willing to sell 82 acres (tracts 1-4 on the map) and may be interested in selling 142 acres (tracts 1-8 on the map), depending on the appraised value. Partner funds are available if the appraised value exceeds LCCMR funding levels.

III. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of January 1, 2016:

On 12/30/2015, we elected to purchase 169.6 acres as an addition Gores WMA. All funds from this appropriation are encumbered (awaiting payment to the landowner) and Dakota County will provide the remaining needed funds (non-LCCMR) for this acquisition. We anticipate closing before the next status update.

Overall Project Outcomes and Results:

The DNR, in partnership with Dakota County, acquired 169.6 acres of high quality habitat along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River on April 27, 2016. The acquisition consists of several disjoint parcels that are inholdings within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Vermillion River Complex. This was a high-priority acquisition for the Department of Natural Resources as the area is classified as an Outstanding Regionally Significant Ecological Area for documented colonial waterbird nesting and red shouldered hawks. The property includes more than one mile of river shoreline, high value wetlands and floodplain forest (red oak-sugar maple- basswood forest; silver maple floodplain forest) important for waterfowl, beaver and mink, whitetail deer and numerous other species including non-game species of special concern. Bald eagles and common snapping turtles are present; lake sturgeon and blue sucker occur in Mississippi River Pool 3 nearby. The acquisition reduced the WMA boundary by approximately one mile and resolves potential for boundary dispute.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1: Acquire in fee 82 acres of land in Dakota County

Description: The Section of Wildlife acquired 169.6 acres of high quality floodplain forest. The State of Minnesota holds the title to this parcel and will designate it as part of the WMA System in late summer 2016.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 400,000
Amount Spent: \$ 400,000
Balance: \$ 0

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Acquisition of 82 acres of high quality habitat.	June 30,2017

Activity Status as of January 1, 2016:

On 12/30/2015, we elected to purchase 169.6 acres as an addition Gores WMA. All funds from this appropriation are encumbered (awaiting payment to the landowner) and Dakota County will provide the remaining needed funds for this acquisition. We anticipate closing before the next status update.

Final Report Summary:

The DNR, in partnership with Dakota County, acquired 169.6 acres of high quality habitat along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River on April 27, 2016.

V. DISSEMINATION:

Description: Lands acquired by the DNR will be designated as WMA. A designation order is published in the State Registry; a news release(s) about new WMA additions will likely take place prior to the first fall after acquiring the land. The DNR website contains maps and recreational opportunity information of state lands

Status as of January 1, 2016:

No dissemination of results has taken place to date.

Final Report Summary:

This parcel will soon be designated as part of the statewide WMA system (anticipated in August, 2016). This process involves publishing a designation order in the State Registrar, and a news release announcing this and other recently acquired WMA lands. The news release will mention the use of Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund for the acquisition.

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. ENRTF Budget Overview:

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Overview Explanation
Fee Title Acquisition:	\$400,000	82 acres; State of MN & managed as a WMA
Professional Services for Acquisition:	\$0	Other funds will be used for these costs
TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:	\$400,000	

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: NA

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000: NA

Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation: 0

Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation: 0

B. Other Funds:

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
Non-state – Dakota County	\$50,000	\$24,000	Landowner payment, if needed
State- \$6.50 surcharge on small game licenses, Game and Fish Funds, Reinvest in Minnesota	\$100,000	\$29,713	Appraisal fee, professional services for acquisition.
TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:	\$150,000	\$53,713	

This proposal does not seek funds to cover professional service fees or an appraisal. Our plan is to appraise the land in two scenarios: tracts 1-4 (82 acres) and tracts 1-8 (142 acres). If the fee title cost of acquisition exceeds \$400,000, Dakota County has pledged \$50,000 and additional state dollars are available to ensure we can protect these parcels.

Below is a table summarizing the costs in addition to the fee title budget for this acquisition.

Category	Amount
Professional Services	\$13,821.75
Survey	\$1,785.00
Appraisal	\$8,991.25
Attorney General Services	\$1,444.80
Abstract, deed tax, recording fees	\$3,670.20
TOTAL	\$29,713.00

VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners:

Al Singer, Dakota County: Mr. Singer has communicated the importance of this acquisition to the Dakota County Board and will provide Dakota County funds, if needed, for this acquisition.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: This acquisition will protect significant habitats, provide new public access from the south, and ease management due to reduced boundaries with private lands.

The WMA system started in 1951, when the state established its “Save the Wetlands” Program to buy wetlands and other habitats from willing sellers in order to preserve them. As a result of 60 years of support by conservationists, hunters and legislators, 1.3 million acres of land in 1,448 units were brought under the control and management of the Division of Fish and Wildlife as WMAs, making it one of the best and largest WMA systems in the country. Acquisition of wildlife lands is focused on protecting critical sites for wildlife and native plants, and providing public hunting and other wildlife-related activities, with primary emphasis on completing existing WMAs.

The long-range goal of the WMA Program, as recommended by the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, is to acquire 700,000 acres of additional WMA lands in the next 50 years to provide sustainable and diverse populations of wildlife and greater opportunities for wildlife-related recreation for future generations.

C. Funding History:

Funding Source and Use of Funds	Funding Timeframe	\$ Amount
2003: \$384,000 ETF + \$1,832,810 in other funding	FY 2004-2006	\$2,216,810
2005: \$290,000 ETF + \$444,050 in other funding	FY 2006-2008	\$734,050
2007: \$172,000 ETF + \$60,250 in other funding	FY 2008-2010	\$232,250

2008: \$557,000 ETF + \$1,342,205 in other funding	FY 2009-2011	\$1,899,205
2009: \$500,000 ETF + \$266,800 in other funding	FY 2010-2012	\$766,800
2011: \$300,000 ETF + \$117,000 in other funding	FY 2012-2014	\$417,000

VIII. FEE TITLE ACQUISITION/CONSERVATION EASEMENT/RESTORATION REQUIREMENTS:

A. Parcel List: see attached.

B. Acquisition/Restoration Information:

Fee Title Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

The DNR’s Section of Wildlife uses a GIS-based scoring system to objectively score potential acquisitions. A score can range from 0 to 100. Example factors considered include: rare & natural features, native plant communities, sites of biodiversity, inclusion in an LCCMR Metro Habitat Corridor, relation to existing state ownership, and recreational potential (i.e., proximity to population centers). The parcel of interest had a score of 74, the second highest score to date. Once scored, each parcel is ranked by the Area Wildlife Manager. Area ranks are then compiled and ranked by the Regional Wildlife Manager. The final ranking is not based solely on the GIS- based score; factors related to management significance, potential to acquire at future date if not acquired today, collaborative partnership opportunities and imminent threat to habitat loss are also considered. Finally, high priority parcels are proposed where they are a good fit with a funding source.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified. Include a link to the plan if one is available.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2006. *Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild and Rare; An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Division of Ecological Services, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwcs/index.html>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2002. *Minnesota’s Wildlife Management Area Acquisition- the Next 50 Years*. Division of Fish and Wildlife, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/strategic-documents/wma-acquisition50year.pdf>

Dakota County, Minnesota, 2009, updated 2013. *Dakota County 2030: Comprehensive Plan*. Dakota County Board of Commissioners. <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Government/Planning/CompPlan/Documents/CompPlanNaturalSystems.pdf>

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

Wildlife managers develop management plans for each WMA. Each plan details habitat characteristics and management needs, public use, anticipated management costs, etc. The proposed acquisition for this project will become part of the Gores WMA. Little is needed in terms of restoration as the habitat is floodplain forest. Management activities may include timber harvest during the winter, and longer term, potential for water level drawdown in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The 2012 Accomplishments/2013 Management Plan is included with this work plan.

All sites funded through this proposal will be state lands and are part of the state outdoor recreation system. Ongoing maintenance will be accomplished through routine management activities accomplished by our

network of DNR offices. Periodic management or restoration will be accomplished by existing staff, MCC crews, temporary project staffing or through vendor contract using traditional habitat project funding such as the Game and Fish Fund, bonding, and future requests to dedicated funding sources.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

County Board approval will be obtained prior to the State of Minnesota purchasing any lands.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

NA

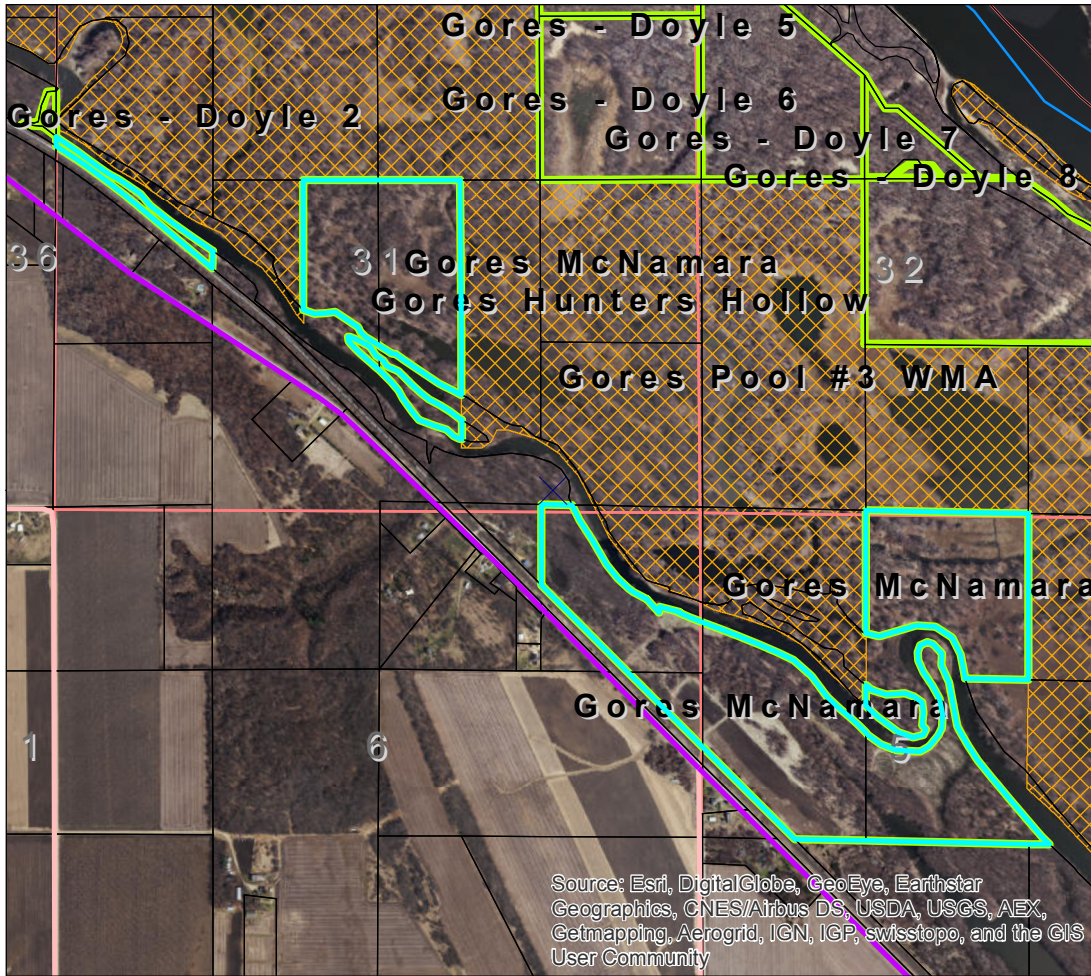
IX. VISUAL COMPONENT or MAP(S): see attached map 2015_DNR_MeCC_8_parcel.pdf.

X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: N/A

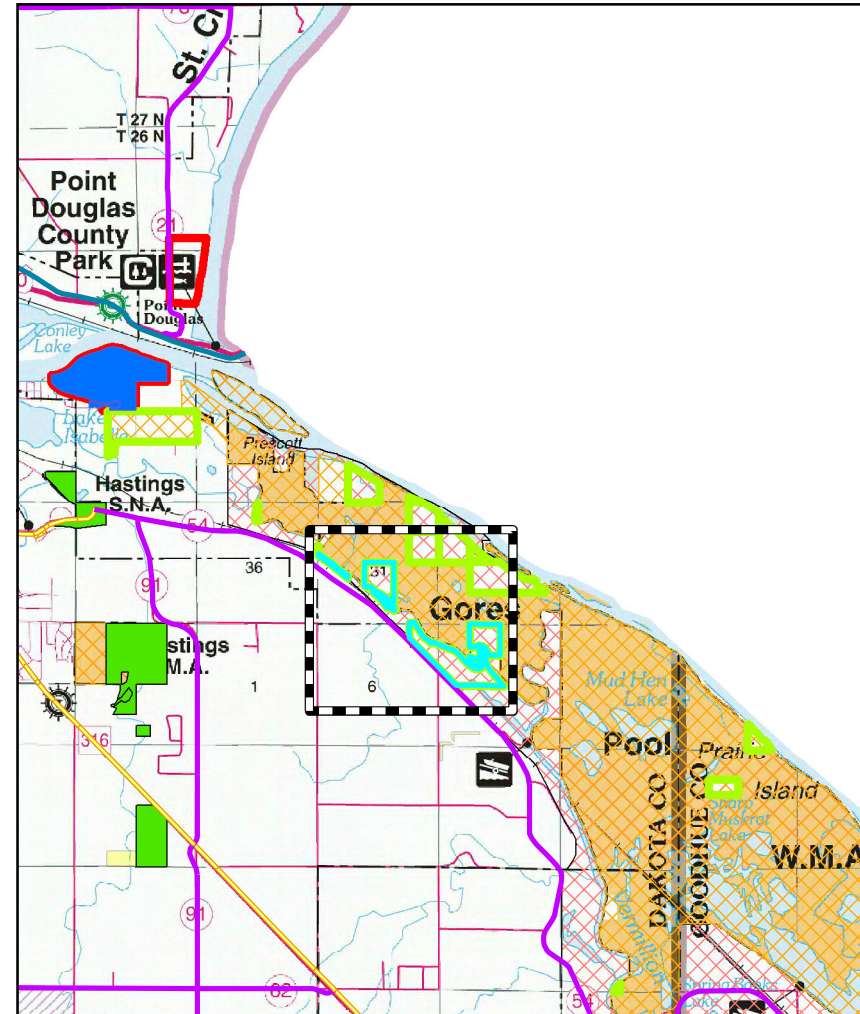
XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted no later than January 1, 2016, July 1 2016, and January 1, 2017. A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2017.








Gores WMA McNamara Tracts











Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

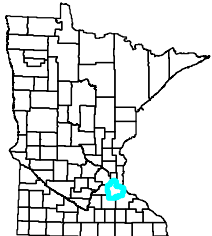


0 1,000 Feet

-  Potential WMA acquisitions
-  Reinvest in Minnesota Active Cons Easements
-  MN Conservation Reserve Program (2007)
-  Potential AMA acquisitions
-  State Wildlife Management Area Boundaries
-  Approved WMA Boundaries - not displayed in close up
-  State Aquatic Management Area Boundaries

-  Minnesota Snowmobile Trails
-  Interstate Trunk Highway
-  U.S. Trunk Highway
-  MN Trunk Highway
-  County Highway
-  Municipal Road
-  Township or Other Road
-  Parcels

0 0.75 1.5 Miles



Note: This map shows the approximate relative location of property boundaries and other features but was not prepared by a professional land surveyor. This map is provided for informational purposes only and may not be sufficient or appropriate for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.

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 Subject property

Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2015 (FY 2016-17) Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Projects											
Project Title: Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII – Wildlife Management Area Acquisition											
Legal Citation: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09h											
Project Manager: Patrick Rivers											
M.L. 2015 (FY 2016-17) ENRTF Appropriation: \$400,000											
Project Length and Completion Date: June 30, 2017											
Date of Update: July 13, 2016											
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Activity 2 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	Activity 3 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM											
<i>Acquire in fee 82 acres of land</i>											
Personnel (Wages and Benefits) <i>(List who is getting paid to do what and what is the % of full-time employment for each position. List out by position or position type—one row per position/position type. For each, provide details in this column on the inputs: i.e. % dollars toward salary, % dollars toward benefits, time period for position/position type, and number of people in the position/position type. Add rows as needed.)</i>											
Position/Position Type 1											
Position/Position Type 2											
Professional/Technical Contracts <i>(List out proposed contracts. Be clear about whom the contract is to be made with and what services will be provided. If a specific contractor is not yet determined, specify the type of contractor sought. List out by contract types/categories—one row per type/category. Add rows as needed)</i>											
Service contracts <i>(List out proposed contracts. Be clear about whom the contract is to be made with and what services will be provided. If a specific contractor is not yet determined, specify the type of contractor sought. List out by contract types/categories—one row per type/category. Add rows as needed)</i>											
Equipment/Tools/Supplies <i>(list out general descriptions of item(s) or item type(s) and their purpose—one row per item/item type. Add rows as needed)</i>											
Capital equipment over \$3,500 <i>(List specific items. Add rows as needed.)</i>											
Fee Title Acquisition											
	400,000	400,000	0							400,000	0
Easement Acquisition											
Professional Services for Acquisition											
Printing											
Travel expenses in Minnesota <i>(Specify types of travel expenses, e.g., mileage, lodging, meals. Per diems are not allowed.)</i>											
Other <i>(Describe the activity and cost - be specific)</i>											
COLUMN TOTAL											
	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$0							\$400,000	\$0

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2015 Parcel List

Project Title: MN DNR Metro Conservation Corridors 8 (MeCC 8) – Ecological Landscapes

Legal Citation: M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09h

Project Manager: Patrick Rivers

Organization: MN Department of Natural Resources

M.L. 2015 ENRTF Appropriation: \$400,000

Project Length and Completion Date: 2 Years, June 30, 2017

Date of Report: July 15, 2016

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		Estimated Cost	Estimated Annual PILT Liabilities	County	Site Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)	Status
		Latitude	Longitude										
1	Gores Pool #3 WMA	44 42' 54N	92 45'58W	\$ 400,000	\$ 1,875	Dakota	Outstanding Regionally Significant Ecological Area. The property includes high value wetlands and floodplain forest important for waterfowl, furbearers, whitetail deer and numerous other species including non-game species of special concern. Vermillion River and associated floodplan	Fee title acquisition	169.6	1	Private	State of MN	Acquired
NOTES: Parcel was acquired on April 27, 2016. Purchase price was the appraised value of \$424,000.													