



# Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection & Restoration Program



## Conserve your wetlands, grasslands, and woods while still owning your land

The Sauk River is a crucial habitat corridor, supports a wide variety of wildlife, supplies numerous fishing and hunting opportunities, and is an important source of drinking water. The river is also a state-designated water trail providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities for the region.

Landowners are being sought to participate in the Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection & Restoration Program. This initiative is a partnership of the Minnesota Land Trust, the Sauk River Watershed District, and Pheasants Forever, and is supported by the Stearns, Douglas, and Todd SWCDs, The Nature Conservancy, DNR, and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

This brochure will help you decide if this program is right for you. Inside is information about the program, conservation easements, project selection criteria, and an application.

### APPLICATION DEADLINE

**August 1, 2020**

If you would like to participate in the Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection & Restoration Program, please complete and return the included application.

### Questions?

Contact Ryan Rothstein at (320) 251-7800 ext. 3 or [Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net)

### Why apply?

- Protect Minnesota's important wildlife habitat, water quality, and beautiful open spaces
- Receive tax incentives or other compensation for a permanent conservation easement on your wetlands and their surrounding natural lands
- Preserve your family's legacy on the land
- Join a community of landowners who steward over 55,000 acres of important Minnesota places
- Receive a free habitat management plan, with the potential for financial and technical land management assistance





## What is a Conservation Easement?

The Minnesota Land Trust is seeking landowners interested in securing a lasting legacy for their lands through conservation easements.

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements through which landowners agree to limit the future use and development of their property to permanently preserve its natural features.

**Lands protected by a conservation easement remain in a landowner's private ownership, with the landowner retaining the right to use and manage the land in line with the terms of the easement. Public access is not required.**

When the land is transferred to a new owner, the easement stays with the land ensuring it is permanently preserved for generations to come.

Each conservation easement completed by the Minnesota Land Trust is individually crafted to reflect the special characteristics of the land and its uses. However, certain restrictions are required to protect the natural habitat and associated species, including:

- Feedlots are not allowed
- Buffers of 150 feet must be established along all wetlands, intermittent and perennial streams, rivers and lakes prior to closing of the easement

## Easement Value and Compensation

The Land Trust uses certified appraisers to ascertain the value of your land without the easement, and then the value of your land with the easement in place. The difference between the two is the easement value. The easement value results from the property rights that have been restricted and the appraised value of those rights.

Upon finalizing a conservation easement with the Land Trust, landowners will receive a one-time payment for the amount indicated in their application, up to 100% of the appraised easement value.

The Minnesota Land Trust is a nonprofit organization and the donation of all or a part of a conservation easement may allow the landowner to claim a tax deduction. Please consult your attorney.



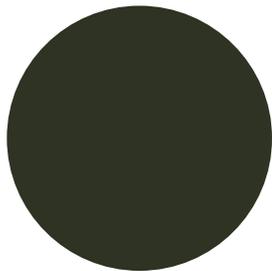
# Requirements to apply

## Property must:

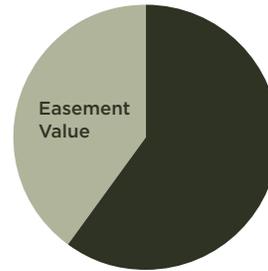
- Be located within the Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection & Restoration Program area (see map)
- Parcels at least 40 acres in size and larger are preferred
- Have wetlands or water bodies within the proposed easement area or contribute to conservation of adjacent wetland habitats
- Contain less than 20% of proposed easement area in cultivation



## Total Property Value



**Property Value Without Easement**  
The fee title and the entire value of the property is held by landowner.



**Property Value With Easement**  
The fee title is owned by the landowner. The conservation easement is held by the Land Trust.

## Selection Process

### Application Review

Applications will be reviewed, ranked, and prioritized as they are received.

Applications received after the deadline may not be reviewed for the current phase of this program, but may be considered later if funding is available.

Projects that are the best fit for the Sauk River Watershed Habitat Protection & Restoration Program will be larger in size and will have high quality natural lands with little development.

Landowners must indicate their desired compensation—payment per acre—for the easement on their application. Please note that the Land Trust cannot pay more than the full appraised value of the easement.

The Land Trust is able to conserve more land and may prioritize your property if you opt to donate some or all of the value of the conservation easement.

### Prioritization and Selection

Easements will be funded in order of assigned priority. The Land Trust will prioritize potential parcels using two sets of criteria:

#### Ecological

- Habitat quality and quantity
- Context relative to other natural and protected lands such as parks, wildlife refuges, etc.

#### Payment per acre

- Landowner’s desired compensation on a per acre basis and willingness to donate some or all of the value of the easement



**MINNESOTA LAND TRUST**  
2356 University Avenue West, Suite 240  
Saint Paul MN 55114

## Conserve your land along or near the Sauk River with the Minnesota Land Trust

Rivers, wetlands, and natural habitat are home to deer, turkeys, and other wildlife that we associate with the outdoor recreation opportunities and beautiful landscapes of Minnesota.

The Minnesota Land Trust is seeking willing private landowners in central Minnesota to protect their wetlands and surrounding natural lands. The Land Trust will purchase permanent conservation easements with funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Properties will be chosen from submitted applications (see enclosed). Their selection will be based on habitat quality, amount of nearby natural lands, and the landowner's desired price per acre.

Applications for round 1 are due **August 1, 2020**. Preference will be given to those submit an application prior to **August 1**.



## Mission

The Minnesota Land Trust protects and restores Minnesota's most vital natural lands in order to provide wildlife habitat, clean water, outdoor experiences, and scenic beauty for generations to come.

## Contact

Ryan Rothstein  
Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist

**Stearns SWCD**  
110 2nd Street, Suite 128  
Waite Park, MN 56387

(320) 251-7800 ext. 3  
[Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net)

Visit us on the web at  
[www.stearnscountyswcd.net](http://www.stearnscountyswcd.net)



**MINNESOTA LAND TRUST**  
SAUK RIVER WATERSHED HABITAT PROTECTION & RESTORATION  
PROGRAM APPLICATION

Funds to protect high quality wildlife habitat across the Sauk River Watershed (SRW) have been made available through grants provided through Minnesota’s Outdoor Heritage Fund. Please contact Nick Bancks at nbancks@mnland.org or (651) 917-6282 with questions.

Completed applications will be prioritized by the Land Trust based on a competitive bid method which considers the ecological value and the amount a landowner would like to receive in compensation. Payment to a landowner for a purchased conservation easement is made upon finalizing a conservation easement with the Minnesota Land Trust.

**To apply:**

Please return to us:

- SRW Protection & Restoration Program Application
- Landowner Questionnaire
- Current property tax statements
- Map or sketch of your property

Please send all materials to:

Ryan Rothstein  
Stearns SWCD  
110 2nd Street S, Suite 128  
Waite Park, MN 56387  
or via email to [Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:Ryan.Rothstein@mn.nacdnet.net)

Application Deadline: August 1, 2020\*

\*If you wish to apply and the deadline has passed, please contact the Land Trust as there may be more funding available.

Owner Name <i>Must match landowner questionnaire</i>	
Date	

**Cost Information**

<p style="text-align: center;">Are you willing to donate all or some of the value of the conservation easement?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>There are limited funds available to support compensation for conservation easements. Donating the value is not a requirement, but we are able to conserve more habitat across the region if landowners are able to donate some or all of the easement value.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes - I am willing and able to donate <input type="checkbox"/> No - I am not willing or able to donate <input type="checkbox"/> Partial - I am willing to consider a partial donation
<p style="text-align: center;">What is your proposed payment per acre?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>If not proposing to donate the full value of the easement, please share your payment per acre bid for compensation. We cannot pay more than the full appraised value of the conservation easement. <b>Typically that will be 20% to 40% of the county-assessed value of the land.</b></i></p>	

Please read each of the following statements.

*About the Program*

- A conservation easement will place permanent restrictions on the land to benefit long-term conservation. The landowner may sell or transfer the property to any person or entity, but these restrictions will travel with the land and permanently encumber the land.
- Once completed, some information pertaining to the conservation easement project will be available to the public since State funds are being used.
- For this application to be eligible, the property must meet the *Requirements to Apply* listed on page 3 of the attached SRW Protection & Restoration Program brochure.

*Payments*

- Payment for a conservation easement is contingent on funding from the sources listed in the program brochure and approval of the conservation easement by the Minnesota Land Trust's Board of Directors.
- The Land Trust cannot compensate landowners for more than the full appraised value of the conservation easement.
- Any payment received may have tax consequences. If the conservation easement or a portion of it is donated, the donation may be considered a charitable contribution for tax purposes.

*Title & Legal Issues*

- Good and marketable title to the land is required and any objectionable title defects must be corrected at the landowner's expense. Any outstanding mortgages or lines of credit will need to be subordinated to the conservation easement.
- Any payment received for a conservation easement may have tax consequences. If some or all of the value of the conservation easement is donated to the Land Trust, the donation may be considered a charitable contribution for tax purposes. Consult your attorney or tax accountant.
- The Land Trust will help guide landowners through the process of the conservation easement project, but it cannot provide any legal or tax advice. Landowners are encouraged to obtain legal advice. The cost of retaining an attorney or other advisors is the landowner's expense.

**I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to each of the above statements and all associated information in the SRW Protection & Restoration Program brochure. I also certify that the information I provided above represents an accurate description of the property, and that all owners of the property are in agreement with this submitted application and bid. Finally, I certify that I have the authority to submit this bid on behalf of the owners of the property being put forward.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send all materials to:**

**Nick Bancks  
Minnesota Land Trust  
2356 University Avenue West, Suite 240  
St. Paul, MN 55114  
or via email to [nbanks@mnland.org](mailto:nbanks@mnland.org)**



**MINNESOTA LAND TRUST  
LANDOWNER QUESTIONNAIRE**

Feel free to attach any maps, tax statements, or other documents that will help us understand your property.

**Background Information**

Person Completing Questionnaire	
Date	

**Property Ownership and Contact Information**

Owner's Name	
Owner's Address	
Owner's Email	
Owner Phone Number(s)	
Additional contact information, if different from above. <i>Please identify relationship with the Owner, if applicable.</i>	

**Property Location**

Property Address		
County		
Acreage	Total Owned	
	To be Protected	
Parcel or Tax ID Numbers		
Nearby Protected Lands <i>Includes federal and state lands, other nearby conservation easements, etc.</i>		

## Land Cover & Description

<p><b>Vegetation and Habitat Types</b>  <i>Please describe the habitat on the property. For example: "80 acres of mixed oak forest, 5 acres cultivated fields, 20 acres of restored prairie."</i></p>	
<p><b>Wildlife</b>  <i>What sorts of animals live or visit your property? Have any unusual or rare species been seen by you or others?</i></p>	
<p><b>Water Features</b>  <i>Are there wetlands? Is there shoreline on a lake, river, or stream? If so, approximately how much?</i></p>	
<p><b>Existing Improvements</b>  <i>Please describe relevant buildings, roads, utilities, and other similar improvements.</i></p>	
<p><b>Current Land Uses</b>  <i>Please describe current land uses such as full-time residential, gardening, grazing, CRP, farming, hunting, forestry, etc. Please describe any use by the general public such as public trails.</i></p>	
<p><b>History</b>  <i>Please provide any known historical uses or relevant history of your property</i></p>	

## Project Goals

<p><b>What are your motivations for working with the Land Trust to protect your land?</b>  <i>E.g., preserve legacy, conservation, financial reasons, other.</i></p>	
<p><b>Future Objectives</b>  <i>Please briefly describe your future objectives for the property, including future management or uses.</i></p>	
<p><b>Timeline Constraints</b>  <i>Are there any potential deadlines or time constraints for completion of this project?</i></p>	