



# STRATEGIC CONSERVATION HELPS STRETCH LIMITED RESOURCES FURTHER

How do we decide what's more important: Wildlife habitat? Clean water? Beautiful views? Wide open spaces?

Unlike a parent asked to choose which child is most beloved, it is possible (and necessary) to develop criteria for prioritizing the lands that should be conserved most urgently.

With approximately 50 million acres of land and 10 million acres of lakes, rivers and streams in our state, we believe we must focus our efforts in places where threat and opportunity intersect. To do this, we use the best available science to identify broad areas of importance with high levels of public benefit.

Within these targeted landscapes, we drill down further to prioritize.

For example, we assess the conservation 'values' of the land: Does it contain shoreline? Are there rare or threatened species? How many acres are available?

Lands adjacent to already protected places such as state parks and Wildlife Management Areas are particularly valued, because we can create larger and more effective conservation complexes.

The need for more effective conservation targeting is clear, but what's the best way to accomplish that?

## GETTING THE BEST BANG FOR THE BUCK

To respond to this need, a new model for project selection was developed with our partners at Saint John's University thanks to critical funding recommended by the forward-thinking Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources.

Saint John's Arboretum Land Manager Tom Kroll worked to develop a project selection process that identifies properties for conservation in the Avon Hills area *with the greatest environmental benefit at the lowest cost.*

He called this model MMAPLE – the Minnesota Multi-faceted Approach to Prioritizing Land Easements.

**Here's how it works:** Within a specific geographic area such as Avon Hills which has natural habitat in need of protection, landowners are invited to offer a sealed application.

The application is scored on its ecological merits reflecting the goals of the program, and those projects with the greatest quality habitat and the lowest desired compensation will rise to the top of the list.

This innovative and proven approach accelerates the pace and scope of land protection that we're able to accomplish because limited funds are stretched much further.

We're currently refining this strategy and rolling it out the Prairie Pothole region, the southern blufflands and beyond.

## THE MODEL IS ROLLED OUT ACROSS THE STATE

After the success we experienced in Avon Hills, the prioritized bidding model was implemented in the Prairie Pothole Region of the western part of our state.

With its lakes and associated wetlands, this area constitutes one of the continent's most important flyways for migratory waterfowl. Today, less than half of Minnesota's wetlands that existed prior to European settlement remain and more continue to be drained.

Working with local Soil and Water Conservation District officials, the Minnesota Land Trust got off to a quick start: to date we've already achieved over two-thirds of the acreage goal. One project is detailed on the back page and another is nearing completion. These projects are funded by members of the Minnesota Land Trust, the McKnight Foundation, and the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

# WITH SMARTER CONSERVATION STRATEGIES SUCH AS PRIORITIZED BIDDING, GREATER PUBLIC BENEFITS FOLLOW



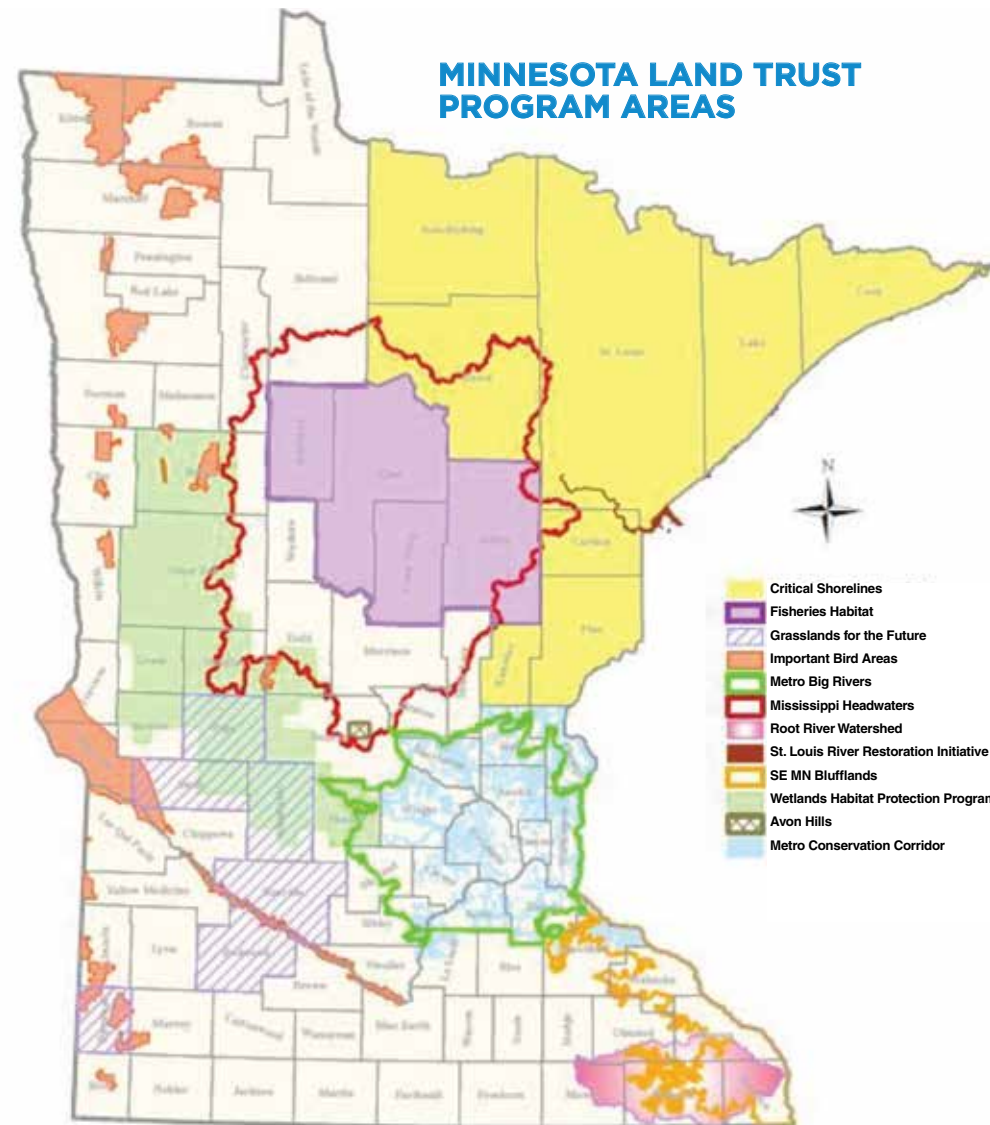
MIGRATING BIRDS AND THREATENED SPECIES SUCH AS BLANDING'S TURTLES AND CERULEAN WARBLERS NEED THE KIND OF FOREST HABITAT THAT'S RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING IN PLACES LIKE AVON HILLS, LOCATED 15 MILES WEST OF ST. CLOUD. MUCH OF THAT HABITAT IS LOCATED ON PRIVATE PROPERTY.

READ MORE ABOUT THIS UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

AVON HILLS CONTAINS HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING RARE PLANTS AND ANIMALS, THAT CREATE THE KIND OF RESILIENCY NEEDED TO SUSTAIN THE LAND THAT GIVES US FOOD, WATER, PLACES TO LIVE AND TO PLAY.

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST'S WORK WITH THE AVON HILLS COMMUNITY HAS BLOSSOMED BECAUSE OF OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH SAINT JOHN'S ARBORETUM AND THE LCCMR. OVER THE YEARS, OVER 1,000 ACRES OF LAND HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONSERVED AND ANOTHER HUNDREDS MORE ARE IN THE WORKS.

THE INNOVATIVE PRIORITIZED BIDDING PROCESS WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BUILDING THIS SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM.



## SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS NOW ON BOARD TOO

Unlike any other part of the state, much the blufflands of Southeast Minnesota were largely untouched by glaciers.

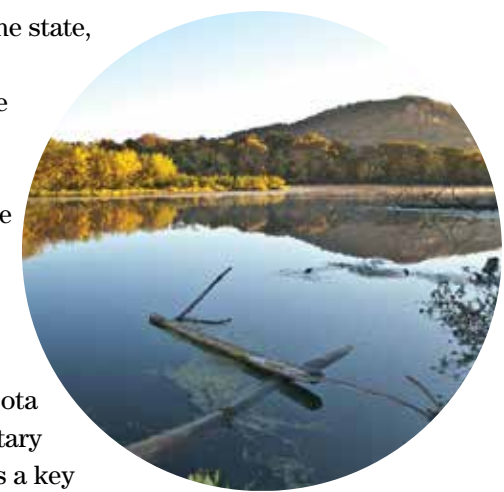
As a result of this unique geology, the Blufflands are home to incredible wildlife diversity.

With 97% of the land privately held, the Minnesota Land Trust's tool of voluntary conservation easements is a key conservation strategy for this region.

The Minnesota Land Trust has already conserved nearly 10,000 acres of land in this part of the state thanks to past funding from the McKnight Foundation and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Now with new funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, we are focusing on acquiring conservation easements on hundreds more acres of high quality prairie, forest and shoreline habitat.

As we go to press, bids have been submitted and evaluation is underway. We look forward to telling you about the newly conserved lands that result.



## AN ENDURING GIFT

“CHERISH THESE NATURAL WONDERS, CHERISH THE NATURAL RESOURCES, CHERISH THE HISTORY AND ROMANCE AS A SACRED HERITAGE, FOR YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.”

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT

One of the most enduring and impactful legacy gifts may very well be the donation of land or other assets to the Minnesota Land Trust.

Because our conservation easements are perpetual, any additions to our legacy funds help ensure the future generations that Teddy Roosevelt wrote about can reap the benefits of our continued stewardship.

Thank you!



## MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF LAND PROTECTION



We're excited to introduce you to Wayne Ostlie, who joined us over the summer after more than 20 years at

The Nature Conservancy and most recently from his position as Director of Conservation Programs at Great River Greening. An alum of Luther College, Wayne also earned an M.A. in Biology (Botany) from the University of Kansas.



## CONTACT US:

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REGISTER TODAY!

# TREASURED PLACES

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 11 - 3PM  
SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - COLLEGEVILLE, MN

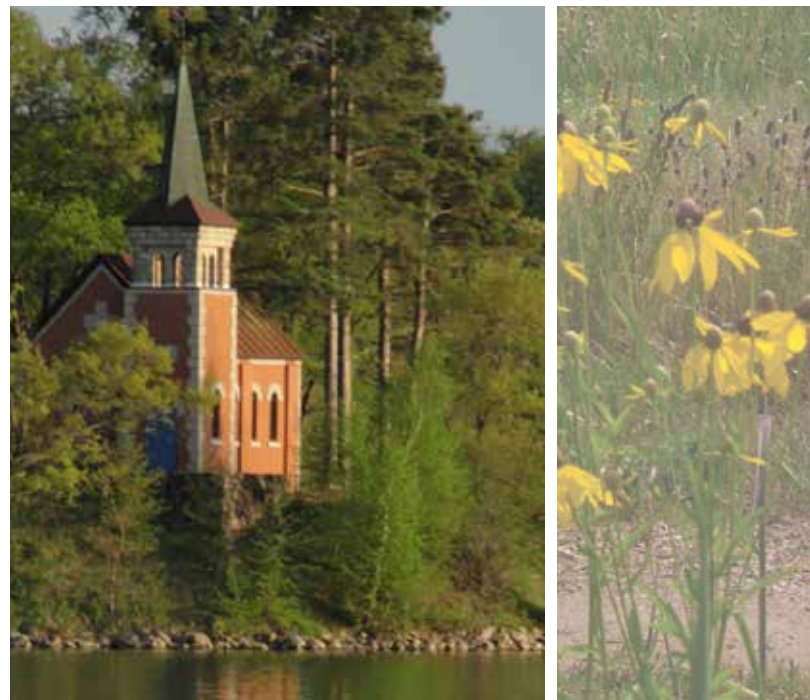
An adventurous celebration of Minnesota land conservation

**TREASURED PLACES** is our annual get-together... a great way to get to know the Land Trust board and staff, meet landowners and volunteers, and just enjoy a wonderful day exploring how nature informs our lives.

This year's event offers a little bit for everyone! After a morning program and delicious lunch, you're invited to spend the afternoon following your muse and exploring one of four optional activities.

With the assistance of Saint John's, we're offering a pottery studio tour, an outdoor 'walking' play, a guided tour of the Arboretum, and a guided viewing of pages from the Saint John's Illuminated Bible.

Please go to [www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org) for more details, and a link to order tickets online. You're also welcome to call 651-647-9590.



**MINNESOTA LAND TRUST**  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## MORE PERMANENT LAND CONSERVATION ACROSS THE STATE

### ONCE A SITE FOR WAR GAMES, NOW A HAVEN FOR HERONS

In an area of rolling glacial hills and pothole lakes, legions of migrating birds once darkened the skies. Today, the oak savannah, hardwood forests and wetlands have largely given way to housing developments and agricultural fields. Now a small corner of Otter Tail and Becker Counties is protected because of landowners **Dick and Gloria Nord**.

Several years ago, the Nord's were surprised to see Bradley Fighting Vehicles in the open field across the road from their property. The National Guard was conducting training exercises near a heron rookery, an activity that would cause nearly all of the 70 nesting pairs to abandon their roosts.

The Nord's purchased that land, and the herons have returned.

Over the years, more land was added. The result? Exceptional habitat for the dozens of bird, mammal, amphibian and reptile species they've personally observed on their 444 acres of land that is now conserved forever.

### DULUTH AREA COLD WATER TROUT STREAM IS SECURE FOR GENERATIONS

This beautiful trout stream, located just northwest of Duluth in St. Louis County, has already been the object of significant restoration by landowners **Carl Haensel and Cynthia Lonneman**. But now, this stretch of the Sucker River and 339 surrounding acres will be permanently conserved.

*Why is this important?*

These hundreds of acres support key habitats for peregrine falcon, Connecticut warbler, boreal owl, Canadian lynx, and moose and is within one of the most significant and visible corridors for migrating songbirds and raptors in the entire Midwest.

It's also one of the most productive trout streams on the north shore because of its cold water and exceptional in-stream habitat which the easement will help ensure long into the future.

Both projects were completed thanks to support of Minnesota Land Trust donors, which made possible additional resources from Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund as recommended by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.



### LANDOWNER OF THE YEAR

### VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

### PARTNER OF THE YEAR



Some 10,000 years ago as glaciers retreated, rocky deposits were left behind interspersed with shallow pothole lakes that beckon waterfowl and migratory birds.

This is the land for which **Kay and Roger Strand's Stoney Ridge Farm** is aptly named and where dozens of wood duck and bluebird houses await feathered tenants.

The Strands are ideal candidates for the Landowner of the Year award. As careful stewards of their land, they have nurtured the habitat that supports the wildlife they cherish.

They are also exceptional ambassadors, having recruited area landowners to commit their own property to perpetual conservation.

And they are truly fine neighbors, generously making their land available for gatherings of area Scouts and the Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

As the Minnesota Land Trust grew from infancy in 1991 to a nationally recognized land trust, **Linda Liestman** has been a part of all of it.

In 1994, Linda saw an opportunity to protect key wildlife habitat near her hometown of Paynesville. She organized the first meeting of the Central Region Chapter and has been volunteering ever since. Linda attends volunteer training every year, visits numerous protected properties and trains new volunteers. She also owns and restores protected land herself.

Linda is the John Peck Volunteer of the Year for her steadfast support of the Land Trust and her work to maintain positive relationships with landowners and her community.

**Saint John's University and Saint John's Abbey** are this year's Partners of the Year.

Under the leadership of **Tom Kroll**, Outdoor University Director and Abbey Arboretum Land Manager, Saint John's has been instrumental in establishing a network of individual landowners within the Avon Hills region who are interested in conserving the special and unique features of the landscape.

This Avon Hills Initiative has successfully generated funding to accelerate land conservation in this rapidly developing area. The visionary guidance of Tom Kroll is also evident in the prioritized bidding process that he developed and was tested in Avon Hills, and now has been rolled out to other areas of the state.



"WE COULD NEVER HAVE LOVED THE EARTH SO WELL IF WE HAD HAD NO CHILDHOOD IN IT."

—GEORGE ELIOT



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST  
MID-YEAR REVIEW | SEPTEMBER 2015

HANSI JOHNSON