2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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MINNESOTA LAND TRUST



WHAT DOES CONSERVATION SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Dear Friends,

One of the questions we constantly ask ourselves at the Minnesota Land Trust is, What does conservation success look like? It's a simple question, but it isn't always simple to answer. And yet, if we can answer that question, planning for how we get there and knowing when we've arrived becomes a much easier undertaking.

With that core question in mind, we embarked on an ambitious visioning process for the next decade. The result is our new "Conservation Agenda 2017-2027: Protecting and Restoring Minnesota's Natural Heritage." A few words best describe this effort: **AMBITIOUS** In 1993, the Minnesota Land Trust completed its first project. Twenty-four years later, we now have completed 530 targeted projects around the state and hold more than 95% of all easements in Minnesota held by nonprofit land trusts. Our Conservation Agenda calls for dramatically increasing the pace, to double the number of acres protected and restored by 2027. We recognize that the time to accelerate our work is <u>now</u>.

STATEWIDE This process reconfirmed that we are the land trust for the entire state of Minnesota. As such, our planning efforts confirmed that we want to preserve and restore the best of the best natural areas throughout the state to benefit our abundant wildlife, clean our water, maintain our scenic beauty and provide places to play outside.

STRATEGIC We also know that we need to be as efficient and effective with our resources as possible to maximize the public benefit of our work. As such, we want our work to result in building large, strategic complexes of habitat that will build Minnesota's natural infrastructure of tomorrow.

COOPERATIVE Our land protection, restoration and engagement tools are only part of the solution to a better Minnesota. As such, we recognize that partnerships are the key to harnessing the talents and resources of all of us to preserve our lakes, forests, prairies and wetlands.

So, what does success look like for the Minnesota Land Trust in 2027? Our vision is to have completed more than 1,000 permanent land protection and restoration projects on the ground, protecting more than 100,000 acres of our best natural areas and more than 2,000,000 feet of our most fragile shorelines. This will help ensure that some of our iconic species such as loons can still return to their summer homes for years to come and that other species, like the Lake Superior sturgeon, can once again thrive after being wiped out more than a century ago. It also will help us achieve our dream that every Minnesotan should have the opportunity to create meaningful and lasting connections with our great outdoors.

To do this, we will need all hands on deck in our Land Trust family. As always, thanks for all you did for us in this past year. As you see in the pages here, we've been busy. And as you see above, we hope to be busier yet. We can't do it without our landowners, donors, volunteers and partners. In short, we can't do it without you.

To paraphrase Daniel Burnham as he was helping to rebuild Chicago in the 1800s: Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir our souls.

I think the same should be said for our collective work to preserve and restore the natural wonders of Minnesota.

All the best,

Kris Larson, Executive Director



We do this work for all Minnesotans

W ith this Annual Report, we are pleased to celebrate with you what has been accomplished in the past year. We're also excited to share our goals for the next 10 years in our Conservation Agenda. This road map for our work through 2027 is ambitious. And we can't do it without you.

But here's what you also need to know: We are doing this for you.

We know that Minnesotans treasure our state's inherent beauty and diverse landscape. It supports a wide variety of plants and animals, and it also supports our way of life. We fish, swim and boat in our thousands of lakes and rivers. We hunt, hike, bird watch and camp in our wildlife areas and parks. And we want to make sure future generations can do the same.

OUR GOALS

On the map that follows, you can see the conservation program areas in the state that we've targeted and what we plan to accomplish in each one over the next decade.

Our goals are to **protect** another 50,000 acres of Minnesota's most vital lands forever and **restore** another 3,000 acres. We also will develop programs in three communities—modeled on our successful Restoration and Engagement projects in Duluth (see page 10)— designed to **engage** more people in outdoor activities.

PROJECTS COMPLETED

Starting on page 6, you'll find details on each of the projects we've undertaken in the past year, with your support and that of landowners and other partners. These are some of the critical benefits this year's projects provide to Minnesotans:

Abundant wildlife Habitat restored and protected by these projects helps ensure that the wildlife Minnesota is known for—creatures like our moose, loons, fish and wolves—can continue to thrive.

Clean water Permanent protections provided to miles of undeveloped shorelines support the natural processes that keep water clean and reduce the potential devastating impacts of storms.

Scenic beauty The project photos you see on these pages speak volumes. The inherent beauty in this state is one of the reasons the quality of life here is one of the best in the country.

Places to play outside Hunters, anglers, hikers, bikers—even climbers—all have more access to the great outdoors thanks to our work.

As it's often said, the devil's in the details. The Minnesota Land Trust takes that to heart and works day in and day out to make sure we get it right for all Minnesotans. n the 10-Year Conservation Agenda, the Minnesota Land Trust has targeted its work throughout the state in 11 key conservation program areas. These areas were chosen based on state plans, ecological data and the input from local partners, Land Trust staff and the Board of Directors. As the state-wide land trust for Minnesota, we provide land protection throughout the state;

however, our work will be concentrated in strategic areas where we can have the greatest impact, taking into consideration adjacent land that is already protected and thereby creating larger complexes of protected and restored natural habitats.

The conservation program areas shown on this map were chosen because of their unique physical factors and important animal and plant life. They represent the best of the best in Minnesota—areas of greatest need and greatest opportunity for having an impact.

By 2027, we will have completed 1,000 projects that protect Minnesota's abundant wildlife, clean water, scenic beauty and places to play.

"OUR YEARS ON EARTH ARE LIMITED.

THIS IS FOR PEOPLE WHO COME

AFTER US."

LANDOWNER DAN ROGERS



HERITAGE LAKES Mississippi Headwaters Project Goals: 113

Protect water quality and fish habitat to maintain our "Up North" lake culture while we still can.



MIGRATORY FLYWAYS Agassiz Beach Ridges,

Alexandria Moraine and Mississippi Corridor Project Goals: 162

Develop prairie complexes in Audubon Important Bird Areas with a diversity of native prairie, pothole lakes and woodlands.



VANISHING PRAIRIES Minnesota River and

Project Goals: 62 Protect and restore land and water quality for pheasants, migratory birds and overall water quality.

[Other outstanding habitat complexes: Project Goals: 76]





BOREAL FORESTS Border Lakes Project Goals: 52

Protect areas that are adjacent to public lands such as the BWCA, benefiting iconic wildlife, outdoor experiences and the tourism economy.

Grand Marais



MAJESTIC SHORES Lake Superior Project Goals: 93

Protect the natural beauty of our North Shore, and improve outdoor access from Duluth to Grand Marais, including the Superior Hiking Trail.



RIVERS TO EXPLORE Rum River/St. Croix

Project Goals: 120 Protect prairie, oak woodlands, shoreline; preserve land along wild and scenic river stretches, and Audubon Important Bird Areas.

NATURE NEARBY Metro Area Project Goals: 226

Protect and restore water quality, remaining wildlife habitat and places to play for the Metro's 3 million residents.





RARE AND WONDROUS Southeast Blufflands Project Goals: 96

Protect and restore this scenic area that holds the state's greatest biodiversity and the least conservation attention.



"IT WAS **EASY TO SET THIS UP** IN MY WILL," SAYS GERALD, "AND I'M HAPPY TO KNOW **I CAN HAVE AN IMPACT."**

PLANNED GIVING: A WILL PROVIDES A WAY

When Gerald Morsello was just a youngster, he treasured the woods across the street from his home in suburban Philadelphia. He spent a lot of time exploring those woods and, even as a child, realized they helped him discover something about himself that would be important his entire life: Being in nature was critical to his happiness and well-being.

Today, at 79 years young, Gerald, a retired city bus driver, can look back and see how that need to connect with nature has influenced his life. It includes moving to Eugene, Oregon, years ago and, to this day, refusing to own a car. Instead, he bikes or takes a bus for transportation.

That love of the outdoors also led Gerald to include the Minnesota Land Trust as a beneficiary in his will. After living in the Midwest, he came to appreciate its beauty and wanted to do something to protect it for others.

"The idea of preserving land and keeping it from being developed has always appealed to me a great deal," says Gerald. "Oregon has lots of publicly owned land, but Minnesota does not, so I wanted to do something about that.'

If you're interested in including a gift to the Minnesota Land Trust in your estate planning, please email Beth Westerback at bwesterback@mnland.org or call her at 651-917-6297.



Land protection projects completed this year

Prairies, forests, wetlands, meadows, rivers, streams, lakes—our work this past year provided permanent protection for nearly 2,600 acres of Minnesota's wide-ranging landscape—that's a 30% increase over last year! We are very grateful to members of the Minnesota Land Trust who provide essential financial support, to the landowners who have so generously left a lasting legacy, to the Outdoor Heritage Fund for providing funding, and to our many partners who made these projects possible.

ALEXANDRIA MORAINE AND MISSISSIPPI CORRIDOR NORTH



COOKS LAKE, OTTER TAIL COUNTY

Two properties totaling 199 acres join adjacent easements to create a 643-acre conservation complex that is permanently protected. In addition, these properties are directly adjacent to a 480-acre Minnesota Department of Natural Resources forest, expanding the size of this complex to a remarkable 1,123 acres. An old-growth maple-basswood forest located on steep hillsides of glacial moraine, sedge meadows and a sphagnum rich fen are protected. The property is designated as a site of high biodiversity significance, and this varied tapestry of habitat provides a home for American woodcock, bald eagle, barred and great-horned owls, fisher and mink.



GEORGE LAKE, STEARNS COUNTY

Two properties located along the Mississippi River flyway protect more than 1/2 mile of George Lake shoreline, wetlands, grasslands and forests. These habitats are home to a variety of wildlife, especially migratory songbirds and waterfowl, including trumpeter swans. The undeveloped and relatively natural shoreline along the lake and the wetlands on the property help to maintain the water quality. The easements also ensure that one of the last remaining shadow

forests in the area will stay intact. (A shadow forest is formed when a lake has historically protected the habitat on the eastern side of the lake from the wild prairie fires ensuing from the west.)



LITTLE PINE LAKE, TODD COUNTY

Running through the heart of the Mississippi River flyway and central Minnesota, this property contains four different native plant communities, including high quality wet forests and meadow systems. More than 6,700 feet of shoreline along perennial and intermittent streams, natural springs, wetlands and grasslands are protected. This diverse landscape is home to a variety of plants, fish and animals, especially migratory songbirds and waterfowl. Numerous natural springs dot the hillsides, providing fresh water to the streams and wetlands, which help keep the water clean in nearby Little Pine Lake.



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ISLAND LAKE, CROW WING COUNTY

A family's dream to protect their property near Emily became a reality with two conservation easements. Their 500-acre complex includes nearly a square mile of open lands, wetlands, forest, one small lake in its entirety and nearly five miles of shoreline along Island Lake, Mud Lake and a creek that connects the two lakes. It provides habitat to migratory and nesting birds, and, because of its large scale, it harbors a host of wildlife, such as black bears. In addition, the undeveloped shore-line provides important buffers that help maintain water quality and fish habitat.

"THIS CONSERVATION EASEMENT IS **A DREAM COME TRUE** FOR MY PARENTS." LANDOWNER DRAKE FLEMMER

MISSISSIPPI HEADWATERS





LEECH LAKE, CASS COUNTY

A portion of Minnesota Island in Leech Lake's Steamboat Bay that is now protected has some unique characteristics, including sedge meadow (above), a slow-growing spruce-tamarack bog and alder-willow shrub swamp wetland communities. It's surrounded by extensive stands of wild rice, which support a diverse population of waterfowl in spring and fall. The easement protects about 43 acres of wetlands and fish habitat, more than a mile of shoreline and small patches of forest.

WHITEFISH LAKE, CROW WING COUNTY

Located about three miles northwest of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, this easement includes about 215 acres, with more than 2.5 miles of shoreline along Whitefish and Kutil Lakes, and additional ponds and streams. The property includes an old growth hardwood forest that's more than 120 years old. Turkey tail fungus (left), seen only in older forests, grows here. The project also protects wetland communities, and it's within the Mille Lacs Important Bird Area. Trumpeter swan, bald eagle, least flycatcher, eastern wood pewee and ovenbird have all been identified on this property.

WASHBURN LAKE, CASS COUNTY

After years of buying property around them to unify what had been fragmented into small, private parcels, a family honored their commitment to preserve the up-north beauty of the area with a conservation easement. Located northwest of Outing, this property includes 236 acres and 3 miles of shoreline on Washburn Lake, Lake George and a connecting brook. Forest, wetlands and shoreline provide diverse habitat for plant communities, aquatic life and wildlife, including swans, ducks and loons. It is one of the larger projects to date in our Tullibee Lake partnership.





SOUTHEAST BLUFFLANDS

This region has the greatest biodiversity in Minnesota. But because most of the land is privately held, it is also one of the most threatened by development and loss of wildlife habitat. Currently, more than 150 species of plants and wildlife are considered in greatest conservation need in the region. Because of this, the Land Trust has made it a top priority in its most recent Conservation Agenda.

In the past year, four projects were completed:

- Root River, Fillmore County
- East Indian Creek, Wabasha County
- Crooked Creek, Houston County
- Wiscoy Valley, Winona County

Because three of them are adjacent to public areas—including the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest and the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area—these easements not only protect the property on which they are located, they stitch together larger landscapes of protected lands.

Forests, wetlands, creeks, rivers and prairies in the area provide critical habitat for animals at risk, including the timber rattlesnake and blue-winged warbler. The protections also ensure clean water for streams that support trout.

Restoration efforts on some of the properties have resulted in the return of the ruffed grouse and golden eagle along with native plant communities. Goat prairies—south-facing bluffs with unique dry conditions—have decreased in the area but are now being restored. In addition, land that once was farmed is being restored to reconnect riparian and bluff forests. This will provide crucial interior forest conditions for threatened animal species like the redshouldered hawk.





ST. CROIX RIVER, WASHINGTON COUNTY

This 87-acre property in Stillwater Township includes 74 acres of mixed hardwood forest and 13 acres of agricultural lands. The area is within the St. Croix Bluffs Important Bird Area, which the Audubon Society has designated of global significance due to its importance as a crucial migratory flyway for swans, geese, ducks, herons, eagles, warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers and sparrows. The forest provides key habitat for species like the four-toed salamander and the rose-breasted grosbeak.





TWIN CITIES METRO



MEDVECKY WOODS, ISANTI COUNTY

Located 35 miles north of the Twin Cities, this easement is in a region that has outstanding biodiversity, including rare native plant communities. It protects 80 acres, including wetlands that are home to tamaracks and several species of sphagnum mosses; a hardwood forest, including red oak; and grasslands that include big bluestem. It also protects more than 1,800 feet of shoreline along Cedar Creek, an important warm water fishery for the Rum River. It is one of the first projects in what will be a much larger conservation complex with some of the greatest biodiversity in the region.

OLD MILL STREAM, WASHINGTON COUNTY

Surrounded on three sides by William O'Brien State Park, this 44-acre conservation easement protects wetlands, prairie and forest, including more than 1 mile of shoreline along Old Mill Stream, a statedesignated trout stream with native brook trout. The stream provides important aquatic habitat, the wetlands help keep the St. Croix River clean and the forest's canopy provides habitat for migratory songbirds and nesting raptors like the great horned owl. The land also provides scenic views for state park visitors.



PICKEREL LAKE, SHERBURNE COUNTY

Located on the I-94 corridor between the Twin Cities and St. Cloud, this 42-acre property includes a hardwood forest, grassland, open water, wetlands, woodlands and nearly a mile of undeveloped shoreline along Pickerel Lake and Fish Lake. The conservation easement helps keep water on the land and reduces pollution for both lakes. And it ensures quality habitat for species such as the red-shouldered hawk, longeared bat and least weasel.

LAKE SUPERIOR

LAKE SUPERIOR, LAKE COUNTY

Close to a half mile of fragile bedrock shoreline that's visible from the Lake Superior Water Trail and the North Shore Scenic Railroad have been protected in this 65-acre project. It preserves the habitat of familiar species, such as lake sturgeon and Canada lynx, and the cold, damp, arctic-like conditions that support rare plants like the Hudson Bay eyebright wildflower. Lichen on shoreline rocks a sign of healthy conditions—is flourishing. The owners are restoring forest habitat by planting cedar, white pine, white spruce and native grass.

Restoration and engagement projects

wo recent projects in Duluth have made it possible for residents to fish, bike, hike and climb within the city limits. These efforts were possible thanks to partnerships, funding and support from numerous entities, including the City of Duluth, Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and the Minnesota DNR.

CHAMBERS GROVE

Extensive improvements to Chambers Grove, Duluth's western-most park, were completed in 2016, as part of a larger project to restore the 12,000-acre St. Louis River Estuary as it runs between Duluth and Superior, Wisconsin. A 1,000-foot steel retaining wall at Chambers Grove that had been installed years ago had the unintended consequence of eroding the shoreline, preventing boat access to the river and destroying important fish spawning habitat.

The Minnesota Land Trust, Minnesota DNR and City of Duluth recognized the opportunity to replace this hardened shoreline with walleye and sturgeon spawning beds by removing the wall, redirecting the current and establishing the gravel and rock bottoms necessary for reproduction in the St. Louis River. The project also improved recreational access to the river, making the investment pay off in multiple ways for the public. Project funding was provided from the Outdoor Heritage Fund.



QUARRY PARK

For years, an abandoned quarry in west Duluth was the unofficial spot in the city for ice climbing due to the natural water seeps that freeze in the winter. In 2015, the Minnesota Land Trust identified the quarry as an opportunity to transform the space from an industrial-age relic (and an eyesore) into a world-class outdoor recreation venue. Three barriers stood in the way: 1) funding; 2) lack of an organized climbing user group; and 3) the fact that the quarry was partially owned by a private party and not open to the public.

To overcome these obstacles, the quarry was able to get funding from the City's new tourism tax, which the Land Trust helped pass. Second, the Land Trust helped form the Duluth Climbers Coalition to advocate for outdoor spaces within the community. Finally, the Land Trust assisted the City in acquiring two key parcels that comprised the core climbing area, creating the first new park in the City in more than four decades. Local volunteers are building hiking trails there, and the climbers are hosting events to promote the park.



Financial summary

MINNESOTA LAND TRUST



The Minnesota Land Trust is committed to strong fiscal health and socially responsible investments. The financial summary that follows is based on a complete financial audit, which was conducted by Redpath and Company, Ltd. Their full report is available online at www.mnland.org or by contacting the Land Trust at 651-647-9590.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

Assets	2017	2016
Cash, Pledges & Investments	\$5,545,966	\$4,725,177
Net Furniture & Equipment	\$20,906	\$5,149
Land Held for Resale/Conservation	\$310,659	\$310,659
Total Assets	\$5,877,531	\$5,040,985
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Accrued Payables	\$139,089	\$119,890
Total Net Assets	\$5,738,442	\$4,921,095
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$5,877,531	\$5,040,985



EXPENSE ALLOCATION

Program	\$4,060,681
Fundraising	\$283,489
Management	\$246,637
Total Expenses	\$4,590,807

88%

FUNDRAISING & REVENUE

Total Support & Revenue	\$5,408,157
Other revenue	\$16,015
Investment & interest income	\$372,710
Other public funding	\$310,353
State of Minnesota: conservation easement acquisition	\$3,267,741
Charitable support from foundations, corporations & organizations	\$558,933
Charitable support from individuals	\$882,405

6% 6%

VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE TIME AND TALENTS

Jess Abernathy Bob Adair Marcia Adair Marge Amberson Tara Anderson Todd Armbruster Rob Axtmann Bob Bankers Polly Bayrd Ann Beaver Tom Beaver Jess Berge Susan Bergmann Brad Bourgeois Matt Bredesen Gini Breidenbach Jim Brewer John Briel Anthony Brown Mike Burnett Frankie Codv Craig Cold Mark Crawford Scott Criqui Jace Crowe Karen Dingle Ross Dudzik Tim Edman Paul Egeland Erik Erikstrup Dave Ethier Rich Fetterly Mark Fickes Fitz Fitzgerald Lisa Fitzpatrick Deirdre Flesche Jenna Fletcher

Stephanie Foster Brad Fuller Sue Eunk Rachel Funke Nona Goertz Sean Gokey Wolfgang Greiner Garv Gustafson Sonva Gylsen Dave Hagen Ken Hains Loren Hansen Jeff Havward Noel Havward John Hedberg Carter Hedeen Fric Hedeen Florence Hedeen Tom Hoffmann Bill Hohengarten Dane Huinker Emma Hutson Patrick Hynes Jordan Jensen Pam Joachim Karl Johansson Cliff Johnson Dennis Kaleta Jennifer Kampf Patricia Kandakai Jeanne Karnowski Wood Kidner David Knoblauch Dag Knudsen Carolyn Kohrs Gene Kremer Ryan Kutter

Betsy Lake Mike LaMotte Allarson Greg Larson Linda Larson Steve Lee Louise Levv Linda Liestman Gloria Lindberg Roslynn Long Alexis Ludwig-Voqen Bill Maiewski Norma Malinowski Cathy Marguardt Pete Martin Laura Matson Diane McGann Brvan McGinnis Hamlin Metzger Clint Miller Rick Musser Terri Nelson Ellen Neuenfeldt Marv Newstrom Sharon Nyberg Jim Odden Eric Olson Lorrie Oswald Dave Palmouist Chervl Paullin Jim Pavne John Peck Linda Peck Ginna Portman Amis Paul Raymaker

Deena Reisman Steve Reisman Craig Richter William Risse Peter Rozumalski Kelly Scanlan Tim Scanlan Bob Scheierl Hank Scheinost Dennis Scherber Bruce Schoenberg Lee Scholder Sadie Schroeder Paul Scobie Betty Selander Chuck Selander Bill Sharbono Cindy Shelton Steve Sicheneder Fay Simer Eric Sizer **Rick Snyder** Greg Solberg Jim Stark Sue Steinwall Terrv Stewart Tim Stieber Teresa Thews Steve Thompson Jack Wachlarowicz Mark Wendt Frick Westerback Em Westerlund David White Ruthann Yaeger Dunn Yoshitani



ANNUAL GIFTS

Gifts that support operations, special projects and long-term stewardship of protected lands.

\$1,000 and above

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\$500 - 999

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Kari Anderson

Londa Anderson

Shane Anderson

Anderson

Anonymous

Gregory Andler

Donald Arbour

Donald and Susan

Frani and Mark Anderson

Evan and Nancy Anderson

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