



St. Croix Blufflands

Washington County Priority Conservation Area

Land Area

- **Total Area:** 926 acres
- **Forest/Woodland:** 612 acres
- **Grassland:** 24 acres
- **Wetland:** 13 acres

Immediate Threats

- Land development
- Habitat fragmentation
- Water quality
- Invasive species

Species of Concern

- Red-Shouldered Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Common Snapping Turtle
- Louisiana Water Thrush
- Warblers (many species)
- Whip-Poor-Will
- Tufted Titmouse
- Wild Ginseng

Land and Water Legacy Program

In 2006, a \$20 million bond referendum passed, initiating the creation of the county's Land and Water Legacy Program, which purchases land or land interests to preserve its natural condition. The program is ongoing and has used collaborative partnerships to invest over \$40 million in protection, conserving over 1,300 acres of high-quality natural lands.

Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas

The Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas represent the county's highest priority areas for land protection. They were identified using a ranking system based upon the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System and other available nature-related datasets. These areas serve as a guide for county land protection projects, however land outside of these areas may still be considered.

Priority Area Description

The St. Croix Blufflands Priority Conservation Area is located mostly within the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, running from from Afton State Park to the Mississippi River confluence in Denmark Township. It is within the South Washington Watershed District and contains most of the remaining large land parcels and sensitive natural areas along the St. Croix, owned primarily by private landowners. The area includes land adjacent to the Lost Valley Scientific and Natural Area.

The St. Croix River is one of the most biologically diverse rivers in the Upper Mississippi River basin with 95 fish species and a premier mussel habitat, supporting a variety of rare species. There are forested blufflands and sand bars along the river, oak and maple forests and woodlands, and prairies and savannas.

In 2008, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency designated Lake St. Croix, the lower 25 miles of the St. Croix River, as an "impaired water" due to high phosphorus levels.

Conservation Objectives and Benefits

Protecting Water Quality

Protecting the undeveloped blufflands along the St. Croix River and maintaining stable shorelines prevents river bank erosion and excess nutrients and sediment from entering to the St. Croix River, reducing degradation to the river's water quality.

Protecting the land also helps prevent groundwater pollution in sensitive areas and helps to facilitate aquifer recharge.

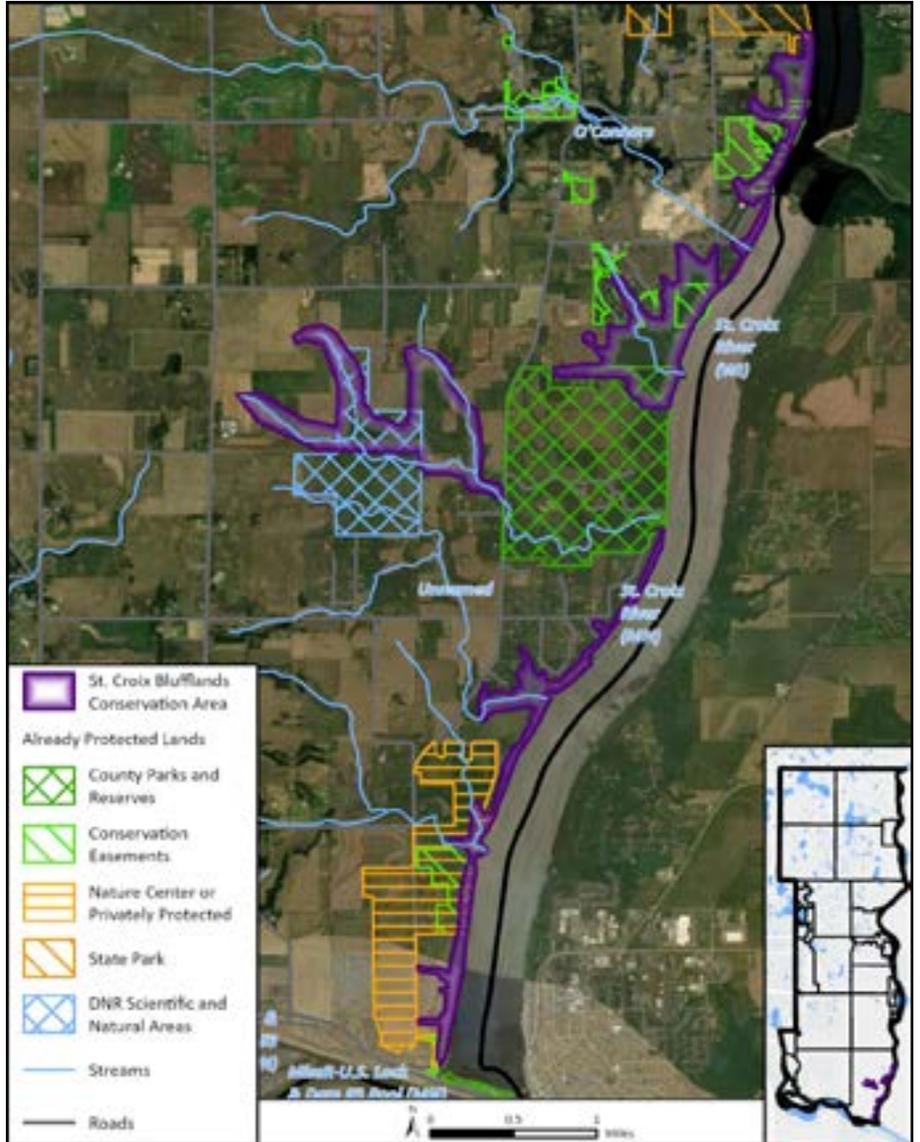


Protecting Habitats

Preserving a corridor along the Lower St. Croix River from future development will prevent fragmentation of intact river shoreland habitats and maintain large areas of high-quality upland forest habitat that contain many rare species, including remnants of mesic oak forest, a rare plant community in the state.

Targeting Invasive Species

Removing invasive species helps combat the destabilization of the steep slopes draining to the St. Croix River.



For more information:

Washington County
Land and Water Legacy Program
WashingtonCountyMN.gov/LWLP

