

Request for Funding

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fiscal Year 2015 / ML 2014

Program or Project Title: Big Woods Habitat Corridors in Scott County

Funds Requested: \$1,840,100

Manager's Name: Patricia Freeman

Title: Senior Manager of Natural Resources

Organization: Scott County

Street Address: 200 West Fourth Street #114

City: Shakopee, MN 55422

Telephone: 952-496-8752

E-Mail: pfreeman@co.scott.mn.us

Organization Web Site:

County Locations: No Counties Listed

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Metro / Urban

Activity Type:

- Restore
- Enhance

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Habitat

Abstract:

The Scott County Big Woods Habitat Corridors initiative restores and enhances 635 acres of priority habitat and native plant communities in a county-wide natural corridor system. This initial phase targets two deteriorating Big Woods habitat complexes, benefitting declining animal populations and rare species.

Design and Scope of Work:

The Problem

Fragmentation, rapid spread of invasive plants and the absence of natural disturbance regimes are contributing to a major decline of habitat value across the state. This translates to declines in animal populations, loss of rare plant and animal species and loss of the overall biological legacy of Minnesota's historic landscapes. This trend is magnified in the Big Woods ecological subsection of the state where development pressures are intense. The area targeted in this proposal falls within the Big Woods section. Here, 128 animal species (the fourth highest of 25 subsections) are identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the MnDNR's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 'Tomorrow's Habitat for the Rare and Wild'.

Decline of habitat across Scott County matches that occurring throughout the Big Woods subsection and is occurring on private and public lands. Public conservation lands house many of the state's biological legacy remnants, however, due to a major lack of monetary resources, needed land stewardship is not happening in these areas and habitat declines are growing severe, in particular in regional parks, state parks and on private lands.

Over the past several decades substantial public invested has been made in the acquisition of lands for conservation and public enjoyment across the state, in the Metro Region and in Scott County. Many of these dollars targeted the best habitats and today they are severely declining.

This phase of the Scott County Big Woods Habitat Corridors initiative targets restoration and enhancement on public lands within regional parks in Scott County, where habitats are severely in decline and biological legacies are being threatened.

Scope of Work

With the requested funding, other funds leveraged by this money, and through a strong local conservation partnership, the following actions and outcomes will be realized:

1. On-the-Ground Habitat Improvement and Preservation of the Big Woods Biological Legacy:

Within Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park and Spring Lake Regional Park, restoration and enhancement will occur on an estimated 635 acres of lands ranging from croplands and degraded woodlands overgrown with invasive species to high quality forest patches recognized by the County Biological Survey and some of the highest quality and most biological diverse wetlands in Scott County.

2. Community Volunteer Involvement:

Community volunteers and conservation and sporting groups will be engaged in restoration activities where appropriate. Great River Greening will continue to be a partner in connecting with both local and regional volunteers.

3. Expand the Benefits of Big Woods Habitat Corridors Initiative

The 'Scott County Natural Area Corridors is a local planning tool which sets a vision for a county-wide, linking, natural corridor system made up of private and public lands. Utilizing this as a mapped vision, County staff will engage other land conservation organizations and local conservation and sporting clubs to identify and plan for needed land protection and to support the efforts of the Scott WMO, Scott SWCD and others to increase participation of private landowners in implementing conservation practices.

Outreach to local conservation and sporting membership groups will target building awareness of wildlife habitat needs and the local opportunity available to bring together restoration of Big Woods Habitats on public lands within the Scott County Natural Area Corridors, private lands restoration and Legacy Funds to create a viable habitat network across the county and to preserve biological diversity. Scott County staff has good working relationships with MnDNR, MN Valley Trust and several local conservation/sporting clubs and will build on these relationships through implementation of this initiative.

4. Project management and administrative responsibilities will be handled by Scott County parks staff experienced in implementing land conservation practices with contractors, professional consultants, non-profits like Great River Greening and other groups and organizations.

5. Contracts will be let to vendors to perform much of the on-the-ground restoration and enhancement work conducted, including prescribed burns, invasive species control, seeding and planting and other needed activities.

6. A consulting ecologist will prepare site specific implementation plans and will assist County staff in developing a schedule and approach for implementation, preparation of bid specs, and supervision of contractors.

How Priorities were Set

The activity sites were selected based on a number of considerations including:

1. Presence in the Scott County Natural Area Corridors, a local planning tool created and implemented by Scott County. The Corridors is a mapped system of linking corridors across the County, made up of private and public lands. It was created with community involvement and was prepared using science-based criteria. The Corridors sets a vision for a connected, buffered, natural system of lands (private and public) to benefit wildlife, water quality, and preservation of a rural setting.
2. Presence on County land that has a natural resources management plan in place and the conservation priority recommendations of these plans.
3. Extent of potential long term contribution to the habitat picture. This was determined based on the extent of contiguous acreage under county ownership now and planned for the future and on the presence of other nearby conservation lands, for instance Wildlife Management Areas.

Urgency and Opportunity

The invasion of woody invasive species has resulted in exponential degradation of natural lands over the past ten years on the target lands. Along with other threats to habitat, this has made the need for intervention dire. The lands targeted in this proposal offer migration and breeding habitat to many Species of Greatest Conservation Need and represent important habitat complex areas that can contribute long-term to the habitat picture in the Metro Region.

There is a unique opportunity today to connect OHF investment with the local Scott County vision for Natural Area Corridors, to create on-the-ground restoration at the proposed sites and build momentum for restoration elsewhere. Over the past several years Scott County has developed strong working relationships with other governmental and non-profit conservation organizations and community groups. These relationships have resulted in joint planning, acquisition partnerships, and sharing of expertise. These connections and working partnerships will be leveraged to motivate further land protection and stewardship practices on priority habitat complexes elsewhere in Scott County.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Plans Addressed:

- Minnesota DNR Nongame Wildlife Plans
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare

LSOHC Statewide Priorities:

- Address Minnesota landscapes that have historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, Minnesota County Biological Survey data, and rare, threatened and endangered species inventories in land and water decisions, as well as long-term or permanent solutions to aquatic invasive species
- Ensures activities for "protecting, restoring and enhancing" are coordinated among agencies, non profits and others while doing this important work; provides the most cost-effective use of financial resources; and where possible takes into consideration the value of local outreach, education, and community engagement to sustain project outcomes
- Leverage effort and/or other funds to supplement any OHF appropriation
- Produce multiple enduring conservation benefits
- Provide Minnesotans with greater public access to outdoor environments with hunting, fishing and other

- outdoor recreation opportunities
- Restore or enhance habitat on permanently protected land

LSOHC Metro Urban Section Priorities:

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Clean Water Fund

The Scott Watershed Management Organization, the Scott County Natural Resources Department, and the Scott County Parks Department work collaboratively to build awareness of and to implement conservation practices throughout the planned Scott County Natural Area Corridors. The Scott WMO has received Clean Water funding to implement conservation practices within the Scott County Natural Area Corridors and to implement native grass plantings in the project area of this Big Wood Habitat Corridors proposal.

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

This phase of the Big Woods Habitat Corridors Initiative represents the triage stage at the sites targeted in this proposal. Restoration and enhancement of degraded Big Woods habitats and high quality but rapidly declining native landscapes is a substantial initial hurdle the County. The OHF would greatly accelerate the County's public lands on-the-ground restoration and enhancement program, providing intervention that is direly needed as woody invasive species and other threats continue to degrade important wildlife habitats. The Outdoor Heritage Fund provides the opportunity for the County to get over this hurdle to a more manageable maintenance phase. Without it, the pace of intervention just will not keep up with the growing threats.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

Once in the maintenance phase, the nature of needed on-the-ground activity drastically shifts, becoming far less labor intensive than the initial triage stage. Maintenance incorporates annual monitoring (at a minimum) and programmed activities across habitat or plant community type, such as prescribed fire, spot-herbicide treatments and targeted manual control of small invasive plant infestations, continued seed collection and re-seeding and other responses as needed. Maintenance will be carried out through a combination of existing staffing and budgets, community volunteers, sentence-to-serve labor and partnerships. The work units and staffing involved have a good track record of implementing restoration with consulting ecologists and contractors and implementing follow up stewardship. Recent examples of the County using this model successfully include a 54-acre prairie restoration and wetland mitigation (BWSR, Scott SWCD); 2000' of shoreland restoration and 2 acre wetland creation (Great River Greening; MnDNR; Scott WMO); and a 22-acre oak savanna restoration (Great River Greening).

Permanent Protection:

*Is the activity on permanently protected land and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15? - **Yes***
(County/Municipal)

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Restoration and enhancement activities begin on public lands.	10/30/2014
Restoration and enhancement activities underway at five sites.	12/30/2015
Restoration and enhancement activities underway at all sites.	12/30/2017
Restoration and enhancement activities are completed on public lands.	06/30/2019

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need *1. Acreage of contiguous ecologically healthy habitat created. 2. Number of community volunteers and groups participating in project.*
- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna *1. Buffer acres (habitats having a species composition and vegetative structure reflective of a native plant community) added around CBS forest and highly diverse wetlands.*
- A forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture *1. This outcome will be measured by comparison of before and after acreage of forests cleared of woody invasive species.*

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$1,840,100

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$121,000		\$121,000
Contracts	\$1,720,100	\$0		\$1,720,100
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$120,000	\$0		\$120,000
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$10,000	Scott County	\$10,000
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$1,840,100	\$131,000	-	\$1,971,100

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Project Manager	0.25	3.00	\$0	\$68,000	Scott County	\$68,000
Project Manager	0.13	2.00	\$0	\$23,000	Scott County	\$23,000
Maintenance Crew	0.13	5.00	\$0	\$30,000	Scott County	\$30,000
Total	0.50	10.00	\$0	\$121,000	-	\$121,000

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	216	216
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	419	419
Total	0	0	0	635	635

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$992,200	\$992,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$847,900	\$847,900
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,840,100	\$1,840,100

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	216	0	0	0	0	216
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	419	0	0	0	0	419
Total	635	0	0	0	0	635

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$992,200	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$992,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$847,900	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$847,900
Total	\$1,840,100	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,840,100

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

0 miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

Scott

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?
DKRP Phase 1 MU1	11322202	80	\$90,000	Yes
DKRP Phase 1 MU 2, 3, 4 and 5	11322202	130	\$350,000	Yes
DKRP Phase 1 MU6 & MU7	11322202	134	\$319,000	Yes
DKRP Phase 1 MU8	11322211	48	\$137,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU1	11422204	50	\$90,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU2	11522233	61	\$80,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU3, 7 & 8	11422204	75	\$206,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU4	11422204	10	\$62,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU5	11422204	26	\$60,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU6	11422204	22	\$100,000	Yes
SLRP Phase 1 MU9	11422204	25	\$100,000	Yes

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Scott County 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update



County Defined Natural Area Corridors

Legend

-  Natural Area Corridors
-  Municipalities

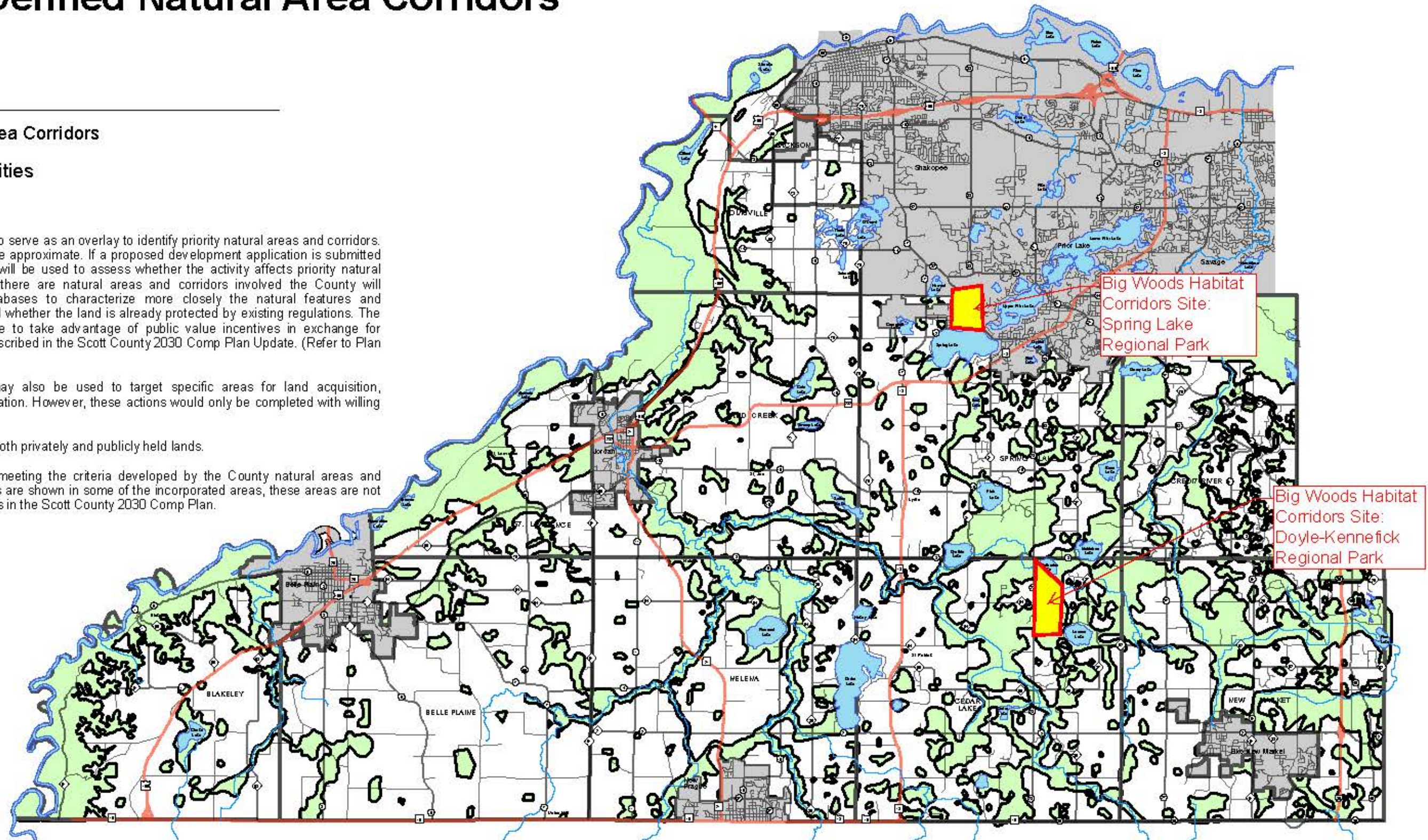
Note:

1) This map is intended to serve as an overlay to identify priority natural areas and corridors. Boundaries presented are approximate. If a proposed development application is submitted to the County this map will be used to assess whether the activity affects priority natural areas and corridors. If there are natural areas and corridors involved the County will reference available databases to characterize more closely the natural features and communities present and whether the land is already protected by existing regulations. The land owner may be able to take advantage of public value incentives in exchange for protection of areas as described in the Scott County 2030 Comp Plan Update. (Refer to Plan for more details.)

2) This overlay map may also be used to target specific areas for land acquisition, improvement, and restoration. However, these actions would only be completed with willing land owners.

3) Areas shown include both privately and publicly held lands.

4) While priority areas meeting the criteria developed by the County natural areas and corridor planning process are shown in some of the incorporated areas, these areas are not subject to the approaches in the Scott County 2030 Comp Plan.



SCOTT COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
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This map is neither a legally recorded document nor a survey and is intended for planning purposes only. Unintended errors may occur.

Prepared by: Scott County Planning Department

Adopted: March 24, 2009

June 12, 2013

David Hartwell, Chair
Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
95 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN

Great River Greening
35 W. Water St. #201
Saint Paul, MN 55107
Tel: 651.665.9500
Fax: 651.665.9409
GreatRiverGreening.org



Dear Mr. Hartwell:

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of Scott County's proposed restoration work at Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park and Spring Lake Regional Park, being submitted to the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for FY 2015 funding. As an organization committed to restoring and enhancing our natural heritage, Great River Greening is particularly excited by the promise of the proposal to improve Big Woods habitat, a rare community that is endemic to Minnesota and one of the Council's priorities.

Already engaged in Spring Lake Regional Park, Great River Greening will continue to be as a strong partner of Scott County if needed, serving as a technical resource as well as a vehicle for community involvement in these important parks.

These two Big Woods projects will improve habitat for rare species and animal populations in decline and target priority habitats within the scientifically-based and locally-identified Scott County Natural Area Corridors. Scott County is one of the fastest growing in the metropolitan area, and the County's progressive approach to secure and improve the natural legacy for its residents is a model for the state.

In conclusion, I fully support the efforts of Scott County as they seek funding to create good habitat in this remarkable region with its diversity of plants and animals.

Sincerely,


Deborah Karasov
Executive Director



Scott Watershed Management Organization

200 Fourth Avenue West

Shakopee, MN 55379-1220

952-496-8054 Fax 952-496-8496

www.co.scott.mn.us

June 12, 2013

David Hartwell, Chair
Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
95 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN

Dear Mr. Hartwell:

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for Scott County's proposed restoration work at Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park and Spring Lake Regional Park. The Scott Watershed Management Organization embraces a vision of a buffered environment. The restoration of healthy native landscapes through the Big Woods Initiative is a part of this vision.

The Scott Watershed Management Organization works closely with Scott County Parks to implement what we call Natural Area Corridors. The intent for the parks to serve as hubs for the natural areas and wildlife with complementary improvements on surrounding private lands sponsored by the Scott Watershed Management Organization through our Cost Share and Incentive Program. This program provides incentives for private land owners to implement conservation practices. We have approved over 300 projects in the last six years. These include nature-based practices such as native grass plantings, wetland restoration, and improving riparian vegetation.

In conclusion, Scott Watershed Management Organization plans are fully integrated with, and support Scott County's Big Wood Initiative. We work closely and collectively our overall strategy combines to create larger, multiple resources benefits.

Sincerely,

Paul Nelson
Natural Resources Program Manager