

Request for Funding

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

Program or Project Title: 3,500-foot Shoreland Acquisition on the St. Croix River

Funds Requested: \$2,500,000

Manager's Name: Jane Harper

Title: Program Manager

Organization: Washington County

Street Address: 14949 62nd Street North

City: Stillwater, MN 55082

Telephone: 651-430-6011

E-Mail: Jane.Harper@co.washington.mn.us

Organization Web Site: www.co.washington.mn.us

County Locations: No Counties Listed

Ecological Planning Regions:

- Metro / Urban

Activity Type:

- Protect in Fee

Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Habitat

Abstract:

Purchase 15 acres and 3,500 feet of St. Croix shoreland paralleling Brown's Creek State Trail to provide recreational opportunities serving trail and river users and tourists from a wide area and to improve ecological functions through subsequent restoration.

Design and Scope of Work:

Washington County is partnering with the City of Stillwater to acquire 15 acres with 3,500 feet of frontage on the St. Croix River to preserve the ecological integrity of and increase the public access to the St. Croix River. This property is located just north of downtown Stillwater and parallels the Brown's Creek State Trail. The property is within the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway District and is one of the longest stretches of St. Croix River frontage remaining in single ownership in Washington County.

The county will receive the grant funds and carry out the acquisition work. The city has agreed to accept the ownership and the future operations and management responsibilities and costs. The city will manage the land as a nature park serving trail users on the new Brown's Creek State Trail, river users, tourists and area residents. Currently, this property contains altered Silver Maple floodplain, and seepage swamp; some invasive species; turf and a modest home. The city will restore much of the property to a natural condition using native species and offer passive recreational uses such as shore fishing, transient dockage, walk-in boat launching, walking paths, nature observation, picnicking and trail access. The county and city will work with key stakeholders including the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare a master plan for the recreational use and restoration of the property. Because the county is contributing a large amount of the funds for this acquisition, the county will retain an interest in the property in the form of a conservation easement

before conveying the property to the city. The conservation easement will assure permanent protection by prohibiting land uses that negatively affect the river and its shoreland habitat.

The requested funds will provide a match to local funds. Both local and state funding is needed and is appropriate for this acquisition because of its high cost as St. Croix River property; its importance in protecting the scenic and ecological values of the St. Croix River, a state-designated resource; its use as a state trail amenity that will enhance the trail users' experience; and its ability to serve the recreational needs of a national, state and local clientele.

This acquisition is consistent with the following goals of the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan:

- **Protect Critical Shorelands**, particularly the land habitats along the St. Croix River, and **Keep Water on the Land**: The St. Croix River is one of the most pristine large river ecosystems in the Upper Midwest; none-the-less it is impacted by nutrient and sediment pollution. 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 levels of phosphorus. If left unprotected, this property could be developed into higher density residential development with additional nutrient and sediment loading to the river. Instead, public acquisition and the planned subsequent removal of the home and restoration of the property to a more natural condition would have positive impacts on the river environment and the water quality in Lake St. Croix including improved ecological diversity and ecosystem connectivity; increased breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and neotropical migrants; and better filtering and storage of storm and flood waters.
- **Improve Connectivity**: Restoration of this property will expand an existing corridor of natural lands along the St. Croix River and Brown's Creek that are owned in fee by the DNR and the NPS or are permanently protected via easements held by the NPS.
- **Improve Access to Outdoor Recreation**: The property's location adjacent to the Brown's Creek State Trail, its proximity to downtown Stillwater, and the length of shoreland frontage along the St. Croix River make this a unique acquisition and a highly desirable destination for recreational pursuits on a nationally and state recognized significant natural resource. In particular, the property's low elevation makes it suitable for shore fishing, a recreational activity that is limited along the lower St. Croix River due to the prevalence of high banks and shoreland bluffs.

The landowner is elderly and is seeking to sell her property. For a limited time she is willing to negotiate for public ownership of all or a portion of the property before she markets it for private development. The county will negotiate for a purchase agreement that is contingent on receiving matching funds. The county will be ready to close on the purchase shortly after receiving the matching funds. The landowner seems willing to wait to close until after July 2014. An appraisal is underway; the project cost will be updated when the appraisal is completed. The county may reduce the amount of funds requested if a lower purchase price can be negotiated; the requested funds will not include the value of the home.

Although this new park will provide additional public access and recreational opportunities to the St. Croix River and a much needed rest area at the terminus of the Brown's Creek State Trail neither the NPS nor the DNR is interested in owning the property. The NPS cannot own the property because it is outside the National Scenic Riverway District boundary and is located within the state-managed portion of the riverway district. The DNR owns enough land to build the state trail. Both agencies are supportive of this acquisition and will be actively involved in preparing the master plan. The project is also supported by the St. Croix River Association and enjoys broad public support in the local community.

The St. Croix River is a national treasure and vital community asset that deserves protection because of its clean water, high quality natural ecosystems, beautiful scenery, unique cultural resources, abundant recreation opportunities and striking geologic features.

Planning

MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

Plans Addressed:

- Long Range Plan for Fisheries Management
- Minnesota Sustainability Framework
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework
- State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare

LSOHC Statewide Priorities:

- Are ongoing, successful, transparent and accountable programs addressing actions and targets of one or more of the ecological sections
- Attempts to ensure conservation benefits are broadly distributed across the LSOHC sections
- 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

LSOHC Metro Urban Section Priorities:

- Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)

Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Washington County has applied for ENRTF funds for this project. The county will reduce this request if ENRTF funds are awarded.

Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Washington County began its land protection efforts in 2000 with a grant from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and a small amount of county levy dollars. In 2006 voters approved a referendum authorizing the county to issue \$20 million in bonds to acquire lands to improve water quality of rivers, lakes and streams; protect drinking water sources; preserve wetlands and woodlands; purchase parkland; and protect land along water bodies from development. This referendum provides long-term stable funding for the county's conservation work through the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program. The county has adopted a Conservation Priorities Plan and site evaluation criteria that aid the county in being strategic in choosing projects that best meet the referendum purposes and maximize the ecological benefits of public funds. The county's priorities are to acquire interests that increase recreational opportunities; that are adjacent to waterways or recreational facilities; that serve multiple public purposes; and that provide public access. A citizen advisory committee rated this acquisition as very high for meeting program goals and priorities and recommends its purchase. The requested funds will be used to match the local sources of funds available for this purchase.

Sustainability and Maintenance:

After the purchase and before conveying the property to the city Washington County will record a conservation easement in the county's favor over the property. This easement will assure permanent protection by prohibiting land uses that negatively affect the river and its shoreland habitat. Washington County will monitor the property on an annual basis and will take necessary enforcement action to ensure that the development and use of the property is consistent with the terms of the conservation easement and the management and restoration plans. Subsequent to its purchase, the county and city will work with partners to restore the property to a more natural condition using native species in accordance with the restoration plan. Additional grants will be sought from appropriate sources to fund the restoration activities in a timely manner.

Government Approval:

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition? - Yes

Permanent Protection:

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection? - **Yes**

Hunting and Fishing Plan:

Is this land open for hunting and fishing? - **Yes**

The land would be open for shore fishing but would not be open for hunting as the city ordinance prohibits hunting within the city limits.

Accomplishment Timeline

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Acquire fee title to a 15-acre parcel including 3,500 feet of frontage on the St. Croix River. An appraisal is underway. The county plans to attain a signed purchase agreement by December 31, 2013 and close on the acquisition by the end of 2014.	June 30, 2015

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 *Will become part of a corridor of public open space along the St. Croix River and Brown's Creek measured in river miles and acres.*
- Improved aquatic habitat indicators *Restoration will establish native vegetation with deep roots that will act as a buffer to infiltrate water run-off, store flood waters and absorb pollutants.*
- Increased natural-resource based recreational opportunities. *Will provide additional opportunities to access the St. Croix River for boating and fishing measured in user days.*

Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount of Request: \$2,500,000

Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Contracts	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	county, city property taxes	\$5,000,000
Easement Acquisition	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Professional Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	-	\$5,000,000

Output Tables

Table 1. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	15	15
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	15	15

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	15	0	0	0	0	15
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	0	0	0	0	15

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$2,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500,000

Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles

1 miles

Parcel List

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type protect.

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

Washington

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	# Bldgs?	Bldg Improve Desc	Value of Bldg	Disposition of Improvements
Aiple	03020228	15	\$5,000,000	1	2244 sq. ft. split foyer frame house, long driveway	\$330,000	Will be removed.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

DATE June 11, 2013
MOTION BY COMMISSIONER Miron

DEPARTMENT Administration
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER Bearth

**Application to Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for
Grant Funds to Acquire Property along the St. Croix River in the City of Stillwater
through the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program**

WHEREAS, Washington County established the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) after voters approved a twenty million dollar referendum to acquire interests in property for the preservation of water quality, woodlands and other natural areas; and

WHEREAS, the owner of 15 acres including 3,500 feet of shoreland along the St. Croix River identified as PIN # 2103020410026 is willing to negotiate for public ownership of all or a portion of this parcel; and

WHEREAS, purchasing this property would meet the LWLP purpose to protect land along water bodies from development, and improve the ecological integrity of and increase the public access to the St. Croix River, a federally- and state-designated scenic riverway; and

WHEREAS, on December 6, 2012, the Washington County Board of Commissioners agreed that this property merits protection and stated that it is willing to consider providing LWLP bond funds to acquire the property; and



WHEREAS, the Washington County Board of Commissioners desires to leverage county dollars through outside sources of funds; and

WHEREAS, on January 8, 2013, the City of Stillwater agreed to consider owning and managing the property as a city park; and

WHEREAS, the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC) is requesting proposals for projects to receive funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund beginning July 1, 2014; and

WHEREAS, purchase of this property is consistent with the Statewide Priority Criteria of the L-SOHC Fiscal Year 2015 Call for Funding Request;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Washington County Board of Commissioners approves submitting a grant request to the L-SOHC for up to two million five hundred thousand dollars (\$2,500,000) to match local funds to purchase the property with PIN # 2103020410026.

ATTEST: 
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

COUNTY BOARD CHAIR

	YES	NO
BEARTH	<u>X</u>	___
KRIESEL	<u>X</u>	___
LEHRKE	<u>X</u>	___
MIRON	<u>X</u>	___
WEIK	<u>X</u>	___

Washington County
St. Croix River Shoreland Acquisition
Aiple Property



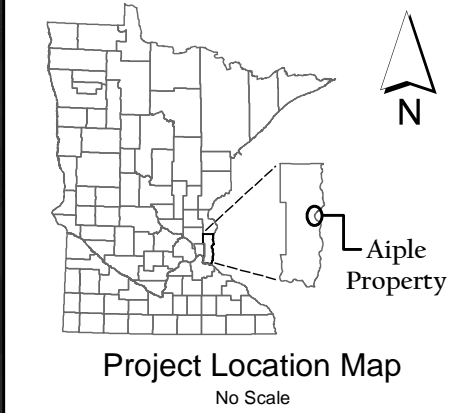
*Lower St. Croix
National Scenic
Riverway*

Aiple Property
3500 Feet of Shoreline
15 Acres

Scale: 1 inch = 600 feet

Date of Aerial Photography:
Spring 2011

prepared by:
Washington County Public Works Department
Survey and Land Management Division





May 13, 2013

Jane Harper
Land & Water Legacy Program Manager
Washington County
14949 – 62nd Street
Stillwater, MN 55082-0006

Re: City Council support of Lessard-Sams OHC Proposal for Aiple Property

Jane:

The proposal presented in the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council to acquire the Aiple property was discussed by the Stillwater City Council included on May 7, 2013. The City Council unanimously supported the proposal. Specifically, they were in favor of restoring much of the property to a natural condition and operating it as a nature park with passive recreational uses.

Thank you for taking a pivotal role in this project.

Sincerely,

CITY OF STILLWATER

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Turnblad".

Bill Turnblad
Community Development Director

April 30, 2013

Jane Harper
Office of Administration
14949 62nd Street North
Stillwater, MN 55082-0006

On behalf of the St. Croix River Association (SCRA), I am writing in support of the purchase 3500 feet of St. Croix shoreland that borders the Brown's Creek State Trail to be used as a city park that will provide passive recreation serving trail, river users, and tourists. The project proposes to restore much of the property to a natural condition and operate it as a nature park with passive recreational uses such as shore fishing, transient dockage, walk-in boat launching, walking paths, nature observation, picnicking, and trail access.

The land currently contains altered Silver Maple floodplain, and seepage swamp; some invasive species; turf and a modest home. The restoration of the turf and invasive species to a more natural condition using native species will improve ecological diversity and ecosystem connectivity; increase breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and neo-tropical migrants. The more natural landscape and shoreline will have water quality benefits. The native vegetation with deep roots will act as a buffer to infiltrate water run-off, store flood waters and absorb pollutants. As the recreated habitat matures it will require minimal maintenance and complement the existing natural landscape.

SCRA was formed in 1911, and our mission is to protect, restore and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed. The SCRA is the only existing organization with a watershed-wide scope able to focus on both sides of the river and both the upper and lower portions of the basin. The location next to the St. Croix and the new Brown's Creek Trail make this an important acquisition, we are very pleased to support this project.

Sincerely,



Deb Ryun



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
401 North Hamilton Street
St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin 54024

June 17, 2013
A3815(SACN)

Jane Harper
Land and Water Legacy Program Manager
Washington County
14949 62nd Street North
P.O. Box 6
Stillwater, Minnesota 55082-0006

Dear Ms. Harper:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support to Washington County and your proposal to acquire the "Aiple" property, as it is commonly known. This property is within the "state managed" zone of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (Riverway) just south of the federally managed zone which the National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for managing.

Please know that the NPS views this property as a great open space and recreational corridor for the people of Stillwater, and other travelers who enjoy the Riverway. We see great potential for shore fishing, transient dockage (which is in short supply in this stretch of the Riverway), walking paths, nature observation, picnicking and of course access to the Brown's Creek State Trail. Providing a trailhead or gateway for the City of Stillwater to the larger St. Croix River watershed by tying into the system of trails using the old lift bridge and the new St. Croix Crossing series of trails being planned as a part of the bridge mitigation will enhance the recreational offerings in the area as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to state our support of this acquisition by Washington County and the City of Stillwater. We look forward to continuing our working relationship as our agencies work to protect this special Riverway and the watershed as a whole.

Sincerely,

Christopher E. Stein
Superintendent



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

500 Lafayette Road • St. Paul, MN • 55155-40__



June 6, 2013

Ms. Jane Harper
Office of Administration
Washington County
14949 - 62nd Street North
Stillwater, MN 55082

Dear Ms. Harper:

Please accept this letter of support for your "3500 foot Shoreland Acquisition on the St. Croix River" project. We feel that this proposal compliments the work of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Trails in developing outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as preserving and protecting river environments.

This linear property will be adjacent to the Brown's Creek State Trail, a 5.9 mile trail that will connect the Gateway Trail in Grant Township to downtown Stillwater along a former rail line. This project will be completed in late 2013 or the spring of 2014 with bridge enhancements, new asphalt trail, parking and safety features, and local trail connections. With the acquisition of the property along the St. Croix River, the Brown's Creek trail would be enhanced for users with an additional park amenity and recreation opportunities along the river. The City of Stillwater will restore much of the acquired property to a natural condition and operate it as a nature park with passive recreation uses and facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to review your shoreland acquisition on the St. Croix River. We look forward to working with Washington County and the City of Stillwater to enhance the trail and recreational opportunities in the near future.

Please contact Joel Stedman at 651-259-5805 or joel.stedman@state.mn.us if you have any questions.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Courtland Nelson".

Courtland Nelson, Director
Division of Parks and Trails

