

# Request for Funding

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

**Program or Project Title:** Northwest Bluffs Wildlife Habitat Project

**Funds Requested: \$468,000**

**Manager's Name:** Michael Goodnature

**Title:** Natural Resources Manager

**Organization:** Ramsey County Parks and Recreation

**Street Address:** 2015 N Van Dyke St

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**Organization Web Site:** <https://parks.co.ramsey.mn.us>

**County Locations:** No Counties Listed

### Ecological Planning Regions:

- Metro / Urban

### Activity Type:

- Restore
- Enhance

### Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie

## Abstract:

Restore 72 acres of critical habitat along the Mississippi River, including restoration and enhancement of prairie, oak savanna, oak forest and shrub swamp, to improve waterfowl and upland game bird feeding and nesting habitats.

## Design and Scope of Work:

Nestled along the Mississippi River, the Ramsey County bluff lands consist of interlinking prairie, oak savanna, oak forests and shrub swamp seep wetlands. This eclectic mix of habitats provides shelter and food for upland game birds, nesting birds, waterfowl, and white-tailed deer. Overtime the bluff lands have become highly degraded by adjacent development and invasive species, providing less of a sanctuary for the animals and birds that inhabit this area. Past surveys of this area have shown that invasive species are overtaking high quality native vegetation at an alarming rate and encroaching even further more into the sensitive areas, such as the unique bluff land swamp shrub wetland seeps.

Pursuant to the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Management Plan to “restore degraded habitats to function as quality habitats for diverse native wildlife communities and water resource protection” and the Tomorrow’s Habitat for the Wild and Rare action plan “to manage Minnesota’s populations of species in

greatest conservation need,” the goal of this project is to restore 72 acres of critical bluff land habitat along the Mississippi River within Ramsey County. The restoration will include 5 acres of prairie and enhancement of 51 acres of prairie/oak savanna, 6 acres of shrub swamp wetlands and 10 acres of forest. The focus will be to improve wildlife habitat by eradicating invasive vegetation through cutting and controlled burns, replanting and seeding of native vegetation, and protection of mature forest trees while restoring the natural forest understory. The prairie and oak savanna will be restored to enhance native vegetation growth of grasses and forbs, such as little and big bluestem, porcupine grass, Pennsylvania sedge, blazing star, bush clover, hare bells, blue aster, and the State listed species kittentails, all to promote upland game and nesting bird habitat. The shrub swamp wetland seeps will be enhanced to improve a mixture of vegetation consisting of speckled alder, sedges, with scattered pockets of marsh marigolds and skunk cabbage, to advance feeding and nesting sites for snipe, woodcock and migratory waterfowl broods traveling along the Mississippi Flyway. The oak savanna and woodland areas will be enhanced to protect mature bur, northern pin and white oaks and revive the understory for new generation of oak trees that will provide shelter for upland game species like white-tailed deer. Once completed this restoration project will also expand quality wildlife corridor lands by connecting other surrounding past restoration projects, consisting of a restoration project to the northwest completed in Indian Mounds Park and a restoration project to the south within Battle Creek Regional Park, which is also located in the popular Ramsey County Parks and Recreation white-tailed deer management archery hunt zone. These previous restoration sites were funded with grants provided by Big Rivers Partnership, Metropolitan Council, National Park Service - Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (NPS - MNRRA) and The State of Minnesota, including funding from the Parks and Trails Fund and the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Ramsey County will utilize in-kind staff hours to manage the project and use only the requested grant funding for on the ground restoration and enhancement of habitat. Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with NPS - MNRRA, Friends of the Mississippi River, Great River Greening, Minnesota Conservation Corps, and Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, has a long standing history of successfully restoring and maintaining hundreds of acres of County land for the benefit of wildlife habitat improvement. Ramsey County, along with these partners, will continue this trend through the successful restoration of these bluff lands for wildlife habitat improvement if granted funding.

## Planning

### **MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:**

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape
- LU6 Reduce Upland and gully erosion through soil conservation practices

### **Plans Addressed:**

- Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare
- Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Management Plan

### **LSOHC Statewide Priorities:**

- 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
- 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:

- No Relationships Listed

## Accelerates or Supplements Current Efforts:

Over the past ten years, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, along with several other agencies, have organized restoration efforts within the greater bluff lands of Ramsey County, including the restoration and enhancement of over 300 acres within Battle Creek Park. Some of the funding for the restoration of these bluff lands was provided through the Parks and Trail and Environmental Natural Resource Trust Funds. Limited funding has prevented the continuation of these restoration efforts through the proposed site due to the steep terrain, unique wetland features and vast amount of invasive vegetation in this area. If awarded funding the restoration of this 72 acre site will connect with these currently restored areas enhancing the overall wildlife corridor along the Mississippi River bluff lands.

## Sustainability and Maintenance:

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation has a long standing history of sustaining restored lands by implementing ongoing maintenance plans to ensure the goals of the project. A maintenance plan will be put in place for the restoration site after the funds are expended. This plan will include surveying the area to monitor the reestablishment of high quality native vegetation and action steps to take when invasive vegetation reemerges. Ramsey County staff will survey the area yearly and the local Minnesota Conservation Corps crew will initially be utilized to continue with the maintenance of the lands.

## 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
Develop a fire management plan for site	7/2014 - 2/2015
Clear invasive woody plants out of woodlands and oak savanna	7/2014 - 3/2015
Perform prescribed burns through woodlands, oak savanna, and prairies	2/2015 - 5/2015
Spot treat invasive vegetation with appropriate chemical application in prairies, savanna, woodlands, and wetlands	5/2015 - 8/2015
Continue with clearing of invasive plants in prairies, savanna, woodlands, and wetlands	8/2015 - 1/2016
Dormant seeding of prairies, savanna, woodlands, and wetlands	11/2015 - 3/2016
Continue with invasive weed and woody vegetation control throughout 2016 and 2017, ensuring the growth of native high quality vegetation	1/2016 - 2/2018
Perform prescribed burn in third year from dormant seeding	3/2018 - 5/2018
Conduct survey of plant species to determine success of project	5/2018 - 11/2018
Continue to manage reemerging invasive vegetation	2/2018 - 6/2019

## Outcomes

**Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:**

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna *Outcomes for this restoration project will be measured by perpetually conducting surveys of plant succession to measure reestablishment of quality native vegetation conducive to wildlife.*

# Budget Spreadsheet

**Total Amount of Request: \$468,000**

## Budget and Cash Leverage

Budget Name	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$0	\$0		\$0
Contracts	\$468,000	\$0		\$468,000
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	\$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
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$468,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	-	<b>\$468,000</b>

## Output Tables

**Table 1. Acres by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	5	0	0	5
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	6	51	10	0	67
Total	6	56	10	0	72

**Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type**

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
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	\$18,000	\$375,000	\$60,000	\$0	\$453,000
Total	\$18,000	\$390,000	\$60,000	\$0	\$468,000

**Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	5	0	0	0	0	5
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	67	0	0	0	0	67
Total	72	0	0	0	0	72

**Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest	Total
Restore	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
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	\$453,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$453,000
Total	\$468,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$468,000

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles**

0 miles

# Parcel List

## Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

Ramsey

<b>Name</b>	<b>TRDS</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Est Cost</b>	<b>Existing Protection?</b>
Ramsey County Parks & Rec	02822203	72	\$468,000	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.