

# **Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council**

RIM Wetlands: Phase 7 Laws of Minnesota 2016 Final Report

# **General Information**

Date: 04/18/2023

Project Title: RIM Wetlands: Phase 7

Funds Recommended: \$13,808,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 4(c)

**Appropriation Language:** \$13,808,000 the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire lands in permanent conservation easements and to restore wetlands and native grassland habitat under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.515. Of this amount, up to

#### **Manager Information**

Manager's Name: Sharon Doucette Title: Easement Section Manager Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources Address: 520 Lafayette Road North City: St. Paul, MN 55155 Email: sharon.doucette@state.mn.us Office Number: 6515392567 Mobile Number: Fax Number: Website: www.bwsr.state.mn.us

#### **Location Information**

**County Location(s):** Cottonwood, Lyon, Becker, Renville, Redwood, Mower, Stearns, Meeker, Martin, McLeod, Wilkin, Otter Tail, Jackson, Freeborn, Carver, Clay, Faribault, Dodge, Blue Earth, Sibley, Rock, Ramsey, Nicollet, Le Sueur and Kandiyohi.

#### Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest
- Northern Forest

#### Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Restore

#### Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Prairie

### **Narrative**

#### **Summary of Accomplishments**

Under the CREP partnership with USDA, 71 easements were recorded on a total of 4,365 acres to restore previously drained wetlands and adjacent uplands. The easements were accomplished with local implementation done by SWCD, NRCS and FSA staff within the 54 county CREP area and leveraged federal funds for both landowner payments and cost share for conservation practice installation.

#### **Process & Methods**

The sites enrolled were generally drained and farmed wetlands and associated upland habitat. These sites offered limited ecological benefits. Through a combination of a scoring and ranking process and eligibility screening, each application was evaluated, with the applications that provided the greatest habitat and environmental benefits after restoration and protection being selected for funding.

RIM Wetlands Phase 7 protected and restored wetlands and adjacent upland area to prairie via the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The project area consisted of the 54 counties within the CREP area with 4,365 acres of permanently protected and restored wetlands and uplands on 71 easements. These acres provide a healthy and plentiful supply of habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, especially for waterfowl and upland birds. CREP utilizes both a 15-year CRP contract and a permanent RIM easement.

RIM Wetlands Phase 7 was a local-state-federal partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and BWSR. In addition, the CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies. BWSR staff coordinate with Federal partners on the overall CREP process and program oversight. In addition, BWSR Staff are also responsible for easement acquisition. Local staff promote CRP contracts and RIM easements, assist with easement processing and provide key essential technical assistance and project management services.

Some highlights of the easements funded through this project include:

The largest easement funded in this project, 73-03-20-01 in Stearns County, included 9 wetland basins on over 100 acres and approximately 250 acres of prairie and forest as well as a portion of Kolling Creek. The landowner donated approximately 50 acres to the easement area.

Easement 56-01-17-01-W, in Otter Tail, was the first wetland application enrolled in this CREP. The total easement area is 84.6 acres, 25.8 donated by the landowner. The landowners remaining adjacent property (534 acres) are protected via easements with Minnesota Land Trust.

The payment rates were consistent throughout this appropriation but CRP annual rental rates fluctuated, so the state's contribution to the overall easement cost varied in reaction to the CRP rate.

# How did the program address habitats of significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, threatened or endangered species, and/or list targeted species?

An expansion of wetland and prairie habitat through this program alleviates pressure on those species that are most sensitive to habitat changes occurring on the landscape. The project targeted wetlands and prairies, two of the three most important habitats used by the Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Of the nearly 1200 known wildlife species in Minnesota, 292 species, or approximately one-fourth, are at risk because they are rare; their populations are declining due to loss of habitat. SGCN in the RIM Wetlands area include the Five-lined Skink, Blanding's Turtle, Two-spotted Skipper, Northern Pintail, American Black Duck, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Western Grebe. In addition to the SGCN, the threatened or endangered species nclude the Dakota Skipper and Poweshiek Skipperling.

Diverse vegetation, access to a water resource, and protection from pesticides are also important to Minnesota's native pollinator species. BWSR's native vegetation guidelines and pollinator initiative protect native pollinators. Complexes and corridors targeted through RIM Wetlands provide areas that are safe from pesticides and natural passageways for pollinators. Targeted pollinator species include the Monarch Butterfly and solitary bee species including Leafcutter Bees, Mason Bees, and Yellow-faced Bees.

Prairie wetlands are important for migratory waterfowl. Although the North American Prairie Pothole region contains only about 10% of the waterfowl nesting habitat on the continent, it produces 70% of all North American waterfowl. The loss of Minnesota's prairie and wetland habitat has led to the decline of many wildlife and plant species. RIM Wetlands has protected and restored this habitat over many years and continues to do this important work using CREP.

# How did the program use science-based targeting that leveraged or expanded corridors and complexes, reduced fragmentation, or protected areas in the MN County Biological Survey.

Through a combination of targeted outreach, a scoring and ranking process, and eligibility screening, RIM Wetlands evaluated each application on its potential to restore wetland/upland functions and values (optimize wildlife habitat benefits) and to provide other benefits including water quality. Each site's benefit to the surrounding landscape, ability to build upon existing corridors and complexes, and site-specific features were evaluated. During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size was conducted to indicate a site's usefulness as a corridor or extension to an existing habitat complex. Other examples of the science-based targeting used include: proximity to T&E Species, contributing watershed area, proximity of drainage to DNR Protected Waters, and the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET)-developed GIS Wildlife Habitat Potential Model for environmental evaluation. The HAPET model is a consolidation of models representing an array of migratory birds that use the Minnesota Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) for breeding or migration. This has proved to be a reliable analysis of critical habitat for migratory birds and wetland dependent wildlife, accounting for the following indicator species:

-Waterfowl (Thunderstorm map – combined score for Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Pintail)

-Migrant Shorebirds (Modeled spring migrant stopover landscapes. Combined the models for: Marbled Godwit, Willet, American Avocet; Wilson's Phalarope, Semipalmated Sandpiper; Upland Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Dunlin, White-rumped Sandpiper)

-Breeding Shorebirds (landscape model for breeding Marbled Godwit)

-Grassland birds (combined score for Bobolink, Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Western Meadowlark, Greater Prairie-chicken) -Waterbirds (Black Tern)

## **Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition**

RIM Wetlands is a local-state-federal partnership delivered locally by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and BWSR. In addition, the CREP partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Pheasants Forever (PF), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and over 70 supporting organizations and agencies.

#### Exceptional challenges, expectations, failures, opportunities, or unique aspects of program

BWSR received the funding in July 2016 in advance of the CREP agreement, signed January 2017, as the state needed to show dedicated funding for the signing of the agreement. The first CREP sign-ups occurred in July 2017. An extension to complete easement acquisition was received in 2020 because the CREP agreement and federal funds were not part of the first accomplishment plan.

#### What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this program?

- Clean Water Fund
- Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund
- Other : Bonding and federal funds

#### How were the funds used to advance the program?

CWF, ENRTF and bonding dollars were all used to support wetland restoration projects within the 54 county CREP area. In addition, federal funds were also provided to landowners in the form of annual CRP payments, incentive payments, and cost share for practice installation per the CREP agreement.

# What is the plan to sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

Once a RIM easement is acquired, BWSR is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring into perpetuity. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight, monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed one every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A noncompliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified. Perpetual monitoring and stewardship costs are charged at \$6,500 per easement. This amount is based on local SWCD staff completing monitoring and landowner communication as well as existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship assists in the cost of regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and enforcement necessary.

# **Budget**

## **Totals**

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$503,000	\$973,000	\$940,300	-	-	-	\$503,000	\$940,300
Contracts	\$223,600	\$445,800	\$422,000	-	-	-	\$223,600	\$422,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$12,789,700	\$11,832,200	\$11,508,500	-	\$22,847,200	USDA-FSA	\$12,789,700	\$34,355,700
Easement Stewardship	\$195,000	\$410,000	\$410,000	-	-	-	\$195,000	\$410,000
Travel	\$24,200	\$37,000	\$4,200	-	-	-	\$24,200	\$4,200
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$27,600	\$30,000	-	-	-	-	\$27,600	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$34,500	\$40,000	\$41,400	-	-	-	\$34,500	\$41,400
Supplies/Materials	\$10,400	\$40,000	\$12,900	-	-	-	\$10,400	\$12,900
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$13,808,000	\$13,808,000	\$13,339,300	-	\$22,847,200	-	\$13,808,000	\$36,186,500

#### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program	0.25	5.0	\$56,300	-	-	\$56,300
Management						
Easement	0.4	3.0	\$247,700	-	-	\$247,700
Processing						
Engineering/Eco Services	1.0	3.0	\$636,300	-	-	\$636,300

#### Explain any budget challenges or successes:

Amount leveraged includes CRP annual payments and cost share payments to landowners for conservation practices to date. There may be future CRP cost share payments . There is no reporting available for FSA/NRCS oversight and/or staff time of the CRP contracts or additional incentive payments to landowners from FSA.

#### **Total Revenue:** \$0

**Revenue Spent:** \$0

#### **Revenue Balance:** \$0

#### Of the money disclosed above, what are the appropriate uses of the money:

• E. This is not applicable as there was no revenue generated.

# **Output Tables**

# Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Туре	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(AP) 0	(Final) 0
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fee with	0	0	0	0	Ũ	0	Ū	0	Ū	Ű
State										
PILT										
Liability										
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fee w/o										
State										
PILT										
Liability										
Protect in	750	1,909	1,500	2,460	0	0	0	0	2,250	4,369
Easement										
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	750	1,909	1,500	2,460	0	0	0	0	2,250	4,369

# Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Туре	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	\$460,300	-	\$920,500	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,380,800	-
Protect in	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee with										
State										
PILT										
Liability										
Protect in	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee w/o										
State										
PILT										
Liability										
Protect in	\$4,142,400	\$4,446,400	\$8,284,800	\$8,892,900	-	-	-	-	\$12,427,200	\$13,339,300
Easement										
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$4,602,700	\$4,446,400	\$9,205,300	\$8,892,900	-	-	-	-	\$13,808,000	\$13,339,300

## Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Туре	Metro / Urban (AP)	Metro / Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Forest (AP)	N. Forest (Final)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restore	(AI) 0	0	0	0	(AI) 0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fee with												
State												
PILT												
Liability												
Protect in	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fee w/o												
State												
PILT												
Liability												
Protect in	225	227	225	187	225	17	1,575	3,934	0	0	2,250	4,365
Easement												
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	225	227	225	187	225	17	1,575	3,934	0	0	2,250	4,365

# Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Туре	Metro/ Urban (AP)	Metro/ Urban (Final)	Forest / Prairie (AP)	Forest / Prairie (Final)	SE Forest (AP)	SE Forest (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	N. Fore st (AP)	N. Fore st (Fin al)	Total (AP)	Total (Final)
Restor	\$138,10	-	\$138,10	-	\$138,10	-	\$966,50	-	-	-	\$1,380,80	-
е	0		0		0		0				0	
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liabilit v	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liabilit y	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easem ent	\$1,242,7 00	\$693,7 00	\$1,242,7 00	\$571,5 00	\$1,242,7 00	\$51,9 00	\$8,699,1 00	\$12,022,2 00	-	-	\$12,427,2 00	\$13,339,3 00
Enhanc	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
e Total	\$1,380,	\$693,7	\$1,380,	\$571,5	\$1,380,	\$51,9	\$9,665,	\$12,022,	-	-	\$13,808,	\$13,339,
	800	00	800	00	800	00	600	200			000	300

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles** 

## **Outcomes**

#### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Improved aquatic habitat indicators ~ The RIM Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing which sites best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also secured, removing the threat of conversion. The increased water retention of restored wetlands reduced flood potential and lessens the amount of aquatic habitat degradation.
- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *The RIM Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing which sites best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also secured, removing the threat of conversion. The increased water retention of restored wetlands reduced flood potential and lessens the amount of aquatic habitat degradation.*

#### Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

• Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *The RIM Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet was used to* 

prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing which sites best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also secured, removing the threat of conversion. The increased water retention of restored wetlands reduced flood potential and lessens the amount of aquatic habitat degradation.

#### Programs in prairie region:

• Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ The RIM Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing which sites best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also secured, removing the threat of conversion. The increased water retention of restored wetlands reduced flood potential and lessens the amount of aquatic habitat degradation.

#### Programs in southeast forest region:

Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat ~ The RIM Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet was used to prioritize sites to achieve maximum environmental benefits. This included prioritizing which sites best served as wildlife corridors/complexes and provided the highest-quality migratory waterfowl and upland bird habitat. We expect healthier populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species with these complexes restored. Areas with expiring CRP contracts were also secured, removing the threat of conversion. The increased water retention of restored wetlands reduced flood potential and lessens the amount of aquatic habitat degradation.

# **Parcels**

### Sign-up Criteria?

Yes - Sign up criteria is attached

## **Protect Parcels**

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing	
	-				Protection	
03-01-18-01	Becker	13839203	59	\$26,391	No	
07-02-17-01	Blue Earth	10527233	49	\$73,000	No	
07-03-17-01	Blue Earth	10728214	79	\$95,600	No	
10-02-17-01	Carver	11625230	96	\$241,600	No	
10-03-17-01	Carver	11524229	50	\$136,400	No	
10-01-17-01	Carver	11626224	56	\$60,700	No	
14-03-18-01	Clay	13846214	64	\$41,212	No	
14-02-18-01	Clay	14047217	34	\$75,520	No	
17-04-20-01	Cottonwood	10335206	39	\$151,862	No	
17-02-17-01	Cottonwood	10534213	29	\$101,700	No	
17-09-20-01	Cottonwood	10737231	21	\$75,252	No	
17-08-20-01	Cottonwood	10335206	158	\$448,553	No	
20-01-17-01	Dodge	10516212	8	\$12,369	No	
20-03-17-01	Dodge	10616224	9	\$11,100	No	
20-01-18-01	Dodge	10816205	60	\$152,400	No	
22-02-18-01	Faribault	10226215	11	\$13,500	No	
22-01-18-01	Faribault	10226215	1	\$700	No	
22-01-17-01	Faribault	10328230	22	\$24,400	No	
24-07-17-01	Freeborn	10122231	36	\$43,145	No	
24-02-17-01	Freeborn	10223226	58	\$84,286	No	
24-01-17-01	Freeborn	10222223	89	\$110,300	No	
24-06-17-01	Freeborn	10421236	148	\$202,800	No	
24-04-17-01	Freeborn	10220229	72	\$84,900	No	
24-09-17-01	Freeborn	10123201	35	\$36,709	No	
24-03-17-01	Freeborn	10120229	30	\$37,810	No	
24-02-18-01	Freeborn	10222229	117	\$153,074	No	
24-05-17-01	Freeborn	10123201	140	\$148,618	No	
32-03-18-01	Jackson	10136224	62	\$143,109	No	
32-02-17-01	Jackson	10134226	30	\$64,200	No	
34-01-18-01	Kandiyohi	11833231	41	\$47,300	No	
40-02-17-01	Le Sueur	11123231	7	\$7,000	No	
40-01-17-01	Le Sueur	11023206	21	\$22,800	No	
42-02-20-01	Lyon	11042222	57	\$235,601	No	
46-04-17-01	Martin	10329224	93	\$154,500	No	
46-05-20-01	Martin	10232222	17	\$50,527	No	
46-03-20-01	Martin	10232215	18	\$51,424	No	
46-02-20-01	Martin	10430234	14	\$44,975	No	
46-01-20-01	Martin	10232215	40	\$117,489	No	
43-01-17-01	McLeod	11429228	20	\$22,300	No	
43-03-20-01	McLeod	11530236	160	\$373,360	No	
47-01-18-01	Meeker	11732235	48	\$112,000	No	
47-02-20-01	Meeker	11929210	25	\$36,195	No	
50-03-17-01	Mower	10317206	75	\$87,746	No	
50-01-21-01	Mower	10418216	81	\$203,369	No	
52-03-17-01	Nicollet	11030206	113	\$358,700	No	
56-01-17-01-W-	Otter Tail	13142203	85	\$72,187	No	
64-13-17-01	Ramsey	11038229	32	\$62,200	No	
64-14-17-01	Redwood	11034228	63	\$142,700	No	
64-12-17-01	Redwood	11037207	56	\$142,700	No	
07-12-1/-01	Neuwoou	1103/20/	50	φ124,500	110	

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64-05-18-01	Redwood	11135207	58	\$199,284	No
64-07-18-01	Redwood	11336215	174	\$352,892	No
64-11-17-01	Redwood	11235205	58	\$180,900	No
64-12-20-01	Redwood	11336223	152	\$309,987	No
64-03-18-01	Redwood	10938219	50	\$117,800	No
64-15-20-01	Redwood	11235211	6	\$20,743	No
65-03-17-01	Renville	11335220	33	\$53,828	No
65-10-20-01	Renville	11631208	17	\$54,932	No
65-13-18-01	Renville	11534208	54	\$128,343	No
65-10-18-01	Renville	11534208	15	\$40,476	No
65-09-17-01	Renville	11334231	64	\$148,797	No
65-08-17-01	Renville	11233212	8	\$15,900	No
65-06-17-01	Renville	11631225	62	\$88,400	No
65-05-17-01	Renville	11532216	175	\$322,500	No
65-04-17-01	Renville	11335217	124	\$258,800	No
65-02-17-01	Renville	11631224	70	\$93,300	No
67-04-17-01	Rock	10245213	47	\$238,200	No
72-01-17-01	Sibley	11226213	42	\$60,300	No
72-02-17-01	Sibley	11428205	99	\$121,400	No
72-03-17-01	Sibley	11226212	34	\$51,041	No
73-03-20-01	Stearns	12331219	260	\$534,063	No
84-01-18-01	Wilkin	13646231	39	\$26,772	No



Protect in Easement
Protect in Fee with PILT
Protect in Fee W/O PILT
Restore
Enhance
Other

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12 24 36 mi