

# Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

## Laws of Minnesota 2012 Final Report

**Date:** September 27, 2013

**Program or Project Title:** Columbus Lake Conservation Area

**Funds Recommended:** \$940,000

**Manager's Name:** John VonDeLinde

**Title:**

**Organization:** Anoka County Parks and Recreation

**Street Address:** 550 Bunker Lake Blvd. NW

**City:** Andover, MN 55304

**Telephone:** 763-767-2865

**E-Mail:** karen.blaska@co.anoka.mn.us

**Organization Web Site:** www.anokacountyparks.com

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2012, Ch. 264, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 4(c )

**Appropriation Language:** \$940,000 in the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Anoka County to acquire land in fee for conservation purposes that connect wetlands and shallow lakes to the Lamprey Pass Wildlife Management Area. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

**County Locations:** Anoka

**Ecological Planning Regions:**

- Metro / Urban

**Activity Type:**

- Protect in Fee

**Priority Resources Addressed by Activity:**

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Prairie

### Abstract:

Acquisition of Columbus Lake Conservation Area will protect 258 acres of quality habitat for game and waterfowl hunters, creating a wildlife corridor connecting Lamprey Pass WMA to other protected habitat.

## Activity Detail

### Design and Scope of Work:

This project acquired 258 acres of wetland and creek corridor just south of the Lamprey Pass Wildlife Management Area (WMA). It protects nearly all of the shoreline of Columbus Lake, a 20-acre shallow lake, and nearly complete public ownership of a 20+ mile conservation corridor, extending from the WMA and along Rice Creek to the Mississippi River. Previously there was no connection between the WMA and the other tracts of publicly owned habitat. The new parcels have a rich mixture of habitat types, including emergent marsh, cattail marsh, mixed hardwood swamp, shrub swamp, maple/basswood islands, poor fen and rich fen. Most of the area is identified within the state's County Biological Survey as some of the last remaining high quality natural communities in the metro area. The property further provides important habitat for many species in the greatest conservation need, including Blanding's Turtles, Snapping Turtles, Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Black Crowned Night Herons, American Bitterns, and Water Willow. The land provides excellent habitat with hunting opportunities for not only waterfowl, but also for pheasant, turkey and deer. Rice Creek also offers opportunities for bow-fishing and angling for northern pike. This was a rare opportunity to obtain high quality habitat that is available to present and future generations of metropolitan area sportsmen and women. The property is within one half hour from downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. The conservation of Columbus Lake and Rice Creek provides many water quality benefits, including sustaining drinking water quality by preserving an important headwaters area and source of water into the Mississippi River. The acquisition was a priority for Anoka County not only because of the habitat, biological, and recreational attributes discussed above; but also because it is a priority in the County's Natural Resources Management Plan. The project had broad local support and was a priority for many local sportsmen's groups. Letters of support for this project were submitted from the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association and Pheasants Forever. The City of Columbus and local citizens further supported this acquisition. The parcels were selected based on their native habitat quality and the need for protection. The previous landowner had development plans drawn up for this land and intended to develop it had this conservation effort not been successful. Such development would have eliminated the connection between the WMA, this conservation area and the large tract of public land to the

south. The County asked The Trust for Public Land (TPL) for assistance in completing this acquisition. TPL then purchased the property from the landowners for its appraised fair market value of \$1,207,000. The County in turn, purchased the land from TPL and contributed \$250,000 towards this project; \$200,000 in capital towards the acquisition itself and \$50,000 for initial site development costs including signing, parking and restoration of a field area to native prairie. The purchase price of the property was \$1,207,000. With the Lessard Sam's Outdoor Heritage Council funding of \$940,000, and the County's \$250,000 contribution, there still was a funding gap of \$67,000, which TPL generously filled. The land is open to public hunting and fishing. The County worked with the Commissioner of Natural Resources to set the appropriate regulations for the resource in the same manner as was done for the Cedar Creek Conservation Area previously funded by the LSOHC. The County also coordinated with the DNR on management of this land so that it is consistent with that of the neighboring WMA. The Columbus Lake property is of such high quality that it meets numerous goals and priorities in statewide resource management plans, including the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (SCPP) and LSOHC's Metro Urbanizing Section Vision. As noted, the Columbus Lake acquisition has also been identified in the County's Natural Resources Management Plan, which establishes a comprehensive and prioritized approach to resource conservation across the County. Participants in the development of this plan included the DNR, the University of Minnesota, the Anoka Conservation District, Rice Creek Watershed District and the City of Columbus. The City has further incorporated the Rice Creek corridor into its comprehensive land use plan for permanent protection.

## Planning

### MN State-wide Conservation Plan Priorities:

- H1 Protect priority land habitats
- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation
- H4 Restore and protect shallow lakes
- H6 Protect and restore critical in-water habitat of lakes and streams

### Plans Addressed:

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN
- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- University of Minnesota, the Anoka Conservation District, Rice Creek Watershed District, and the City of Columbus

### LSOHC Statewide Priorities:

- Allow public access. This comes into play when all other things about the request are approximately equal
- 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)
- Protect, enhance, and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and nongame fish species

## Relationship to Other Constitutional Funds:

- Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Other constitutional funds will not be sought for acquisition of this land. However, \$67,000 in ENRTF funds previously awarded to TPL will be used to acquire this land.

## Sustainability and Maintenance:

On-going operations and maintenance of the land and restoration will be sustained following the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Natural Resource Management Plan and will be supported through the annual Operations and Maintenance Budget for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Anoka County's management goals for the Columbus Lake Conservation Area are based upon the ideals that will achieve the outcomes of existing natural resource plans, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Statewide Conservation Plan, that directly relate to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. In addition, the conservation area will remain open to hunting and fishing, consistent with the capacity of the land, during the open season, as determined by the State Commissioner of Natural Resources. As a result, the following management goals for Columbus Lake Conservation Area have been identified:

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the natural character of Columbus Lake, Rice Creek, and the surrounding wetlands and their function as a connective wildlife habitat corridor to Lamprey Pass WMA.

The water quality and habitat quality of the creek and lake will be maintained or enhanced. A natural flow regime should be maintained. An emphasis will be placed on stream, lake, and wetland habitat that supports fish and wildlife production.

The creek, lake, and wetlands will be monitored on regular basis to identify trends or changes in water quality.

Best management practices will be used to control erosion and pollution. This includes establishing native vegetation buffers along the riparian zones and educating and encouraging adjacent landowners to employ best management practices.

Goal 2: Restore and maintain the quality and function of the natural plant and wildlife habitat and production.

Efforts will be made to reconstruct, restore and manage prairies, wetlands, and forests utilizing locally native ecotype sources of seeds and plants. This includes maximizing habitat structure and composition that will support wildlife production.

Necessary disturbance regimes, at prescribed intervals, will be introduced to sustain healthy populations of plants and wildlife.

Roads, parking lots, and other infrastructure will be designed to minimize impacts to the creek, natural communities, and wildlife.

Invasive species will be monitored, controlled and suppressed. Biological control methods will be used when applicable.

Goal 3: Hunting and fishing opportunities will be maintained, consistent with the capacity of the land.

One vehicle access point will be developed and maintained off of County Road 23.

Rustic trails will be provided to allow for reasonable access to hunting and fishing areas. In addition, the trails will be used outside of the hunting season for general hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities.

The primary game species that will be hunted, in addition to deer, will be pheasants, waterfowl, ruffed grouse, turkey, rabbit, and squirrel.

The annual cost of working towards obtaining the above conservation goals will approximately be as follows:

Labor - \$7,000 per year

Equipment - \$7,000 per year

Supplies / Materials - \$2,500 per year

The above annual costs will be funded through Anoka County's operations and maintenance budget. In addition, various grant programs will be pursued for special larger scale habitat restoration projects.

## 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
- Protected habitats will hold wetlands and shallow lakes open to public recreation and hunting
- The anticipated outcome of this project will permanently protect 263 acres of high quality habitat. It will connect and provide a wildlife corridor between the 1,300-acre Lamprey Pass WMA and over 600 acres of public land to the south. These tracts further connect to a conservation corridor that extends over 20 miles to the Mississippi River. This complex will provide quality hunting opportunities for Twin Cities residents in close proximity to where they live. Short-term and Intermediate Results: 263 acres with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities is protected; Increased large complexes and corridors of biologically diverse habitat provide multiple enduring conservation benefits in the face of climate change, invasive species and other major stressors; Improved health of terrestrial and aquatic habitat for fish, game and other wildlife species; Increased access for outdoor recreation, Improved health of watersheds, Increased number of fish, game and wildlife

## Budget Spreadsheet

Total Amount: \$940,000

### Budget and Cash Leverage

| Budget Name                | Request          | Spent            | Cash Leverage (anticipated) | Cash Leverage (received) | Leverage Source  | Total (original)   | Total (final)      |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Personnel                  | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Contracts                  | \$0              | \$0              | \$50,000                    | \$50,000                 | Anoka County     | \$50,000           | \$50,000           |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT    | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT   | \$940,000        | \$940,000        | \$267,000                   | \$267,000                | Anoka County/TPL | \$1,207,000        | \$1,207,000        |
| Easement Acquisition       | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Easement Stewardship       | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Travel                     | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Professional Services      | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Direct Support Services    | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Capital Equipment          | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Other Equipment/Tools      | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| Supplies/Materials         | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| DNR IDP                    | \$0              | \$0              | \$0                         | \$0                      |                  | \$0                | \$0                |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>\$940,000</b> | <b>\$940,000</b> | <b>\$317,000</b>            | <b>\$317,000</b>         |                  | <b>\$1,257,000</b> | <b>\$1,257,000</b> |

## Output Tables

**Table 1. Acres by Resource Type**

| Type                                     | Wetlands (original) | Wetlands (final) | Prairies (original) | Prairies (final) | Forest (original) | Forest (final) | Habitats (original) | Habitats (final) | Total (original) | Total (final) |
|--|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Restore                                  | 0                   | 0                | 0                   | 0                | 0                 | 0              | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0                   | 0                | 0                   | 0                | 0                 | 0              | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability  | 243                 | 238              | 3                   | 3                | 17                | 17             | 0                   | 0                | 263              | 258           |
| Protect in Easement                      | 0                   | 0                | 0                   | 0                | 0                 | 0              | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Enhance                                  | 0                   | 0                | 0                   | 0                | 0                 | 0              | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>243</b>          | <b>238</b>       | <b>3</b>            | <b>3</b>         | <b>17</b>         | <b>17</b>      | <b>0</b>            | <b>0</b>         | <b>263</b>       | <b>258</b>    |

**Table 1b. How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie?**

| Type                                     | Native Prairie (original) | Native Prairie (final) |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Restore                                  | 0                         | 0                      |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0                         | 0                      |
| Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability  | 0                         | 0                      |
| Protect in Easement                      | 0                         | 0                      |
| Enhance                                  | 0                         | 0                      |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>0</b>                  | <b>0</b>               |

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

| Type                                     | Wetlands (original) | Wetlands (final) | Prairies (original) | Prairies (final) | Forest (original) | Forest (final)  | Habitats (original) | Habitats (final) | Total (original) | Total (final)    |
|--|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Restore                                  | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0               | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0              |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0               | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0              |
| Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability  | \$874,200           | \$874,200        | \$9,400             | \$9,400          | \$56,400          | \$56,400        | \$0                 | \$0              | \$940,000        | \$940,000        |
| Protect in Easement                      | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0               | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0              |
| Enhance                                  | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0               | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0              |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>\$874,200</b>    | <b>\$874,200</b> | <b>\$9,400</b>      | <b>\$9,400</b>   | <b>\$56,400</b>   | <b>\$56,400</b> | <b>\$0</b>          | <b>\$0</b>       | <b>\$940,000</b> | <b>\$940,000</b> |

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

| Type                                     | Metro Urban (original) | Metro Urban (final) | Forest Prairie (original) | Forest Prairie (final) | SE Forest (original) | SE Forest (final) | Prairie (original) | Prairie (final) | N Forest (original) | N Forest (final) | Total (original) | Total (final) |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Restore                                  | 0                      | 0                   | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 0                      | 0                   | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability  | 263                    | 258                 | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 263              | 258           |
| Protect in Easement                      | 0                      | 0                   | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Enhance                                  | 0                      | 0                   | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 0                | 0             |
| Total                                    | 263                    | 258                 | 0                         | 0                      | 0                    | 0                 | 0                  | 0               | 0                   | 0                | 263              | 258           |

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

| Type                                     | Metro Urban (original) | Metro Urban (final) | Forest Prairie (original) | Forest Prairie (final) | SE Forest (original) | SE Forest (final) | Prairie (original) | Prairie (final) | N Forest (original) | N Forest (final) | Total (original) | Total (final) |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Restore                                  | \$0                    | \$0                 | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0           |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | \$940,000              | \$940,000           | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$940,000        | \$940,000     |
| Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability  | \$0                    | \$0                 | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0           |
| Protect in Easement                      | \$0                    | \$0                 | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0           |
| Enhance                                  | \$0                    | \$0                 | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$0              | \$0           |
| Total                                    | \$940,000              | \$940,000           | \$0                       | \$0                    | \$0                  | \$0               | \$0                | \$0             | \$0                 | \$0              | \$940,000        | \$940,000     |

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles (original)**

0 miles

**Table 5. Target Lake/Stream/River Miles (final)**

0 miles

## Parcel List

### Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

### Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Anoka

| Name                            | TRDS     | Acres | Est Cost  | Existing Protection? | Hunting? | Fishing? |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------|-----------|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Columbus Lake Conservation Area | 03222223 | 40    | \$131,600 | No                   | Yes      | Yes      |
| Columbus Lake Conservation Area | 03222222 | 218   | \$808,400 | No                   | Yes      | Yes      |

### 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.

## Completed Parcel: Columbus Lake Conservation Area

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b># of Total Acres:</b>  | 40                                      |
| <b>County:</b>  | Anoka                                   |
| <b>Township:</b>  | 032                                     |
| <b>Range:</b>   | 22                                      |
| <b>Direction:</b>   | 2                                       |
| <b>Section:</b>   | 23                                      |
| <b># of Acres: Wetlands/Upland:</b>   | 40                                      |
| <b># of Acres: Forest:</b>  |   |
| <b># of Acres: Prairie/Grassland:</b>   |   |
| <b>Amount of Shoreline:</b>   | (Linear Feet)                           |
| <b>Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):</b>                        | No -                                    |
| <b>Has there been signage erected at the site:</b>                            | Signs will be erected by Sept. 1, 2013. |
| <b>Annual Reporting Organization Name:</b>                                    | Anoka County                            |
| <b>Annual Reporting Manager Name:</b>   | Karen Blaska                            |
| <b>Annual Reporting Address:</b>  | 550 Bunker Lake Blvd NW                 |
| <b>Annual Reporting City:</b>   | Andover                                 |
| <b>Annual Reporting State:</b>  | MN                                      |
| <b>Annual Reporting Zip:</b>  | 55304                                   |
| <b>Annual Reporting Email:</b>  | karen.blaska@co.anoka.mn.us             |
| <b>Annual Reporting Phone:</b>  | 763-767-2865                            |
| <b>Purchase Date:</b>   | January 03, 2013                        |
| <b>Purchase Price:</b>  | \$1,109,000                             |
| <b>Appraised Value:</b>   | \$1,176,000                             |
| <b>Assessed Value:</b>  | \$21,300                                |
| <b>Total Project Cost:</b>  | \$940,000                               |
| <b>Property Managed By:</b>   | Other -                                 |
| <b>Name of the unit area or location<br/>government unit or land manager:</b> | Anoka County                            |



## Completed Parcel: Columbus Lake Conservation Area

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b># of Total Acres:</b>  | 218   |
| <b>County:</b>  | Anoka                                       |
| <b>Township:</b>  | 032   |
| <b>Range:</b>   | 22  |
| <b>Direction:</b>   | 2   |
| <b>Section:</b>   | 22  |
| <b># of Acres: Wetlands/Upland:</b>                                       | 218   |
| <b># of Acres: Forest:</b>  |   |
| <b># of Acres: Prairie/Grassland:</b>                                     |   |
| <b>Amount of Shoreline:</b>   | (Linear Feet)                               |
| <b>Name of Adjacent Body of Water (if applicable):</b>                    | No -  |
| <b>Has there been signage erected at the site:</b>                        | Signage will be erected by Sept. 1st, 2013. |
| <b>Annual Reporting Organization Name:</b>                                | Anoka County                                |
| <b>Annual Reporting Manager Name:</b>                                     | Karen Blaska                                |
| <b>Annual Reporting Address:</b>  | 550 Bunker Lake Blvd NW                     |
| <b>Annual Reporting City:</b>   | Andover                                     |
| <b>Annual Reporting State:</b>  | MN  |
| <b>Annual Reporting Zip:</b>  | 55304                                       |
| <b>Annual Reporting Email:</b>  | karen.blaska@co.anoka.mn.us                 |
| <b>Annual Reporting Phone:</b>  | 763-767-2865                                |
| <b>Purchase Date:</b>   | January 03, 2013                            |
| <b>Purchase Price:</b>  | \$1,109,000                                 |
| <b>Appraised Value:</b>   | \$1,176,000                                 |
| <b>Assessed Value:</b>  | \$117,150                                   |
| <b>Total Project Cost:</b>  | \$940,000                                   |
| <b>Property Managed By:</b>   | Local Unit of Government -                  |
| <b>Name of the unit area or location government unit or land manager:</b> | Anoka County                                |