



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program - Phase VI
Laws of Minnesota 2017 Final Report

General Information

Date: 10/10/2022

Project Title: Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program - Phase VI

Funds Recommended: \$1,779,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2017, Ch. 91, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(g)

Appropriation Language: \$1,779,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Shell Rock River Watershed District to acquire land in fee, restore, and enhance aquatic habitat in the Shell Rock River watershed. A list of proposed acquisitions, restorations, and enhancements must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Andy Henschel

Title: Administrator

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Location Information

County Location(s): Freeborn.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Wetlands
- Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Phase VI Habitat Restoration Program included an Orr Property Acquisition, a Vandegrift Wetland Restoration, an IC&E Wetland Enhancement Project and a Headwaters Streambank Restoration Project. As a result, 296 acres of habitat and wetlands were protected, enhanced or restored.

Process & Methods

With the Phase VI Habitat Restoration Program, the District completed one acquisition, along with a wetland restoration, a river restoration and a vegetation enhancement project.

For the land acquisition project, the District worked with a willing landowner and entered into an option agreement to purchase the property. Once the option was signed, the District completed a survey and an appraisal of the property. The District had to have an appraisal review being that it was over the \$500,000 threshold. The District then negotiated with the landowner an acceptable offer, executed the purchase agreement, and completed final closing requirements. The District closed on the property in 2020. This property included 80 acres of row-crop farm ground that the District planted into natives. Upcoming work for this site includes wetland restoration work that will be funded in a later phase of the Habitat Restoration Program.

The restoration and enhancement projects in the Phase VI list include the IC&E Enhancement, the Headwaters Streambank Restoration and the Vandegrift Wetland Restoration. The IC&E Project partnered with the USFWS to seed fallow agricultural ground into native grasses and flowers. The District worked with the USFWS to source native origin seed and get the ground seeded prior to wetland restoration work. This project expands current restored parcels owned by the USFWS and will benefit pollinators, such as the rusty patched bumblebee, and songbirds.

The Vandegrift Wetland Restoration was completed on a property that was purchased in Phase 4 of the Habitat Restoration Program. The District, following procurement procedures, hired a contractor to implement a wetland restoration. This restoration reconnected a historic floodplain that was disconnected from Wedge Creek when the railroad came through. The District worked with the DNR and neighboring landowners to complete this restoration. Project benefits include increased use days for waterfowl, reduced competition for feeding and nesting sites as well as improved habitat for the threatened Marsh Wren.

The Headwaters Streambank was a project that the District partnered with the DNR to implement site specific habitat features in the Shell Rock River. Following procurement procedures, the District worked with DNR's engineers and river specialists to design and construct habitat features all along the Headwaters Aquatic Management Area. Tree revetments, rock crossings, and permeable pylons were all used to incorporate habitat back into the Shell Rock River.

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?

Historically the Shell Rock River Watershed is a shallow lake system with diverse populations of fish, waterfowl and wildlife. An ongoing effort of modeling and monitoring has defined current impairments and invasive species populations. Implementing site specific habitat restoration projects are progressively improving populations of native fish, waterfowl and wildlife habitat. The Program included projects that are prioritized based on the

significance of benefit to aquatic habitat, urgency of the work, availability of leverage funding, location of projects and agreement with relevant planning documents. Targeted species that benefited from this proposal outcomes included the Blanding's turtle, Sheepnose and Round Pigtoe Mussels from the River Restoration Project and the Marsh Wren and Blanding's turtle with the IC&E, Orr, and Vandegrift Wetland projects. Pollinators such as the rusty patch bumblebee have more habitat from the many acres of native prairies that were established.

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.

The SRRWD utilizes precision conservation modeling with monitoring to identify Priority Management Zones (PMZs) on a sub-watershed basis. The PMZs are prioritized, evaluated conservation measures and project locations chosen to mitigate specific areas contributing to degradation of habitat which reduce populations of aquatic vegetation, fish waterfowl and wildlife within the lakeshed. The PMZ is a watershed wide parcel review where habitat areas were ranked on a 1 to 3 scale. This scale incorporates a variety of measures including size of the habitat complex to be protected, proximity to existing protection, location to MN County Biological Survey areas and distance to a wetland or lake water resource. The District's goal is to implement projects that receive the highest rating where there are willing landowners.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Partners in this Phase VI of funding include the DNR with the Streambank Restoration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Orr and IC&E Wetland Enhancement Projects, and numerous landowners were supporters for the Vandegrift Wetland Restoration Project. All projects completed in this Phase had the support of the Albert Lea Lakes Foundation, City of Albert Lea and Freeborn County officials, along with neighboring landowners.

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

Some challenges included amendments that resulted in project changes. This included an acquisition change because of a landowner death, as well as increased funding to the new acquisition after an appraisal was completed. The District did have a reduction in the amount of R/E acres reduced in the R/E line is a direct result of amendment changes. First amendment was to change the protect parcel (which is the increase from 33 to 80 in the protect line). Because of that increase in the scope of the protection project, the District had to modify the remaining projects that could be completed. This resulted in one wetland restoration project being reduced from 35 down to 20 acres; and enhancement work to shift from 266 to 171 acres. The enhancement acres was also an approved amendment shift from the original parcel.

What other fund may contribute to this program?

- N/A

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

The SRRWD relies on multiple funding sources including a citizen driven local option sales tax, local levy, and multiple public funding sources to assist the District in restoration efforts. These funding sources will allow the District to maintain existing and future natural resource management projects.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2023+	Local Option Sales Tax	Maintenance Inspections by SRRWD Staff	Implement Maintenance As Needed.	The Orr Property will eventually be owned by the USFWS and

				they will conduct burns/maintenance on property using their funding dollars.
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Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Antic. Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$36,700	-	-	-	\$45,000	\$36,700
Contracts	\$863,800	\$867,100	\$868,500	-	-	-	\$863,800	\$868,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$360,000	\$666,800	\$678,700	-	-	-	\$360,000	\$678,700
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$239,400	\$195,100	\$195,100	\$100,000	\$22,100	Local Option Sales Tax	\$339,400	\$217,200
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$5,000	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	\$5,000	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$265,800	-	-	-	-	-	\$265,800	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$1,779,000	\$1,779,000	\$1,779,000	\$100,000	\$22,100	-	\$1,879,000	\$1,801,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Manager	0.43	1.0	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Program Assistant	0.3	1.0	\$11,700	-	-	\$11,700

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The budget did change slightly as projects moved forward, this is due to acquisitions coming in higher than expected resulting in a budget amendments. The District did fall short in the intended leverage dollars for this Phase, this is due to professional services, specifically engineering, coming in lower than budgeted. Although leverage was reduced in Phase 4, Phase 5 the District contributed \$300,000 more than originally proposed.

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)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Acres (AP)	Total Acres (Final)
Restore	35	20	0	0	0	0	25	25	60	45
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	80	33	80
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	266	171	266	171
Total	35	20	0	0	0	0	324	276	359	296

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland (AP)	Wetland (Final)	Prairie (AP)	Prairie (Final)	Forest (AP)	Forest (Final)	Habitat (AP)	Habitat (Final)	Total Funding (AP)	Total Funding (Final)
Restore	\$225,600	\$40,400	-	-	-	-	\$795,600	\$890,200	\$1,021,200	\$930,600
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$365,000	\$719,300	\$365,000	\$719,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$392,800	\$129,100	\$392,800	\$129,100
Total	\$225,600	\$40,400	-	-	-	-	\$1,553,400	\$1,738,600	\$1,779,000	\$1,779,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	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	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	45	0	0	60	45
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	80	0	0	33	80
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	266	171	0	0	266	171
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	359	296	0	0	359	296

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,021,200	\$930,600	-	-	\$1,021,200	\$930,600
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$365,000	\$719,300	-	-	\$365,000	\$719,300
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$392,800	\$129,100	-	-	\$392,800	\$129,100
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,779,000	\$1,779,000	-	-	\$1,779,000	\$1,779,000

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

7

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced habitat for migratory and unique Minnesota species ~ *Outcomes will be measured and evaluated by the increase of use days for migrating waterfowl and increase angler success as a result of improved habitat in shallow lakes. The protected, restored and enhanced shallow lakes, wetlands and streambanks will provide habitat to wildlife and support healthy natural resource conditions for long term benefits.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

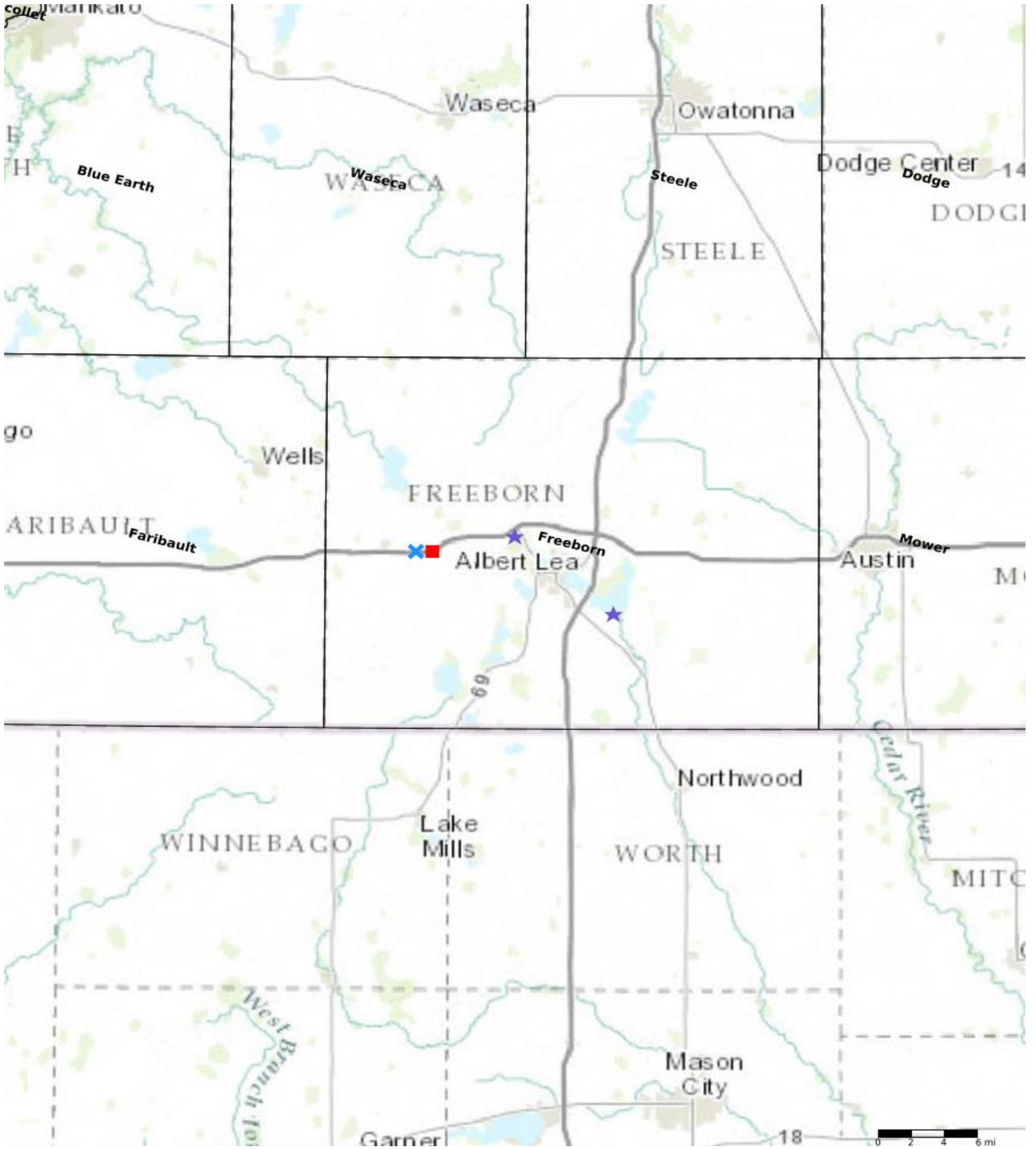
Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Headwaters Streambank Restoration	Freeborn	10221225	25	\$775,600	Yes
IC&E Wetland Enhancement	Freeborn	10223201	171	\$67,700	Yes
Wedge Creek (Vandegrift) Wetland Restoration	Freeborn	10322236	20	\$225,600	No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Orr Tract	Freeborn	10222206	80	\$666,800	No

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- + Other