



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program - Phase VII

Laws of Minnesota 2018 Final Report

General Information

Date: 07/31/2023

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

Funds Recommended: \$1,421,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2018, Ch. 208, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd 5(l)

Appropriation Language: \$1,421,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Shell Rock River Watershed District to acquire lands in fee and to 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 VII Habitat Restoration Program included an Orr Wetland Restoration, a Belshan Property Targeted Habitat Acquisition Project, and a Shell Rock River Streambank Restoration Project. As a result, 152 acres of habitat and wetlands were protected, enhanced or restored.

Process & Methods

With the Phase VII Habitat Restoration Program, the District completed one acquisition, along with a large wetland restoration, and a river 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 then negotiated with the landowner an acceptable offer, executed the purchase agreement, and completed final closing requirements. The District closed on the property in 2021. This property included 57 acres of previous row-crop farm ground that the District planted into natives. The District also conducted two wetland restorations on this property with Phase VII funding. Using tile breaks, berms, and scrapes, two different wetland basins were created for waterfowl enhancement efforts. The District placed the work out for bid, and construction and touch up seeding wrapped up in Spring of 2023.

The Orr Wetland Restoration 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 District then worked with USFWS staff to design and implement wetland restorations ranging in size from a quarter of an acre to 22 acres. In total approximately 55 total acres of wetlands were designed and installed. Construction was placed out for bid and work was conducted over the fall of 2022 into spring of 2023. Project benefits of the wetland restorations also include increased use days for waterfowl, reduced competition for feeding and nesting sites as well as improved habitat for the threatened Marsh Wren.

The Shell Rock River Streambank Enhancement 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 Panicum Prairie Management Area. Toe wood installation and natural benches were all used to incorporate habitat back into the Shell Rock River and prevent continued erosion.

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 Orr 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. The District's efforts in Phase VII conducted projects that were located on, or adjacent to PMZ identified areas within the District.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Partners in this Phase VII of funding include the DNR with the Streambank Restoration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Orr Wetland Enhancement Projects. 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 and a wetland restoration location change. However, the District did have an increase in the amount of R/E acres is a direct result of the amendment changes. The first amendment was to change the protect parcel which is the increase from 37 to 57 acres in the protect line. The second amendment resulted in one wetland restoration project being increased from 60 to 80 acres.

The District was also able to partner with different agencies to complete some high wish list projects. One challenge was meeting the match that was stated, but that is explained in the budget tab due to projects coming in under bid.

What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or 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 in this Phase. The US. Fish and Wildlife Service will also own the Orr Wetland Restoration Property and will continue to conduct vegetation management of the site.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2024+	Local Option Sales Tax	Maintenance Inspections by SRRWD Staff	Implement Maintenance as Needed	The Orr Wetland 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	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$5,000	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$197,300	-	-	-	-	-	\$197,300	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personnel	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$42,800	-	-	-	\$45,000	\$42,800
Contracts	\$641,100	\$778,400	\$763,700	-	-	-	\$641,100	\$763,700
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	\$433,100	\$433,000	-	-	-	-	\$433,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$451,600	-	-	-	-	-	\$451,600	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$81,000	\$164,500	\$181,000	\$100,000	\$23,600	Local Option Sales Tax	\$181,000	\$204,600
Grand Total	\$1,421,000	\$1,421,000	\$1,420,500	\$100,000	\$23,600	-	\$1,521,000	\$1,444,100

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Manager	0.43	1.0	\$25,000	-	-	\$25,000
Program Assistant	0.3	1.0	\$17,800	-	-	\$17,800

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The budget did change slightly as projects moved forward and bids were received. We did fall short in our intended leverage dollars. This is due to bids coming in lower than engineers' estimates. One bid was 13% below engineers estimates and the second was 40% below. This resulted in a reduction of project costs by \$109,437. An additional budget benefit was being able to work with USFWS and partner with them for in-kind dollar amount of \$8,000 for working on the Orr Wetland Restoration.

Total Revenue: \$0

Revenue Spent: \$0

Revenue Balance: \$0

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

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	60	80	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	80
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	37	57	37	57
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15	15	15
Total	60	80	0	0	0	0	52	72	112	152

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	\$606,200	\$465,300	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$606,200	\$465,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$547,100	-	\$547,100
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$362,500	-	\$362,500	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$452,300	\$408,600	\$452,300	\$408,600
Total	\$606,200	\$465,300	-	-	-	-	\$814,800	\$955,700	\$1,421,000	\$1,421,000

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	80	0	0	60	80
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	37	57	0	0	37	57
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15	0	0	15	15
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	112	152	0	0	112	152

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$606,200	\$465,300	-	-	\$606,200	\$465,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$547,100	-	-	-	\$547,100
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$362,500	-	-	-	\$362,500	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$452,300	\$408,600	-	-	\$452,300	\$408,600
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,421,000	\$1,421,000	-	-	\$1,421,000	\$1,421,000

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

4,500

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
Orr Wetland Restoration	Freeborn	10222206	80	\$371,250	Yes
Shell Rock River Streambank Enhancement	Freeborn	10120231	15	\$615,000	Yes

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Belshan Property	Freeborn	10221220	57	\$456,025	No

Parcel Map



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