



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Watershed Restoration Program - Phase VIII

Laws of Minnesota 2019 Final Report

General Information

Date: 04/30/2025

Project Title: Shell Rock River Watershed Restoration Program - Phase VIII

Funds Recommended: \$2,046,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd, 5(j)

Appropriation Language: \$2,046,000 the first 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: Courtney Phillips

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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

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Phase VIII Habitat Restoration Program completed a targeted property Church Lake Acquisition, a Pioneer Park Lakeshore Restoration Project, and a Fountain Lake In-Lake Habitat Project. As a result, 80 acres were permanently protected, and 235 acres of habitat were enhanced and restored.

Process & Methods

With the Phase VIII Habitat Restoration Program, the District completed one acquisition, along with a lakeshore restoration and implementing in-lake habitat features.

The Pioneer Park Lakeshore Project was initiated by the Board in June of 2019. Engineering and permitting were completed and the project was placed out for bid in winter of 2019. Once the contractor was awarded, they began work in January of 2020. Final completion for the Pioneer Park project was November of 2020. Outcomes for this project including installing “tree fish sticks” to incorporate submersed wooded vegetation in the littoral areas of the lake, promoting spawning and refuge locations for fish. Additionally, the lake shoreline was restored as erosion was taking place.

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 June of 2020. This property included opening up access to Church Lake, that was previously landlocked by private ownership. The District has further gone on to purchase other property in the area (ML 22) stemming from this project. The SRRWD has since donated this parcel to the DNR to add to the Twin Lakes WMA.

All projects in the workplan were completed, but the biggest project, Fountain Lake In-Lake Habitat project did experience permitting delays as a result of needing an Environmental Assessment Worksheet. The project was largely done prior to the original grant deadline, but the extension allowed for more breathing room for construction. Work included installing bolder clusters, spawning gravel, and rock reef structures in Fountain Lake to promote fish habitat. This project included multiple advisory meetings to focus on community involvement and information and has been highly praised by our local angler community.

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?

Implementing site specific habitat restoration projects are progressively improving populations of native fish, waterfowl and wildlife habitat. This 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.

Target species that benefited from this proposal outcomes include the Marsh Wren and Blanding’s turtle with the habitat permanently protected with Church Lake Acquisition. Additionally, the District has been working diligently

with DNR fisheries to establish diverse and stable game fish populations in Fountain Lake. The shoreline restoration and in-lake habitat project directly target improvements in fish populations.

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 Property 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 reduces populations of aquatic vegetation, fish, waterfowl and wildlife within the lake-shed. 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 resources. This District's goal is to implement projects that receive the highest rating where there are willing landowners.

The Church Lake Property was included in the highest ranked zone. The In-Lake Habitat was in public waters, so was not specifically included with a land ranking value. However, Fountain Lake is a priority waterbody and its sub-watershed is ranked highest in our comprehensive watershed management planning.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

The City of Albert Lea was a large supporter of both the Pioneer Lakeshore Project and In-Lake Habitat Restoration Project. This involved multiple permits and land agreements with them being they owned the property and staging locations needed for construction. We have received much praise for our efforts in the In-Lake Habitat Project and had some great ice fishing pictures sent our way from anglers having success on Fountain Lake.

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

As mentioned, this phase of funding did receive an extension to the grant expiration timeline. While two of the projects were finished early in the grant window (2020) the largest in-lake project took quite a bit of time with engineering and permitting. Most notably was the time to took to complete the EAW. Once placed out for bid, construction went smooth and timely.

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

Other : City of Albert Lea

How were the funds used to advance the program?

\$70,663 of funding by the City of Albert Lea's general fund was used to install a fishing pier located were the in-lake habitat features were installed. Although directly not expensed towards the habitat improvements itself, the City is promoting the angling success by the installation of the pier.

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 sources to assist in the District's restoration efforts. These funding sources will allow the District to maintain existing and future natural resource management projects in this Phase. The Mn DNR also owns the Chruch Lake Property and will continue to conduct vegetation management on the site.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2025 +	Local Option Sales Tax	Maintenance Inspections by SRRWD Staff	Implement Maintenance as Needed	Continue Monitoring

Budget

Totals

Item	Requested	AP Amount	Spent	Leverage	Received Leverage	Leverage Source	Original Total	Final Total
Personnel	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$25,000	\$18,200	Local Option Sales Tax	\$70,000	\$63,200
Contracts	\$950,300	\$1,387,900	\$1,387,900	-	\$100	Local Option Sales Tax	\$950,300	\$1,388,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$543,100	\$423,900	\$423,900	-	-	-	\$543,100	\$423,900
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$205,200	\$189,200	\$189,200	\$75,000	\$1,600	Local Option Sales Tax	\$280,200	\$190,800
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,000	-	-	-	-	-	\$10,000	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$292,400	-	-	-	-	-	\$292,400	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000	\$100,000	\$19,900	-	\$2,146,000	\$2,065,900

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Amount Spent	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Manager	0.43	1.0	\$25,000	\$10,000	Local Option Sales Tax	\$35,000
Program Assistant	0.3	1.0	\$20,000	\$8,200	Local Option Sales Tax	\$28,200

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The District had some amendments in the process to change funding categories around, but the parcels never changed. The District did fall short in the direct match towards this grant. As mentioned in the contributing funds, the City of Albert Lea spent \$70,663 towards a fishing pier that highlights the in-lake habitat features that were installed using LSOHC funding.

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	0	0	0	0	0	0	235	235	235	235
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	80	80	80
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	315	315	315	315

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,447,000	\$1,576,200	\$1,447,000	\$1,576,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$599,000	\$469,800	\$599,000	\$469,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000

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	235	235	0	0	235	235
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	80	0	0	80	80
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	315	315	0	0	315	315

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$1,447,000	\$1,576,200	-	-	\$1,447,000	\$1,576,200
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$599,000	\$469,800	-	-	\$599,000	\$469,800
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000	-	-	\$2,046,000	\$2,046,000

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

20345

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

The District was able to meet the acre goals that were set in the original accomplishment plan.

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, increased fisheries IBI scores, and increasing angler success as a result of improved habitat in shallow lakes. The protected and restored property 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	Description
Fountain Lake In-lake Habitat Restoration	Freeborn	10221205	232	\$1,324,800	Yes	Restoration of 232 acres of in-lake habitat
Fountain Lake Pioneer Lakeshore Restoration	Freeborn	10221208	3	\$137,200	Yes	Lake shore Restoration on Pioneer Park in Albert Lea

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Church Lake Property	Freeborn	10222226	80	\$609,000	No

Parcel Map



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

0 2 4 6 mi