



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Habitat Restoration Program - Phase X

Laws of Minnesota 2021 Final Report

General Information

Date: 04/24/2025

Project Title: Shell Rock River Habitat Restoration Program - Phase X

Funds Recommended: \$1,547,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(m)

Appropriation Language: \$1,547,000 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 and to restore and enhance wildlife 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

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Title: Program/Project Manager

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Location Information

County Location(s): Freeborn.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Activity types:

Protect in Fee

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Prairie

Habitat

Narrative

Summary of Accomplishments

The Phase X Habitat Restoration Program completed a targeted property Hein acquisition and an ICE WPA wetland restoration. As a result, 149 acres were permanently protected, and 213 acres of habitat and wetlands were enhanced and restored.

Process & Methods

With the Phase X Habitat Restoration Program, the District completed one acquisition, along with a large wetland restoration complex 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. This acquisition was valued at over \$1,000,000 and required the extra DNR review of appraisals. The District closed on the property in August of 2024. This property included over 140 acres of row crop farm ground that the District will be planting into natives. Funding for the restoration of this parcel is already underway and is included in our ML 22 workplan.

The wetland restoration and enhancements partnered with USFWS to complete final wetland restoration on the ICE WPA site. A large majority of the ICE wetland restoration work was completed in previous appropriations (ML 18), but final touch up items needed to be addressed. Additionally, this project partnered with LCCMR funding to construct wetland restoration work. Using LCCMR funding, the District was able to secure a conservation easement on a parcel, and engineer the wetland restoration. LSOHC funding was then used to construct the project, leading to over \$467,000 in matching funds.

All projects in the workplan were completed in a timely manner and within budget.

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. 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 wetland restoration projects. Pollinators such as the rusty patch bumblebee have more habitat from the many acres of native prairie plantings that will be established on the Hein Property.

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. This District's efforts in Phase X concluded projects that were located on the highest ranked PMZ identified areas.

Explain Partners, Supporters, & Opposition

Partners in the Phase X funding include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the ICE WPA wetland restoration. All projects completed in this Phase had the support of 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. The original parcel that the District wanted had an appraisal that came in two low for what the landowners wanted. Being bound to the Appendix E requirements, the District passed on the property and amended it for the Hein acquisition. This parcel was similar in scope and actually had better wetland restoration potential. This grant also had the opportunity to fund a project that was largely completed by the LCCMR which included a conservation easement followed by wetland restoration work.

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

Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

How were the funds used to advance the program?

The ENRTF funds were used to purchase a conservation easement along with engineering a wetland restoration. LSOHC funds paid for the construction of the project.

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 US. Fish and Wildlife Service also owns the ICE 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 | The Hein site and ICE Restoration will eventually be owned by the USFWS, and they will conduct burns/maintenance on property using their funding dollars. |

Budget

Totals

| Item | Requested | AP Amount | Spent | Leverage | Received Leverage | Leverage Source | Original Total | Final Total |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Personnel | \$45,000 | \$24,500 | \$24,500 | \$25,000 | \$2,100 | Local Option Sales Tax | \$70,000 | \$26,600 |
| Contracts | \$155,000 | \$145,400 | \$145,400 | - | - | Local Option Sales Tax | \$155,000 | \$145,400 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | \$1,177,300 | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,177,300 | - |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | \$1,309,600 | \$1,309,600 | - | - | - | - | \$1,309,600 |
| Easement Acquisition | - | - | - | - | \$420,000 | LCCMR | - | \$420,000 |
| Easement Stewardship | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Travel | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Professional Services | \$164,700 | \$67,500 | \$67,500 | \$75,000 | \$83,000 | Local Option Sales Tax and LCCMR | \$239,700 | \$150,500 |
| Direct Support Services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| DNR Land Acquisition Costs | \$5,000 | - | - | - | - | - | \$5,000 | - |
| Capital Equipment | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Equipment/Tools | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Supplies/Materials | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| DNR IDP | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Grand Total | \$1,547,000 | \$1,547,000 | \$1,547,000 | \$100,000 | \$505,100 | - | \$1,647,000 | \$2,052,100 |

Personnel

| Position | Annual FTE | Years Working | Amount Spent | Leverage | Leverage Source | Total |
|-------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| Program Manager | 0.43 | 1.0 | \$14,500 | \$2,100 | Local Option Sales Tax | \$16,600 |
| Program Assistant | 0.43 | 1.0 | \$10,000 | - | - | \$10,000 |

Explain any budget challenges or successes:

The budget did change slightly as projects moved forward and bids and appraisals came in. The District was able to increase the leverage dollars by utilizing ENRTF funding for a conservation easement on a parcel that wetland restoration work was completed on.

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 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | 218 | 0 | 218 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 149 | - | 149 |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | 171 | 213 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 171 | 213 |
| Total | 171 | 213 | - | - | - | - | 218 | 149 | 389 | 362 |

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 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,347,000 | - | \$1,347,000 | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,337,500 | - | \$1,337,500 |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | \$200,000 | \$209,500 | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$200,000 | \$209,500 |
| Total | \$200,000 | \$209,500 | - | - | - | - | \$1,347,000 | \$1,337,500 | \$1,547,000 | \$1,547,000 |

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 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | 218 | 0 | - | - | 218 | 0 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 149 | - | - | - | 149 |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - | 171 | 213 | - | - | 171 | 213 |
| Total | - | - | - | - | - | - | 389 | 362 | - | - | 389 | 362 |

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 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,347,000 | - | - | - | \$1,347,000 | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,337,500 | - | - | - | \$1,337,500 |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$200,000 | \$209,500 | - | - | \$200,000 | \$209,500 |
| Total | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$1,547,000 | \$1,547,000 | - | - | \$1,547,000 | \$1,547,000 |

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

N/A

Explain the success/shortage of acre goals

There was a slight reduction in final acre goals due the acquisition project changing with the amendment. All wetland enhancement acres were met or exceeded.

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 increasing angler success as a result of improved habitat in shallow lakes. The protected, restored and enhanced wetlands will provide habitat to wildlife and support healthy natural resource conditions for long term benefits.*

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

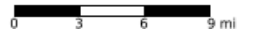
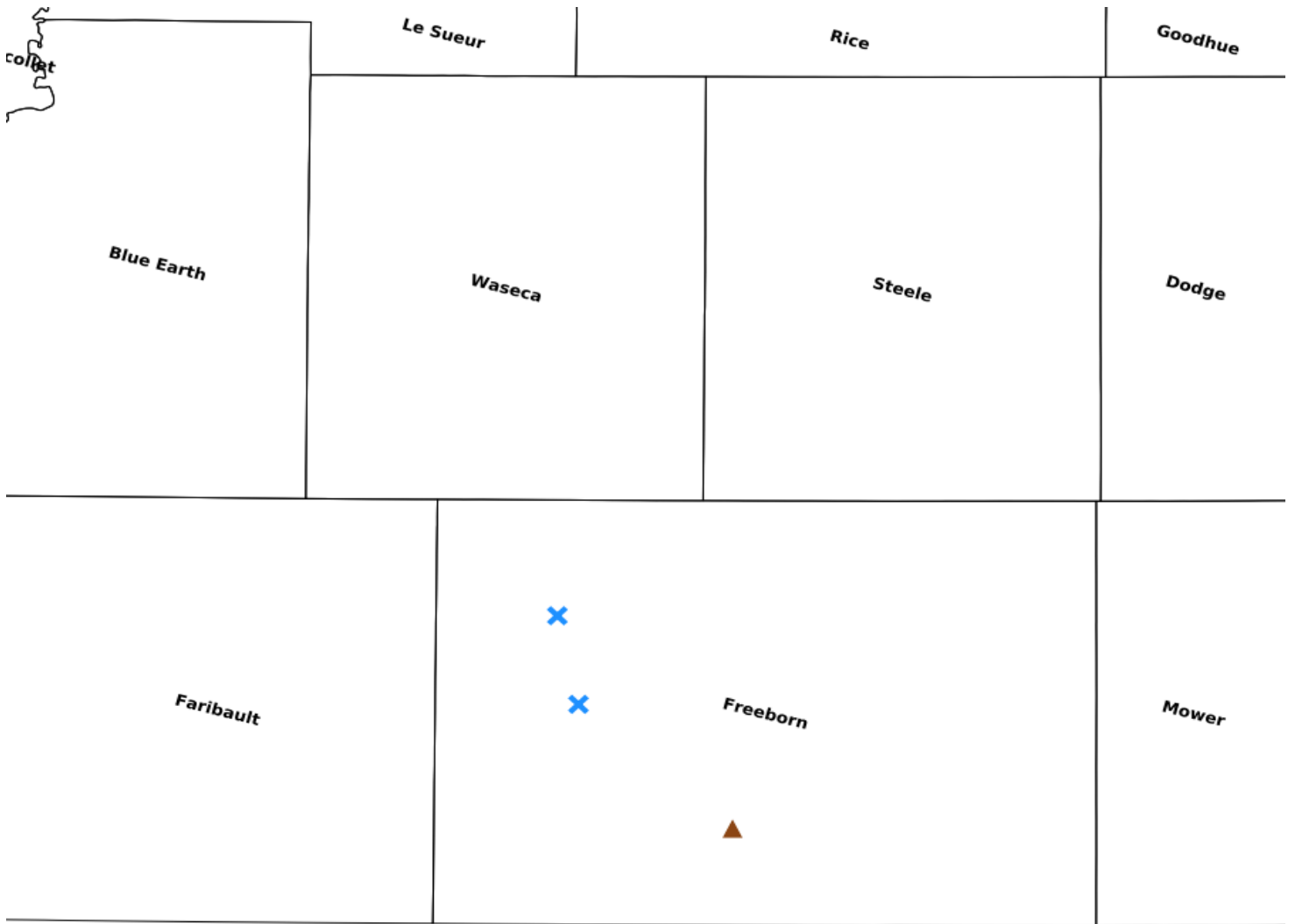
Restore / Enhance Parcels

| Name | County | TRDS | Acres | Est Cost | Existing Protection | Description |
|--|----------|----------|-------|-----------|---------------------|--|
| IC & E WPA Wetland Enhancement | Freeborn | 10323201 | 171 | \$200,000 | Yes | A combination of 4 parcels located east of Alden and north of interstate 90 |
| IC & E Bryson Parcel Wetland Enhancement | Freeborn | 10322231 | 42 | \$80,000 | Yes | Additional parcel adjacent to the ICE WPA for wetland restoration and native prairie planting. |

Fee Parcels

| Name | County | TRDS | Acres | Est Cost | Existing Protection |
|---------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|---------------------|
| Hein Property | Freeborn | 10121205 | 149 | \$684,000 | No |

Parcel Map



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