



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program - Phase XI
Laws of Minnesota 2022 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 03/14/2024

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

Funds Recommended: \$1,438,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2022, Ch. 77, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(f)

Appropriation Language: \$1,438,000 the second 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 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

Title: Program and Project Manager

Organization: Shell Rock River Watershed District

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Location Information

County Location(s): Freeborn.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

- Prairie

Activity types:

- Enhance
- Restore
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Habitat
- Wetlands

Narrative**Abstract**

The Shell Rock River Watershed District (SRRWD) is seeking funding for their Habitat Restoration Program to restore, enhance, and protect 302 acres of essential prairie upland, wetland, lake and streambank habitat across the watershed. As a result of the projects, key biological functioning parcels will be permanently protected, streambank habitat will be enhanced, vegetation and feeding sources will be restored for migratory fowl habitat and wetlands will be restored from row crop agriculture. Projects in Phase XI are critical for the benefit of fish, waterfowl, and wildlife populations, reversing the trend of wetland loss and habitat degradation.

Design and Scope of Work

In 2014, the SRRWD created a phased approach to restore, protect, and enhance degraded habitat conditions by implementing projects on a lake-shed basis. Specifically, Phase XI will contribute to the District's goals by:

- Acquire 62 acres of key targeted acquisitions to protect wooded riparian areas along Church and Eberhart Lake, establish upland prairie, and permanently protect historic oak woodlands.
- Enhance 40 acres of wetland basins, reversing wetland loss and habitat degradation while improving nesting habitat and waterfowl food sources.
- Reestablish 190 acres of vegetation into upland prairie from agricultural use in an important flyway that is crucial to nesting waterfowl, upland game, and other wading bird species.
- Habitat restoration and enhancements on 10 acres of lakeshore and streambank sites that is critical for wildlife.

This proposal uses a programmatic approach to achieve protection, restoration, and enhancement of lakes, wetlands, streams and native prairie landscapes. The program includes projects that are prioritized on the significance of the benefits to aquatic habitat, urgency of the work, availability of leveraged funds, location of projects and agreements with relevant planning documents. The SRRWD has a proven track record with the LSOHC and implementing projects that protect, restore and enhance natural resources. The SRRWD continues to receive strong support for these projects from landowners, local governments and sporting organizations.

Once completed, the program will establish waterfowl and fish populations, increase habitat for wetland dependent wildlife, will interconnect and reestablish important flyway habitats and recreate the wildlife mecca in southern Minnesota. Finally, this program will preserve an outdoor legacy for Minnesotans to use and enjoy for generations.

Background:

The SRRWD covers 246 square miles inside Freeborn County and includes a complex system of wetlands, streams, and shallow lakes that drain into the Shell Rock River. Managing habitat for this complex system is imperative to the SRRWD as well as understanding its role for providing critical habitat for fish, waterfowl and wildlife. Habitat degradation of wetlands, streams, and shallow lakes is an issue of statewide importance that requires accelerated investment in projects to reverse this degradation. Protection and restoration of this critical habitat is the highest priority of the SRRWD and is directly affected by invasive aquatic vegetation, land use changes, increased water demands, populations of invasive fish species such as common carp, and artificial drainage. Degradation in habitat

influences available food sources for game fish populations that include Northern Pike, Bluegill, Yellow Perch and Walleye, and duck populations including Northern Pintail, Redhead, Canvasback and Lesser Scaup.

How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?

Using the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources tool for species in greatest conservation need by habitat, the SRRWD has identified species of importance for the oak savanna landscape. Those species include birds such as the Marsh Wren and Common Moorhen, mussels such as Sheepnose and Round Pigtoe, and amphibians including the Blanding's turtle.

One of the fastest declining populations in Minnesota are the native mussels. The freshwater mussel is threatened by a multitude of sources including dams and stream channelization, wetland drainage, bank erosion, invasive mussels and water pollution. The District is focused on improving 10 acres of in-water features that will improve that quality of habitat for the threatened Round Pigtoe, and endangered Sheepnose mussels.

The Common Moorhen is listed as special concern in the oak savanna habitat and can be attributed to the loss of well-vegetated ponds and wetlands. With projects proposed by Phase XI, wetland creation and vegetation enhancement of 230 acres will provide restored habitat for both the Common Moorhen and March Wren. Blanding's turtles are listed as being a threatened species and creating streambank restorations that include turtle hibernaculums and restoring wetland with marshy areas will provide habitat for this threatened species.

Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified 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 was 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 (MCBS) areas and distance to a wetland or lake water source.

Historically the Shell Rock River Watershed is a shallow lake system with diverse populations of fish, waterfowl and wildlife. With degraded habitat becoming a concern, and more areas listed as below biodiversity significance in the MCBS, the District has ongoing efforts with identifying key PMZs to implement projects that expands habitat corridors and protects areas identified by the MCBS.

One of the land acquisitions is contained within areas identified on the MCBS, permanently protecting the valued significance of the land. The Eberhart acquisition is adjacent to this same complex, expanding habitat corridors to offer permanent protection.

Projects such as these are important to expanding corridors and reaching the targeted nine square mile parcels. Implementing site specific habitat restorations projects, in line with areas identified in the MCBS, are progressively improving populations of native fish, waterfowl and wildlife habitat to once again create a wildlife mecca.

Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds

Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota's Wildlife Management Area Acquisition - The Next 50 Years
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

Outcomes

Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands will be measured by the increase of use days for migrating waterfowl and increased 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. The projects will offer an oasis for migratory waterfowl by reestablished and connecting MCBS corridors, and flyway habitats. Improved and permanently protected areas will provide a lasting habitat for Minnesota's unique species and provide improved access to public natural resources.*

Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

Explain the leverage:

Leverage funding is from the Albert Lea Local Option Sales Tax. Additional in-kind work includes some of the staff costs.

Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

Not applicable.

Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2020	Local Tax Levy	\$300,000
2019	Local Tax Levy	\$400,000
2018	Local Tax Levy	\$400,000
2017	Local Tax Levy	\$500,000
2016	Local Tax Levy	\$750,000
2015	Local Tax Levy	\$200,000
2014	Local Tax Levy	\$804,750
2013	Local Tax Levy	\$230,000
2012	Local Tax Levy	\$180,000

How will you 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 and private funding sources to assist in the District's restoration efforts. The District has an aggressive monitoring protocol that generates yearly data used for extensive reporting. The habitat efforts that

accrue from the Phase XI Restoration Program will be easily incorporated into this existing results-driven reporting framework. This reporting can be used to generate public interest and education of a watershed based restoration approach. The District has commitment and funding sources necessary to maintain existing and future natural resource management projects.

The SRRWD is authorized by Minnesota state statute 103D and operates under a series of 10 year Water Management Plans that are approved by the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR). The District recently updated its waterplan and is completing the One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) Comprehensive Management Plan process. This second generation plan, and 1W1P includes a top to bottom comprehensive list detailing natural resource restoration, enhancement, along with protection and management strategies to sustain this work.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026+	Sales Tax	Maintenance Inspections	Maintenance Implementations	-
2023-2025	Sales Tax and LSOHC	Construction and Erosion Control	Erosion Control and Maintenance	Maintenance Inspections and Implementations

Provide an assessment of how your program celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:

The SRRWD has used, and continues to use, the Understanding Environmental Justice in Minnesota tool, developed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, to understand where BIPOC and diverse communities are present in the watershed area. The SRRWD tries to implement projects within those areas when possible based on landowner willingness.

Additionally the SRRWD has a digital option to view this program. Digital options give diverse community members an option to engage regardless of language, color, age, transportation and gender.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?

Yes

Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

Yes

Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?

Yes

Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?

Yes

Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?

Yes

Where does the activity take place?

- Public Waters

Land Use

Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?

No

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

No

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

All projects will follow State of Minnesota regulations.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA

What is the anticipated number of closed acquisitions (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?

Two are anticipated.

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?

No

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?

No

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

Yes

There are restoration costs, but it had to be reduced due to the reduced allocation amount. Native plants and flowers will be planted, but the wetland restoration scope is reduced.

Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?

Yes

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Maintenance and monitoring of all restoration and habitat improvement projects	Ongoing
Vegetation enhancement on restoration project; complete final project construction	June 2027
Complete all restorations and habitat improvement projects and finalize acquisitions	2025
Begin projects during the 2023 construction season following completion of design, permits and contracting	2023 Construction season to 2025
Begin project planning, design, permitting work and start acquisition process	July 2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2027

Availability of Appropriation: Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

(a) Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. Money appropriated to acquire land in fee may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.

(b) Money appropriated in this section is available as follows:

(1) money appropriated for acquiring real property is available until June 30, 2026;

(2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this act is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2030;

(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2027;

(4) notwithstanding clauses (1) to (3), money appropriated for a project that receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds is available until a date sufficient to match the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan; and

(5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

Budget

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$40,000	\$20,000	-	\$60,000
Contracts	\$919,200	-	Local Option Sales Tax	\$919,200
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$288,400	-	-	\$288,400
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$175,400	\$80,000	Local Option Sales Tax	\$255,400
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$10,000	-	-	\$10,000
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	\$5,000	-	-	\$5,000
Grand Total	\$1,438,000	\$100,000	-	\$1,538,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Manager	0.43	5.0	\$25,000	\$12,000	Local Option Sales Tax	\$37,000
Program Assistant	0.43	5.0	\$15,000	\$8,000	Local Option Sales Tax	\$23,000

Amount of Request: \$1,438,000

Amount of Leverage: \$100,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 6.95%

DSS + Personnel: \$40,000

As a % of the total request: 2.78%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?

As a result of the reduced appropriation recommendation, four project locations had to be removed entirely. Of the six remaining projects, two had to be reduced in size of acres completed, and one had to be reduced in the scope of restoration that could be completed.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

Leverage is from the watershed districts secured local option sales tax.

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?

Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

70% funding would mean a reduction of enhancement and restoration projects. All protect in fee projects would still be completed.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Personnel would be reduced from \$70,000 down to \$45,000, very similar to a proportionate reduction. Leveraged in-kind amounts would stay the same.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

All the work in the contract line is centered on enhancement and restoration costs, minus 15% professional services and staff time.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

There are two fee title acquisitions.

Federal Funds

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?

No

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	40	-	-	150	190
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	40	-	-	22	62
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	50	-	-	0	50
Total	130	-	-	172	302

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	\$156,500	-	-	\$561,000	\$717,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$253,000	-	-	\$79,500	\$332,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$388,000	-	-	-	\$388,000
Total	\$797,500	-	-	\$640,500	\$1,438,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	190	-	190
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	62	-	62
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	50	-	50
Total	-	-	-	302	-	302

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$717,500	-	\$717,500
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$332,500	-	\$332,500
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$388,000	-	\$388,000
Total	-	-	-	\$1,438,000	-	\$1,438,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	\$3,912	-	-	\$3,740
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$6,325	-	-	\$3,613
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$7,760	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$3,776	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$5,362	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	\$7,760	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

25,300 Feet

Parcels

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Parcels are selected using the Property Management Zones (PMZs). The PMZs are identified using precision conservation modeling, along with monitoring, and science based targeting. Parcels are then prioritized and ranked based on the degree of habitat degradation, restoration potential, and landowner interest and support. All parcels listed below have willing landowners ready to complete the projects if funding allows.

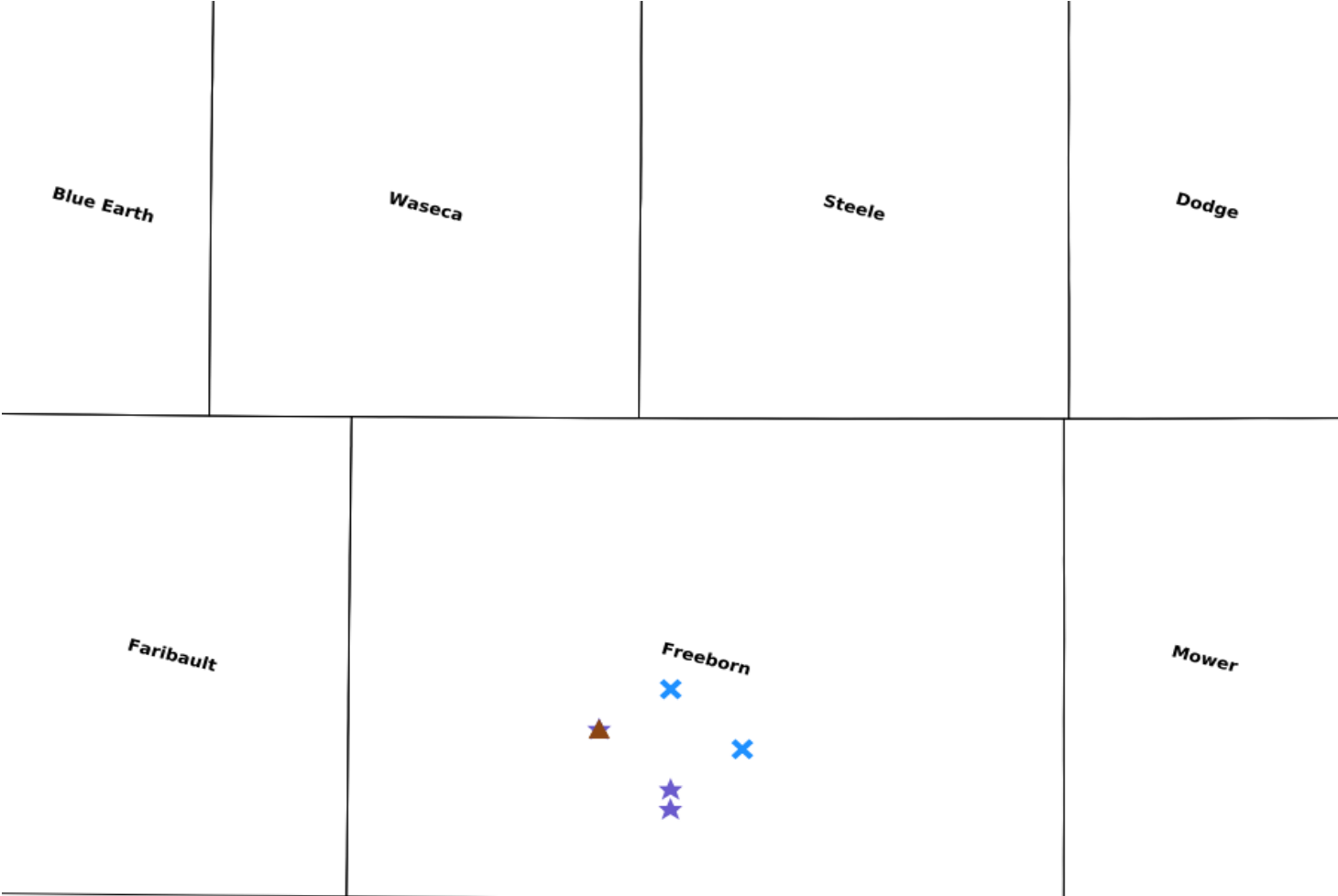
Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Fountain Lake Shoreline Enhancement	Freeborn	10221208	10	\$290,000	Yes
Hein Restoration	Freeborn	10121208	74	\$276,500	Yes
Hein Restoration	Freeborn	10121205	76	\$276,500	Yes
South Shore Enhancement	Freeborn	10221226	40	\$90,000	Yes
Eberhart Lake Restoration	Freeborn	10222223	40	\$148,500	Yes

Fee Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Eberhart Lake	Freeborn	10222223	40	\$245,000	No
Church Lake Property	Freeborn	10222223	22	\$71,500	No

Parcel Map



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

