



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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

General Information

Date: 03/27/2025

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

Address: 305 S 1st Ave

City: Albert Lea, MN 56007

Email: courtney.phillips@co.freeborn.mn.us

Office Number: 507-379-8782

Mobile Number: 507-402-4824

Fax Number: N/A

Website: www.shellrock.org

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 360 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 40 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.
- Fish barrier installation to prevent spawning in Goose Lake, an 80-acre lake basin known to be a reproductive area for rough fish.

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. Additionally, the Goose Lake Project is located in a MCBS area.

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 match will come from Freeborn County for the of Goose Lake Fish Barrier Project.

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?

One 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 | \$998,100 | - | - | \$998,100 |
| Fee Acquisition w/ PILT | \$209,500 | - | - | \$209,500 |
| Fee Acquisition w/o PILT | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Acquisition | - | - | - | - |
| Easement Stewardship | - | - | - | - |
| Travel | - | - | - | - |
| Professional Services | \$175,400 | \$80,000 | Local Option Sales Tax and Freeborn County | \$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 and Freeborn County

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 is one fee title acquisition.

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 | - | - | 230 | 270 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | 40 | - | - | 0 | 40 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | 50 | - | - | 0 | 50 |
| Total | 130 | - | - | 230 | 360 |

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat | Total Funding |
|--|------------------|----------|----------|------------------|--------------------|
| Restore | \$158,500 | - | - | \$655,000 | \$813,500 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | \$234,500 | - | - | - | \$234,500 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | \$390,000 | - | - | - | \$390,000 |
| Total | \$783,000 | - | - | \$655,000 | \$1,438,000 |

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Acres |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Restore | - | - | - | 270 | - | 270 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | 40 | - | 40 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | 50 | - | 50 |
| Total | - | - | - | 360 | - | 360 |

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest | Total Funding |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Restore | - | - | - | \$813,500 | - | \$813,500 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | \$234,500 | - | \$234,500 |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | \$390,000 | - | \$390,000 |
| Total | - | - | - | \$1,438,000 | - | \$1,438,000 |

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

| Type | Wetland | Prairie | Forest | Habitat |
|--|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Restore | \$3,962 | - | - | \$2,847 |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | \$5,862 | - | - | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | \$7,800 | - | - | - |

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

| Type | Metro/Urban | Forest/Prairie | SE Forest | Prairie | N. Forest |
|--|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| Restore | - | - | - | \$3,012 | - |
| Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability | - | - | - | \$5,862 | - |
| Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability | - | - | - | - | - |
| Protect in Easement | - | - | - | - | - |
| Enhance | - | - | - | \$7,800 | - |

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

33100 Feet

Parcels

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.

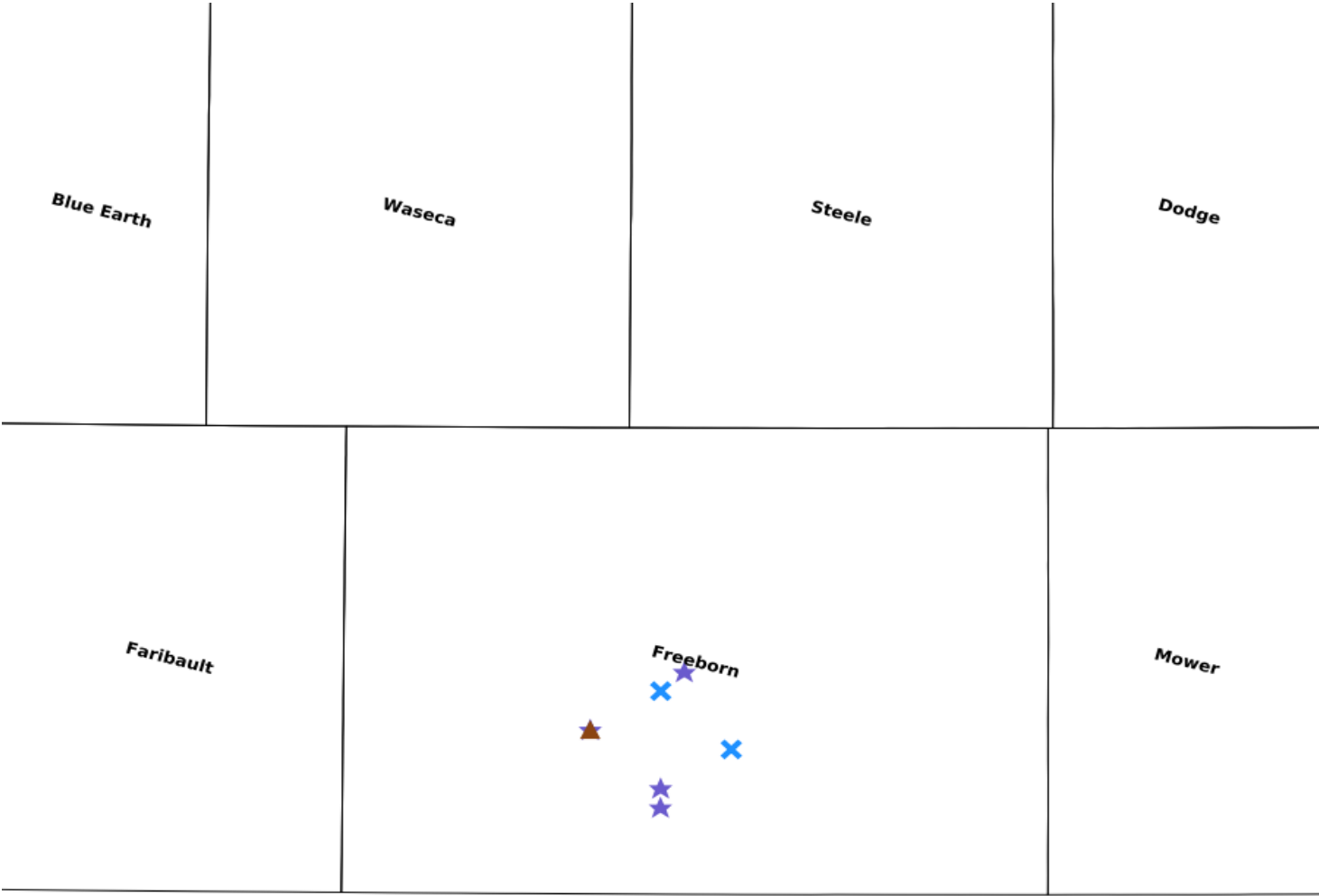
Restore / Enhance Parcels

| Name | County | TRDS | Acres | Est Cost | Existing Protection | Description |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|---------------------|---|
| Eberhart Lake Restoration | Freeborn | 10222223 | 40 | \$148,500 | Yes | Located along the East side of Eberhart Lake |
| Fountain Lake Shoreline Enhancement | Freeborn | 10221208 | 10 | \$290,000 | Yes | Located on the south and east side of Fountain Lake |
| Goose Lake Reclamation | Freeborn | 10221204 | 80 | \$71,500 | Yes | Fish Barrier install to prevent movement of rough fish to Goose Lake. |
| Hein Restoration | Freeborn | 10121205 | 76 | \$276,500 | Yes | Located East of Twin Lakes |
| Hein Restoration | Freeborn | 10121208 | 74 | \$276,500 | Yes | Located East of Twin Lakes |
| South Shore Enhancement | Freeborn | 10221226 | 40 | \$90,000 | Yes | Located South of Albert Lea Lake |

Fee Parcels

| Name | County | TRDS | Acres | Est Cost | Existing Protection |
|---------------|----------|----------|-------|-----------|---------------------|
| Eberhart Lake | Freeborn | 10222223 | 40 | \$245,000 | No |

Parcel Map



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

