



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program Phase XII
Laws of Minnesota 2023 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/07/2023

Project Title: Shell Rock River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program Phase XII

Funds Recommended: \$2,198,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2023, Ch. 40, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(l)

Appropriation Language: \$2,198,000 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 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:

- Protect in Fee
- Restore

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, and protect 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, and vegetation and feeding sources will be restored for migratory fowl habitat. Projects 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

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

- Acquire 50 acres of key targeted acquisitions to protect wooded riparian areas, and to establish upland prairie and wetlands
- Enhance habitat on 25 acres of lakeshore and streambank sites that are critical for wildlife.
- Reestablish vegetation into upland prairie from agricultural use in an important flyway that is crucial to nesting waterfowl, upland game, and other wading bird species.
- 50 acres of invasive species management.

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. All projects listed above have landowner support, who are eager to get funding. 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.

The program will also interconnect and reestablish important flyway habitats within Minnesota. Once completed, the program will establish waterfowl and fish populations, increase habitat for wetland dependent wildlife, 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 is influencing available food sources for game fish populations such as, 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 the Marsh Wren and Common Moorhen for birds, mussels such as Sheepnose and Round Pigtoe, and amphibians including the Blanding's turtle.

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 in Phase XII, wetland creation and vegetation enhancement can provide restored habitat for both the Common Moorhen and March Wren. Blanding's turtles are listed as being a threatened species and completing the streambank restorations identified in this proposal will include habitat restorations, such as turtle hibernaculums, and by restoring wetlands with marshy areas will provide habitat for this threatened species.

One of the fastest declining populations in Minnesota is the native mussel. 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 25 acres of in-water features that will improve that quality of habitat for the threatened Round Pigtoe, and endangered Sheepnose mussels.

The SRRWD understands that when critical habitats are lost due to land use changes and other factors, restoring the habitat is imperative to the protection of species and their ecological processes. Important species are disappearing at an alarming rate and the SRRWD has the opportunity to protect targeted specific habitats and the species that call it home.

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 incorporated 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 water source.

One of the five project locations is in an area identified in the MCBS. All project locations are adjacent or in close proximity to areas identified on the MCBS. Projects such as these are important to expand corridors and reach 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.

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 expand habitat corridors and protect areas identified on the MCBS.

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, and restore migratory habitat for waterfowl and related species, so as to increase migratory and breeding success

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 re-establishing 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:

The SRRWD is an agency that has a local option sales tax in place that will be used to leverage funds, other local government funds will be contributed to the Channel Restoration as well.

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
2021	Local Tax Levy	\$250,000
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 is authorized by Minnesota state statute 103D and operates under a series of 10 year Water Management Plans.

The SRRWD relies on multiple funding sources including a citizen driven local option sales tax, local levy, and multiple public and private funding sources including previously LSOHC phased projects 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 XII Restoration Program will be easily incorporated into this existing results-driven reporting framework. This reporting can be used to generate public interest and education on a watershed based restoration approach. The District has commitment and funding sources necessary to maintain existing and future natural resource management projects.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026+	Local Funds	Maintenance Inspections	Maintenance Implementations	-
2024-2026	Sales Tax and LSOHC	Construction	Maintenance	-

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 underserved communities are present in the watershed area. Specifically, the Channel Restoration Project aims at targeting diverse and low-income communities. 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, transportation, or 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?

No

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

Public waters are open to state fishing regulations. Private lands are not open to public hunting.

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

Yes

Describe any variation from the State of Minnesota regulations:

Restoration within City limits will be open to public fishing, but not hunting.

Who will eventually own the fee title land?

- State of MN
- Federal

Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:

- WMA
- WPA

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

Two acquisitions are expected.

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

Initial treatment for invasives will be a part of this appropriation.

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	Ongoing

improvement projects	
Vegetation enhancement on restoration projects; complete final project construction	June 2027
Complete all restoration and habitat improvement projects and finalize acquisitions	End of 2025 Construction Season
Begin projects during the 2023-2024 construction season following completion of design, permits, and contracting	2023 -2024 Construction Season
Begin project planning, design, permitting work and acquisitions	July 2023

Date of Final Report Submission: 06/30/2028

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, 2027;
- (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, 2031;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2028;
- (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	\$50,000	-	-	\$50,000
Contracts	\$1,544,500	\$80,000	Local Match	\$1,624,500
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$121,600	-	-	\$121,600
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$97,200	-	-	\$97,200
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$384,700	\$80,000	Local Match	\$464,700
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,198,000	\$160,000	-	\$2,358,000

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Assistant	0.43	5.0	\$20,000	-	-	\$20,000
Program Manager	0.43	5.0	\$30,000	-	-	\$30,000

Amount of Request: \$2,198,000

Amount of Leverage: \$160,000

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 7.28%

DSS + Personnel: \$50,000

As a % of the total request: 2.27%

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, five projects had to be removed. The District prioritized the top projects and that includes funding two acquisitions and three restoration projects.

Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:

The Shell Rock River Watershed District is an entity that has a local option sales tax in place that will be used. Other local government funds will be contributed as well.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

The SRRWD has an extensive time-tracking system that allows staff members to track time for each project within each grant. Each year this system is updated to reflect current active grants.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

All the work in the contract line is centered on restoration costs, minus 20% professional services and staff time.

Fee Acquisition

What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?

There are two anticipated number of 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	22	-	-	53	75
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	28	28
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	22	-	-	0	22
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	44	-	-	81	125

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$1,871,300	\$1,871,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$177,700	\$177,700
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$149,000	-	-	-	\$149,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$149,000	-	-	\$2,049,000	\$2,198,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	75	-	75
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	28	-	28
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	22	-	22
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	125	-	125

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$1,871,300	-	\$1,871,300
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$177,700	-	\$177,700
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$149,000	-	\$149,000
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	\$2,198,000	-	\$2,198,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$35,307
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$6,346
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$6,772	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	\$24,950	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$6,346	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	\$6,772	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

15,100 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
Channel Restoration	Freeborn	10221209	5	\$351,000	No
Goose Lake Property	Freeborn	10221203	22	\$10,000	No
Ordalen Property	Freeborn	10221219	8	\$4,000	No
Ordalen Property	Freeborn	10221220	20	\$11,000	No
Channel Restoration	Freeborn	10221209	9	\$411,800	No
Channel Restoration	Freeborn	10221209	11	\$887,800	No

Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Ordalen Property	Freeborn	10221220	20	\$102,200	No
Ordalen Property	Freeborn	10221219	8	\$40,800	No
Goose Lake Property	Freeborn	10221203	22	\$114,400	No

Parcel Map



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