



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Restoring connectivity, floodplain, and river habitat in the Upper Clearwater River for trout and creek  
heel splitter mussels  
ML 2024 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 05/31/2023

**Proposal Title:** Restoring connectivity, floodplain, and river habitat in the Upper Clearwater River for trout and creek heel splitter mussels

**Funds Requested:** \$3,240,000

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$2,650,000

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** No

### **Manager Information**

**Manager's Name:** Zach Gutknecht

**Title:** Clean Water Specialist

**Organization:** Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District

**Address:** 701 Minnesota Avenue Suite 113

**City:** Bemidji, MN 56601

**Email:** zachrie.gutknecht@co.beltrami.mn.us

**Office Number:** 2183334157

**Mobile Number:**

**Fax Number:**

**Website:**

### **Location Information**

**County Location(s):** Beltrami.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Northern Forest

**Activity types:**

- Restore
- Enhance
- Other : Fish and aquatic organism barrier removal

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Habitat

## Narrative

### Abstract

This project will restore a segment of the upper Clearwater River by re-connecting the waterway that is currently disrupted by two undersized, perched culverts, ensuring trout and other species of special concern including the creek heelsplitter have access to high-quality habitats upstream. It will also incorporate the existing culvert scour pool for winter habitat refuge, provide additional in-stream and riparian habitat, and greatly reduce the risk of infrastructure failure. Restoration of the stream will preserve the OHV trail that crosses the river, provide access to the existing scenic overlook, and allow for recreational activities such as fishing and swimming.

### Design and Scope of Work

Our proposed project is located at the Clearwater River and Nelson Dam Road/Wilton Trail crossings in western Beltrami County, approximately 15 miles northwest of Bemidji. This project is set in the Chippewa Plains of the Northern Forest ecoregion. The Clearwater River channel gradient significantly increases as it flows into Beltrami County and transitions into the designated trout stream and aquatic management area. The project location has also been identified by the MBS as containing creek heelsplitter (*Lasmigona compressa*), a state-listed species of special concern. The local habitat, fish, and mussel species are being adversely impacted by road and trail culverts installed approximately 10 feet apart that are improperly sized and placed.

The Nelson Dam Road, upstream of the Wilton Trail, has two undersized concrete culverts. Each culvert is 12 feet wide and 50 feet long concrete culvert. The Wilton Trail, which is a regional corridor for ATV and snowmobile recreation users, was created on an abandoned portion of a railroad. The trail is approximately 50 feet above the river estimated at 180,000 cy of material with two undersized 96-inch wide, 200-foot long perched culverts. The Nelson Dam Road and Wilton Trail culverts are significantly decreasing lateral and longitudinal connectivity, are a barrier to aquatic organism passage, increase lateral and vertical erosion, and are altering local hydrology. The undersized culverts have created infrastructure risks for the county road and trail. The culverts under the trail have exceeded their estimated life span and show signs of deformation. The implications of responding to a catastrophic culvert failure under the trail would include not only a rebuild of the road/trail and the trail embankment, but would also require significant downstream river restoration. Addressing the ecological, economic, and social impacts and risks associated with the site's failing culverts ahead of catastrophic failure meets the expressed values of the region's stakeholders. This site is prioritized in the Clearwater River Watershed Comprehensive Plan under capital improvement actions as a modification for fish passage at the Wilton Trail in the Upper Clearwater reaches. In addition, the team does have a completed feasibility analysis currently being finalized.

Our project will remove a portion of the Wilton Trail embankment and Nelson Dam Road and replace roadway channel culverts with a new trail alignment to follow Nelson Dam Road. This concept restores a significant section of the river channel and floodplain by reducing the total culvert length while providing a dedicated OHV trail separate from vehicle traffic for increased safety along Nelson Dam Road. In addition, the project will restore aquatic organism passage, improve instream habitat, restore floodplain connectivity, and address in-stream erosion and downstream deposition.

This request for funding will contribute to a large, multi-million dollar project that is currently partially funded. At the time of this application, \$2.65 million has been secured, however the project will require additional funding.

The existing financing has a time constraint, and if other sources are not secured by December 31, 2023, we may lose those funds.

### **Explain how the proposal addresses habitat protection, restoration, and/or enhancement for fish, game & wildlife, including threatened or endangered species conservation**

The Clearwater River is a valuable resource for the state, as it is one of the few trout streams and aquatic management areas in the region. Many anglers enjoy fishing for rainbow and brown trout in this river, which are stocked annually by the Department of Natural Resources. The river has high water quality, a groundwater-fed system, and a well-defined riffle-pool morphology with good gravel and cobble substrates that are ideal for trout habitat. However, the river also faces some challenges, such as the Nelson Dam Road and Wilton Trail crossings' culverts, which are perched and too small for the river flow. This causes a high stream velocity and a deep scour pool on the downstream side of the culverts, creating multiple barriers for fish migration and other aquatic organisms. One species in particular, the creek heelsplitter, which is a species of concern in Minnesota, is impacted by this barrier through reduced species movement and limited access to fish hosts to complete their life cycle. The proposed project aims to improve the river conditions by stabilizing the bank and bed, enhancing the in-stream habitat such as increasing woody habitat, and replacing the existing culverts with a more natural crossing that matches the characteristics of a reference reach. The project will also preserve the pool created by the perched culverts, which provides a winter refuge for trout in Beltrami County. Additionally, the project will consolidate two crossings into one, reducing the length of the culverts and improving fish passage. Furthermore, restoring the floodplain by removing over 180,000 cubic yards of fill created by the trail can reduce flood risk, improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and provide additional recreational opportunities. This project will benefit not only the trout and the creek heelsplitter, but also improve the recreational and ecological value of the Clearwater River.

### **What are the elements of this proposal that are critical from a timing perspective?**

There are a couple of critical timing elements of this proposal. The first is that we were awarded \$2.4 million in funding for this project from the BWSR in 2022. However, a contingency of those funds is that the project partners must show significant progress to obtain additional sources of funds by the end of 2023. With our other grant applications, we have been successful in securing another \$250k, but to complete a project of this magnitude additional major sources of funding are needed in a short time. The other critical timing aspect if a project is funded will be during project construction, which must account for impacts of trout stream work exclusion dates from September 1st to April 15th as well as tree removal impacts to the northern long-eared bat, which has recently been given endangered status, thus requiring tree removal outside of April 1 to October 1.

### **Describe how the proposal expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:**

The site of the Nelson Dam Road/Wilton Trail has fragmented aquatic habitat due to undersized and perched culverts, which disconnect the river and prevent access to some of the best habitat in the Clearwater River. The habitat as described by the Clearwater River Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Report consisted of sand and sparse cover, with no coarse substrate present, much lower than the sampling areas up and downstream. The most recent sampling upstream of the project location indicated good biotic integrity, including brown trout, rainbow trout, mottled sculpin, and a number of cold water-obligated macroinvertebrate taxa. Excellent stream habitat was present with habitat assessment scores (>75), which are among the highest in the Clearwater River Watershed. The downstream reach of the project site also held exceptional biotic integrity scores with a number of sensitive and lithophilic spawning species, as the area had good cover in the form of undercut banks, aquatic vegetation, deep pools, and woody debris. In addition, the project will expand habitat corridors and complexes by removing a

large embankment that spans across the floodplain for the Wilton Trail. Removing the embankment will expand habitat by allowing the river to reconnect with its natural floodplain and create more diverse and dynamic habitats for aquatic and terrestrial species. The embankment also degrades the ecological functions and services of floodplains such as water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and biodiversity support. By removing or setting back embankments, the river can access its floodplain more frequently and restore its natural hydrological and geomorphological processes such as sediment transport, erosion, deposition, and meandering. These processes create a mosaic of habitat types and conditions that support a variety of species and life stages such as wetlands, riparian forests, gravel bars, and backwaters. Habitat corridors or complexes are areas of connected habitats that facilitate the movement and dispersal of species across the landscape and increase their resilience to environmental changes. Removal of the embankment can enhance habitat connectivity by reducing fragmentation and isolation of floodplain habitats and allowing species to access different resources and refuges along the river continuum.

### **Which Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?**

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Other : Clearwater River comprehensive Water Management Plan

### **Explain how this proposal will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.**

Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of floods, posing challenges for both transportation infrastructure and aquatic ecosystems. By designing culverts to accommodate higher peak flows and flashiness, we can reduce the risk of road overtopping, erosion, scour, and infrastructure failure. By restoring natural floodplain boundaries and removing the embankment from the floodplain, we can enhance the ability of the Clearwater River to store excess water and sediment, reducing downstream flooding and improving water quality. Protecting channel and woody habitat and maintaining the deep pool will support the life cycle of trout and other cold-water organisms that are vulnerable to changes in temperature and flow regimes. Culvert and floodplain connectivity are examples of how resilience concepts can benefit natural and built systems. By understanding the dynamics of the riverine environment and preserving or enhancing its functions, project partners can achieve more sustainable and ecologically sensitive outcomes.

### **Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?**

#### **Northern Forest**

- Restore and enhance habitat on existing protected properties, with preference to habitat for rare, endangered, or threatened species identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey

### **Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:**

Nelson Dam Road and Wilton Trail are two scenic routes that connect the town of Pinewood to the rest of Beltrami County and northwest Minnesota. The Wilton Trail crossing covers a pre-existing wooden railroad bridge spanning the Clearwater River valley. Locally known as “the trestle,” the river and trestle are a part of the local land legacy. This project has the ability to demonstrate a significant trout stream restoration through successful collaboration among various stakeholders such as ATV/snowmobile clubs, anglers, conservation groups, government agencies, and local citizens. Trout stream restoration can foster a sense of stewardship and responsibility for the natural

resources among the participants and the public. Restoring this portion of the Clearwater River can also showcase innovative techniques to create unique habitats within the river and floodplain. As part of re-establishing connectivity of the river and its floodplain, we also intend to protect the scour pool, which is one of the few places along the river that provides winter refugia. We are also going to install additional in-stream habitat, including introducing more wood along the banks, which is identified as a feature that is lacking along the river. These few examples provide additional opportunities to sustain the trout population, protect the creek heelsplitter and other cold water-dependent taxa, and increase recreational opportunities. The replacement of the Nelson Dam Road and Wilton Trail, along with habitat enhancements, will be a permanent fixture providing a lasting conservation legacy that will become a part of the local land legacy.

### Outcomes

#### Programs in the northern forest region:

- Improved aquatic habitat indicators ~ *Through our local stakeholder process we have identified goals of restoring connectivity, retain pool habitat, and develop additional habitat. The success of improving reconnecting the upper and lower reaches of the Clearwater River will be measured by the successful removal of current culverts and installation of appropriate sized culverts and floodplain culverts. Through implementation want to maintain the 14,000 square foot scour pool downstream for cover habitat and winter refuge site. Lastly, we also will maximize the footprint of additional channel habitat measured by total linear feet and acres of floodplain restored.*

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

- N/A

#### 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.

The funding request is not supplanting or substituting previous funding. The current level of funds will be used in conjunction with LSOHC funds.

#### How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

To sustain this project for the long term, we will develop clear, achievable, and measurable goals for the project based on a comprehensive assessment of the stream condition, reference sites, watershed potential, and stakeholder interests. During the design process, we will use natural channel design principles and techniques such as removing disturbances, reshaping or replacing unstable reaches, installing structures and planting vegetation to stabilize banks and provide habitat, and re-establishing riparian buffers and floodplains. We will also work with our partners such as the Red Lake Watershed District and the MPCA for the continual monitoring of the project outcomes and impacts over time, using indicators such as stream morphology, hydrology, water quality, vegetation cover and diversity, and aquatic biota. The SWCD and County will continue to evaluate the project performance against the goals and objectives and adapt the project design or management as needed. Lastly, we will engage and educate the stakeholders, particularly the township and ATV/snowmobile clubs who maintain the road and trail, to assist in collaborative decision-making and foster a sense of stewardship and responsibility for the restored stream system.

#### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2026	Local/Watershed based funding	Monitor and document vegetation	Mow to 5- 8 inches three times during the	Selectively overseed low-diversity areas in

		establishment and structure stability three times during the growing season.	growing season. Selectively spot and apply water-safe herbicides to weeds/invasive three times during the growing season.	spring or late fall. Take corrective actions on structures as needed.
2027	Local/Watershed based funding	Monitor and document vegetation establishment and structure stability three times during the growing season.	Mow to 5- 8 inches once during the spring season. Selectively spot apply water-safe herbicides to weeds/invasive three times during the growing season.	Selectively overseed low-diversity areas in spring or late fall. Take corrective actions on structures as needed.
2028	Local/Watershed based funding	Monitor and document vegetation establishment and structure stability three times during the growing season.	Selectively spot and apply water-safe herbicides to weeds/invasive twice during the growing season.	Selectively overseed low-diversity areas in spring or late fall. Take corrective actions on structures as needed.
2029	Local/Watershed based funding	Monitor sites twice a year	Selectively overseed low-diversity areas in spring or late fall. Take corrective actions on structures as needed.	-
2030	Local/Watershed based funding	Monitor and document vegetation establishment and structure stability mid-summer.	Selectively overseed low-diversity areas in spring or late fall. Take corrective actions on structures as needed.	-

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

The Clearwater River is a border feature on the southwest portion of the Red Lake Nation. The Red Lake Reservation encompasses over 837,000 acres in north-central Minnesota, and accounts for 55% of all Tribal land in the region. The Band’s biological resources are as diverse today as they were centuries ago, and provide spiritual, cultural, and nutritional well-being to their people. The Red Lake region contains a rich and vast amount of natural resources that have sustained the Band both economically and spiritually for centuries. Anishinaabe subsistence activities are still practiced by many Band members today, however the struggle to maintain this traditional lifestyle is being tested by rising populations on and off the Reservation. It is locally recognized that the areas outside of the Reservation present the largest threat to the people of Red Lake.

The project could also showcase the diversity of wildlife and plants that depend on the stream, and how they reflect the diversity of Minnesota's people and cultures. It could also create opportunities for community engagement and education, such as inviting schools, churches, and other groups to participate in the restoration activities, or hosting events and workshops that celebrate the stream and its benefits for the environment and society. Currently, the local Trout Unlimited group uses this area of the Clearwater River for the trout in their classroom education series. This could be expanded to include our project site. By doing so, the project could foster a sense of pride and ownership among diverse communities, and inspire them to care for and protect the stream and its resources. Finally, the Bemidji area and a large portion of Beltrami and Clearwater County are designated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as having at least 40% of the people reporting income less than 185%

of the federal poverty level. Beltrami County is also one of the poorest counties in Minnesota if the culverts were to fail, there wouldn't be funds to reestablish the resource, leading to a loss of opportunity for low and moderate-income houses in the area.

### Activity Details

#### Requirements

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

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?**

- County/Municipal
- AMA
- Public Waters

#### Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?**

No

**Will neonicotinoid pesticide products be used within any activities of this proposal?**

No

#### Other OHF Appropriation Awards

**Have you received OHF dollars in the past through LSOHC that are current OPEN appropriations?**

No

### Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Project Design	December 2023
Environmental Review	December 2023
Stakeholder Review	November 2023
Permitting	April 2024
Construction Bidding	September 2024
Construction	September 2025

**Budget**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	-	-	-
Contracts	\$3,240,000	\$1,651,000	BWSR and Enbridge	\$4,891,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	\$999,000	BWSR	\$999,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,240,000</b>	<b>\$2,650,000</b>	-	<b>\$5,890,000</b>

**Amount of Request:** \$3,240,000

**Amount of Leverage:** \$2,650,000

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 81.79%

**DSS + Personnel:** -

**As a % of the total request:** 0.0%

**Easement Stewardship:** -

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$2,650,000	\$2,650,000	100.0%	-	0.0%

**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**

\$2.4 million of the leverage sources is from BWSR as one-time funding opportunity. The grant was executed on 11/18/2022. The remaining \$250,000 are funds from Enbridge which were processed on 1/11/2023.

**Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?**

No

**Please explain why this project can NOT be scaled:**

The project as proposed will address connectivity and habitat restoration in the Upper Clearwater River Watershed as prioritized by the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy, the Clearwater Watershed Comprehensive Plan, and the Clearwater River Watershed Stressor Identification Report.

**Contracts**

**What is included in the contracts line?**

Bidding and hiring a contractor for installation.



**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	0	0	0	3	3
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$3,240,000	\$3,240,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,240,000</b>	<b>\$3,240,000</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	3	3
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	-	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	\$3,240,000	\$3,240,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,240,000</b>	<b>\$3,240,000</b>

### Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$1,080,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

### Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	\$1,080,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles**

300 linear feet of river channel

Parcels

**Sign-up Criteria?**

No

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

The location for our project has been identified and prioritized in the Clearwater River Watershed Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan developed in 2021-2022 through the One Watershed, One Plan program administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources. The property will be completely contained within Beltrami County public lands.

**Restore / Enhance Parcels**

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Beltrami County	Beltrami	14835229	7	-	Yes

Parcel Map

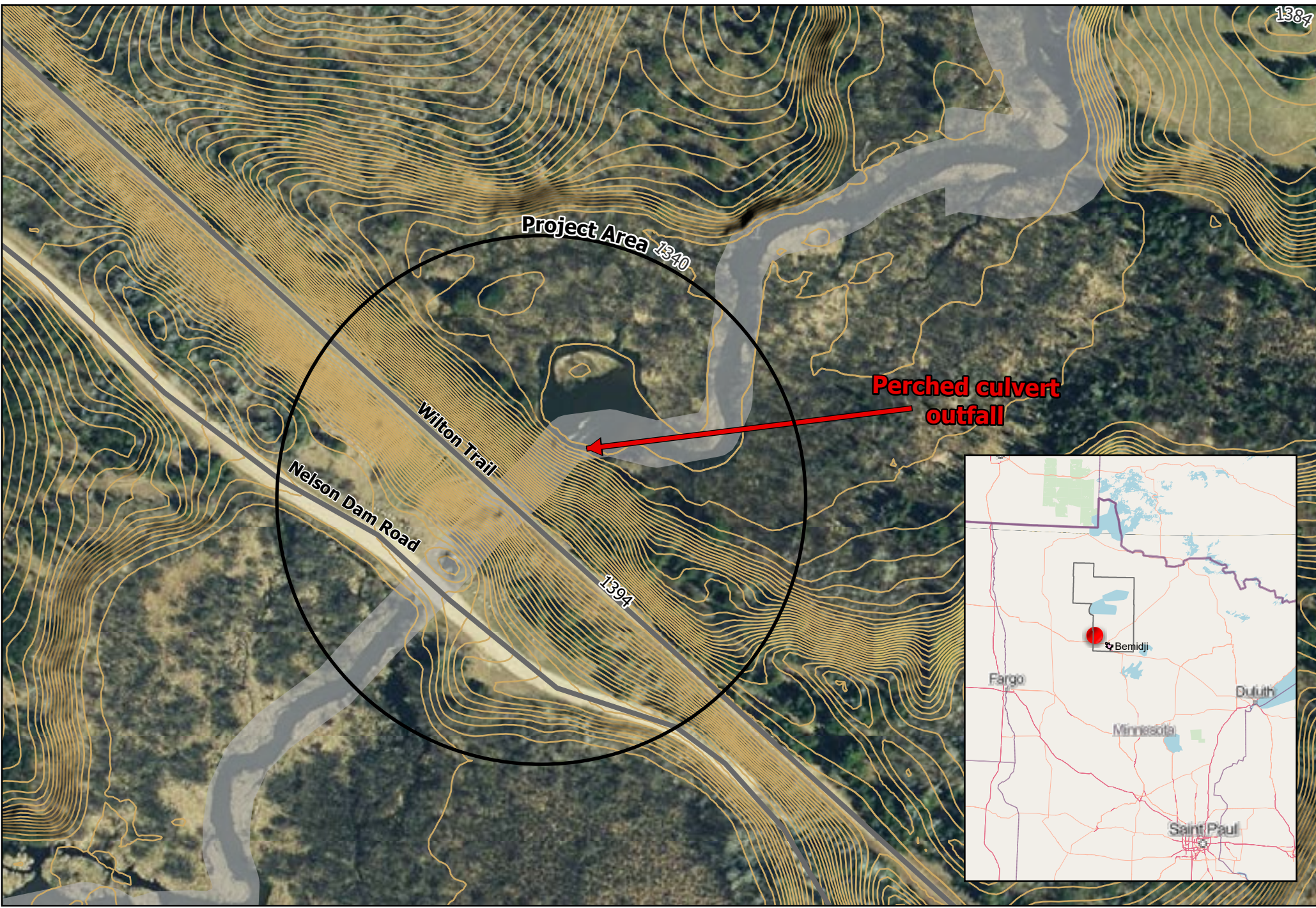


- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other

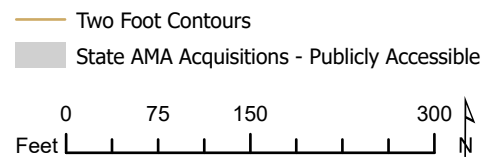
# Clearwater River Restoration Project Detail



The Beltrami SWCD is proposing to address several issues related to aging stormwater conveyance infrastructure under Nelson Dam Road and the Wilton Trail. The sets of culverts running under the roadway and trail are at or have exceeded, their lifespan posing a significant risk to road and trail stability as well as to downstream water resources. The current culverts also pose a barrier to aquatic organism migration. The proposed project is to protect local transportation and recreational infrastructure, restore habitat, reduce erosion and downstream deposition, and restore aquatic organism passage.



**Restoring connectivity, floodplain, and river habitat in the Upper Clearwater River for trout and creek heelsplitter mussels**



May 25, 2023

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
PO Box 20  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, we support the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District 2023 application for funding to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for improving a designated trout public waterway by resolving a long-standing connectivity issue and enhancing habitat within the Clearwater River. This letter of support is for the “Restoring connectivity, floodplain, and river habitat in the Upper Clearwater River for trout and creek heel splitter mussels” project.

Through the years, the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District has been a critical partner in working collaboratively to achieve the common goals of completing management plans and implementing best management practices furthering water quality objectives. The proposed application to the Lessard-Sam Outdoor Heritage Council will advance our local and state watershed restoration objectives by implementing a project identified by multiple state and regional watershed plans and assessment reports. This project will be part of a large-scale effort resulting in cumulative benefits of maintaining and developing trout habitat, engaging with local stakeholders, and helping safeguard fragile ecosystems through conservation-based solutions.

The Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District has implemented multiple grants focused on habitat projects and restoration over the past couple of years, including establishing native pollinator plants throughout the City of Bemidji and assisting private forest landowners to improve habitat conditions through sustainable forest management. Most significantly, the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District received a Clean Water Fund Grant at the beginning of 2020 to implement a stormwater project that restored several hundred feet of an altered waterway within the City of Bemidji. The Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District has executed over \$700,000 of habitat restoration and protection over the past couple of years. We are committing to continuing our partnership to develop and implement projects that will have local significance and achieve multiple objectives and goals.

Funding through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council will be a major opportunity to achieve the shared goals of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District by expanding the opportunities to achieve this work on the ground. We strongly encourage the council to support the 2023 grant proposal. Questions can be directed to me via email at [denise.oakes@state.mn.us](mailto:denise.oakes@state.mn.us).



Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program

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May 25, 2023

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Oakes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denise Oakes, PG

Project Manager

Watershed Division

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency