



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Woods Creek Restoration

Laws of Minnesota 2026 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 06/08/2026

Project Title: Woods Creek Restoration

Funds Recommended: \$750,000

Legislative Citation: ML 2026, Ch. 126, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(y)

Appropriation Language: \$750,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Cook County to restore and enhance coldwater stream habitat in Woods Creek in Cook County.

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Robert Kimmel-Hass

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Location Information

County Location(s): Cook.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Activity types:

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

The project will restore and protect cold-water streams for natural occurring brook trout, a sensitive and semi-rare species, by removing two undersized crossings. Each crossing is undersized compared to the natural stream geomorphology. The project is part of a larger countywide collaborative initiative with local and state partners to protect water quality by ensuring crossings are correctly sized. Removing these two undersized crossings and installing correctly sized structures will improve stream connectivity, ensure future fish passage, improve climate resiliency, reduce sediment loading, eliminate further stream bank erosion, and contribute to fully restoring Woods Creek back to its natural state.

Design and Scope of Work

Northeast Minnesota contains many pristine lakes and rivers which support robust populations of wild brook trout, steelhead, and other sensitive or semi-rare aquatic organisms. Brook trout are significant to aquatic ecosystems, recreational fishing, and an indicator of healthy watersheds. Ecological functions of streams are diminished by roads, development, and impairments that degrade the aquatic ecosystem leading to reductions in brook trout populations. Tributaries provide critical services by providing thermal refugia to brook trout populations.

Woods Creek is a tributary to Devil Track River, a tributary to Lake Superior. Two crossings (North and South) have been identified as a local priority for replacement for several reasons: to better facilitate aquatic organism passage (AOP), being undersized for the streams they carry, creating high stream velocities, and causing sediment loading in the water. AOP is defined as the ability of fish and other aquatic organisms to migrate and swim freely upstream and downstream through or beneath human infrastructure such as culverts, bridges, diversion, dams, etc. Currently, trout and other fish are unable to pass through these crossings due to high velocities and perched bottoms. The bankfull width measurements for the North crossing is 22 feet and the South crossing is 20 feet with the current structures spanning 10-ft and 11.5-ft respectively. Cook County will install an AOP and climate resilient North crossing and the South crossing will become a bottomless concrete arch crossing to improve native brook trout habitat, build for climate resiliency with increased precipitation events, and aid in maintaining and improving water quality. The bottomless arch crossing will accommodate the bedrock located at the South crossing. Cook County and Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), with input from the local MN DNR fisheries, agree that the upsized crossings will be the most beneficial for the water quality and aquatic habitat. This project is directly in line with the MN DNR Fisheries priorities of restoring fish passage in our streams. Wild brook trout have been identified as the primary species in the project area. Steelhead have also been identified in the project area. Downstream, near the mouth at Lake Superior, brook trout, rainbow trout, pink salmon, coho (silver) salmon, chinook salmon have all been identified. While both crossings are part of the larger project, the South crossing will be funded with OHF funds. This is because the South crossing has been identified as priority by our local partners and is not scheduled to be replaced for 50 years from a transportation lens.

The current crossings are impeding AOP, pinching the river at two locations since it is not at bankfull width, causing high stream velocities, and increasing sediment loading in the river. Because it is pinching the river at these locations, it is causing an increase in velocity of stream flow. The velocity is creating shear stress on downstream banks, causing erosion, unnatural pools and contributing to sediment loading in the river. The inlet and outlet banks of each crossings show extreme erosion due to the undersized crossings.

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

Currently, the creek has two crossings that are undersized, causing erosion and preventing AOP. The new structures will be wide enough to accommodate bankfull width and be able to handle larger flood events. It will restore the area back to a more natural state. The instream area of the new structures will have natural channel design to aid in AOP and aquatic habitat. Engineering design work is already being done to ensure proper stream velocity and AOP is incorporated into the project. A MN DNR report highlighted that the more favorable habitat that is created in Woods Creek that the Brook Trout can (and have been) persisting there. Better habitat creates a healthier ecosystem which benefits the surrounding environment.

The reduction in the velocity of water passing through the structure will reduce the shear stress on the inlet and outlet banks. Currently, there is severe erosion occurring which is causing sediment loading into the river. This prohibits a clean and habitable river for trout and other species. 2 miles of river and tributaries will be opened up with the replacement of these structures.

What are the elements of this plan that are critical from a timing perspective?

With increased precipitation in rain and snow melt events, it is important to be proactive and complete the work now before additional issues arise from improperly sized crossings. Work has already begun to design these crossings to meet AOP needs and if this project doesn't happen now then resources will have been expended for nothing and the problems associated with increased sediment loading, lack of AOP, and increased erosion will continue. The south crossing isn't scheduled for replacement for 50+ years so the problem would continue to persist. Funding for the North crossing is covered through state bridge bonds while the South crossing is covered by OHF funds. Combining the projects saves in mobilization costs and minimizes disturbing the surrounding environment. Cook County is working on the design as we speak and the project is construction ready within 6 months of appropriation.

Describe how the plan expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:

Woods Creek is a tributary to Devil Track River, a tributary to Lake Superior. There are smaller tributaries that flow into Woods Creek as well. The project will connect 2 miles of river and its tributaries, thus reducing habitat fragmentation. According to the MN Department of Natural Resources, there are healthy numbers of brook trout in Woods Creek and a small number of rainbow trout and steelhead. By replacing the two undersized crossings and incorporating natural channel design the remainder of Woods Creek would open up to this population thus creating more upstream habitat and creating a more diverse genetic pool with more mobility in the river.

Which top 2 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Other : Lake Superior North, One Watershed One Plan

Explain how this plan 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.

By incorporating natural channel design, meeting bankfull width, and floodplain connection, the creek will return to a natural state and be more climate resilient to handle precipitation challenges. Natural sediment deposition will be less disrupted, providing a more natural channel evolution of the river. The stream will not be pinched to a confined area in two locations causing upstream and downstream issues. Flood waters will be able to flow in a more natural way, allowing the stream to function and adapt more naturally. The long-term benefits of this project include reducing habitat fragmentation, preventing sediment loading and bank erosion, reducing water velocity and reducing warming water trends. Climate resiliency is addressed through riparian planting, natural channel design, floodplain connection, and crossings that are designed to handle larger storm events.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Northern Forest

Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

Improved aquatic habitat indicators ~ *The project will eliminate impediments for AOP to 2-miles of upstream headwaters habitat by removing two undersized crossings. Modeling of the current crossing conditions indicate the current bankfull widths are not being met and velocities are too high, prohibiting AOP. To fully restore AOP, the project proposes to restore Woods Creek back to its natural habitat in this area.*

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.

These funds are not supplanting or substituting previous funds allocated for this project.

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

The project is part of a larger countywide effort to protect water quality. The crossings in this project will allow the river to be restored to a more natural state and will be maintained by Cook County for the lifespan of the structure and any subsequent replacements into perpetuity.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027 and beyond	local	monitor restored banks	document observations	continue to monitor banks and make necessary adjustments
2027 and beyond	local	initial bridge inspection	document observations	continue inspections and documentation for lifespan of structure

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

Enhancing and protecting water quality is in direct alignment with the goals set out by the 1854 Treaty Authority to protect, preserve, and enhance the hunting, fishing and gathering rights of the Grand Portage and Bois Forte bands of Lake Superior Chippewa in the 1854 Treaty area. By improving the water quality, creating better fish habitat, and reducing bank erosion this project is directly benefiting the Grand Portage and Bois Forte bands of Lake Superior Chippewa.

Activity Details

Requirements

If funded, this program 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?

Public Waters

County/Municipal

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

Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this program either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
End construction	October 2027
Begin construction	June 2027
Bid letting	December 2026
Design, engineering, permitting	September 2026

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/01/2026

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 for fee title acquisition of land 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, 2030;
- (2) money appropriated for restoring and enhancing land acquired with an appropriation in this section is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2034;
- (3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2031;
- (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	-	\$112,400	county levy	\$112,400
Contracts	\$750,000	\$688,000	state bridge bonds and local levy	\$1,438,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$750,000	\$800,400	-	\$1,550,400

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Cook County inspector	2.0	1.0	-	\$98,400	county levy	\$98,400
Cook County Engineer	1.0	1.0	-	\$14,000	county levy	\$14,000

Amount of Request: \$750,000

Amount of Leverage: \$800,400

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 106.72%

DSS + Personnel: -

As a % of the total request: 0.0%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

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

The additional funding will come from the local levy

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

local levy comes from our annual property tax allotment

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?

No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

equipment mobilization, removing existing crossing, excavation of fill material, stream bank restoration, stream diversion, riprap, structure replacement, structure backfill materials

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	-	-	-	1	1
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	1	1

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	\$750,000	\$750,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	\$750,000	\$750,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	1	1
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	1	1

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	\$750,000	\$750,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	-	\$750,000	\$750,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	\$750,000
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	-	-	-	-	\$750,000
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

2 miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?

No

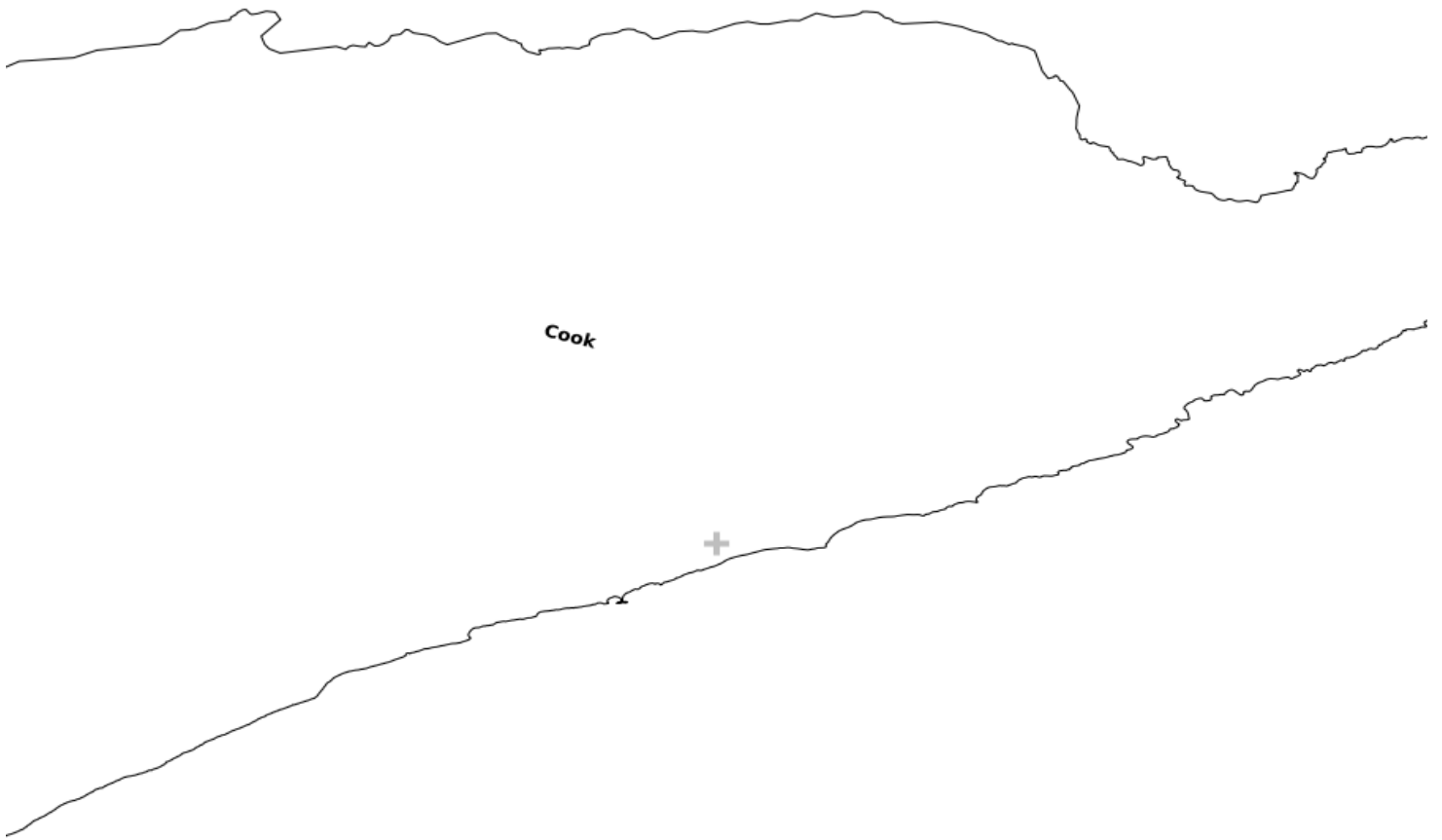
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

The parcel identified below are the locations of the fish barriers.

Other Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Remove South AOP barrier: Tax PID: 53-112-1200	Cook	06101E12	1	\$750,000	-

Parcel Map



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