Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Little Cannon River Stream Habitat Restoration

ML 2026 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/26/2025

Proposal Title: Little Cannon River Stream Habitat Restoration

Funds Requested: $5,174,800

Confirmed Leverage Funds: $179,000

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: John Lenczewski
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Location Information

County Location(s): Goodhue.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Southeast Forest

Activity types:

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

This project will restore habitat on a badly degraded 3.3-mile section of the Little Cannon River, re-meandering it and adding 1.7 miles of new stream habitat. Five miles of high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife will be created on protected lands located where the majority of Minnesota's population can easily access it. Minnesota Trout Unlimited will create 5.0 miles of stable stream channel filled with habitat for trout, as well as diverse fish, aquatic, and riparian wildlife. Great River Greening will restore upland native vegetation for birds and wildlife, protecting up to four federally threatened species.

Design and Scope of Work

This project will restore habitat in 5 miles of the Little Cannon River and its riparian corridor, creating lasting benefits for fish and wildlife in a region where coldwater streams are scarce and increasingly impaired.

Minnesota Trout Unlimited (MNTU) will lead the in-stream habitat restoration, restoring a natural meandering pattern and creating 1.7 miles of new stream habitat in the process. By raising the deeply incised stream channel, reconnecting the stream to its floodplain, and restoring a natural pattern the stream will become stable so that in-stream habitat will endure large floods and remain productive. Diverse trout habitats for all life stages will be created, including pool habitat, bank cover, riffles and runs for food production, and spawning habitat. The drastically reduced erosion will decrease sedimentation of in-stream habitat both within the 5-mile-long project site and downstream. Stream channel improvement will also increase habitat for red-sided dace, a Minnesota Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Off-channel oxbow habitat will be created, which will improve habitat for multiple game and wildlife species, including amphibians, reptiles, waterfowl, and mammals.

Great River Greening (GRG) will restore riparian and upland vegetation on adjacent AMA lands and new conservation easements added upstream and downstream in 2025. Their work will include native plantings that stabilize soil, improve infiltration, and restore nesting habitat for waterfowl, migrating birds, amphibians, and reptiles.

Clean River Partners (CRP) will lead outreach, connect the restoration with broader watershed initiatives, and coordinate the project partners. CRP has secured separate funding to support upstream conservation practices like cover crops and managed grazing, and is pending federal funds to support additional agricultural practices near the project site.

Goodhue SWCD has decades-long relationships with the project area landowners and introduced the concept of habitat restoration and fishing easements in 2021. It has facilitated planning discussions and secured $30,000 in Watershed-Based Implementation Funding to support permitting and early-stage development. The SWCD is not seeking OHF funding, but will continue to serve as a key local facilitator and partner. The SWCD is providing $20,000 in leverage funds to cover personnel costs.

Stream habitat and vegetation plans are being coordinated with the Minnesota DNR to ensure alignment with long-term management goals. All project partners bring specific, complementary strengths and long-standing relationships to ensure that this work is completed efficiently and achieves permanent ecological benefits.

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

Rewilding this coldwater stream will add 1.7 miles of new stream filled with good habitat for trout and other species that require functioning coldwater ecosystems for survival, including red-sided dace. Coldwater streams are exceptionally susceptible to climate change variables such as warming temperatures, increased flooding frequencies and durations, along with decreasing cold water inputs due to increased groundwater extraction from their replenishing aquifers.

The restoration is needed to stabilize eroding stream banks and reduce erosion and sedimentation of in-stream habitat. The current high erosion rates cause unstable banks that collapse and bury habitat. The turbidity and sedimentation created fill in pools and smother gravel and cobble essential for food production and for trout spawning. High turbidity also decreases light penetration, which impacts species that rely on photosynthesis such as plants and phytoplankton, valuable food sources for other aquatic and waterfowl species.

Although management practices have improved on surrounding agricultural acres, erosion and bank instability continue to increase the sediment load within the channel of the river. The stream has not been able to re-meander itself in the 70+ years since it was altered. Intervention is needed to restore stable habitat and keep it from being smothered by sediment.

While enhancement and restoration work has been ongoing at the Little Cannon River AMA, adjacent stretches of the riverbank have not been addressed. The new easements being added in 2025 not only allow a larger portion of the Little Cannon to be re-meandered and stabilized, it also allows for restoration on the streambanks and riparian corridor to native riparian and mesic prairie vegetation. The reestablishment of these shorelines will increase nesting habitat for reptiles, waterfowl, and migrating avian species, while the creation of off-channel oxbows will create habitat for amphibians and breeding fish populations.

There are potentially four federally threatened or endangered species in the area that could benefit from our restoration efforts: Northern Long-eared Bat, Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, Minnesota dwarf trout lily, and prairie bush clover.

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

Partners currently have non-OHF funding available to kick start the survey and permitting processes and move up the timeline for construction. The DNR has dedicated most of its Trout Stream conservation easement funding for Region 3 (Metro and SE quarter of MN) to acquiring easements above and below its fee title Aquatic Management Area (AMA). Large, coordinated projects like this Little Cannon River Restoration are only possible when landowner interest, LGU capacity, and appreciation of habitat benefits and public use converge. The Council's support now is critical to reward such collaboration to efficiently improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Landowners are enthusiastic for this project, transferring easements to facilitate it. Moving forward without delay will encourage other landowners to consider protective easements. CRP and GRG have worked closely with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and habitat restoration now will create opportunities to expand land protection along the Little Cannon.

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

The Little Cannon River project will create a 5.0 mile long corridor of restored habitat, stretching across two entire Sections of land. Although the recently acquired fee title Aquatic Management Area (AMA) parcel sits in the center of the proposed project corridor, the habitat is currently too degraded to function well as a habitat corridor or complex. The permanent conservation easements being added in 2025 upstream and downstream also contain very degraded habitat with reduced ecological function.

By remeandering the stream, restoring in-stream habitat, and returning adjacent land to native riparian woodland and mesic prairie vegetation, the project will reconnect fragmented habitat and improve landscape-scale ecological function. These restored corridors will support species movement and dispersal, increase breeding and foraging opportunities, and provide critical nesting habitat for reptiles, waterfowl, and migratory birds. In-stream and off-channel oxbow features will further diversify aquatic habitat, benefiting amphibians and breeding fish populations.

This project will also enhance the hydrology and associated wildlife habitat of a rare calcareous fen located adjacent to the stream restoration site, within the AMA. These fens—some of the rarest wetland types in Minnesota—are groundwater-dependent and highly sensitive to changes in surface and subsurface hydrology. By increasing floodplain connectivity and water infiltration, the project will help stabilize water levels that sustain this unique plant community and its associated species of conservation concern.

This work complements goals outlined in multiple regional plans, including the Cannon River Watershed Landscape Stewardship Plan and Cannon River Watershed Comprehensive Management Plan, and leverages existing protected lands to expand functional habitat corridors in southeastern Minnesota's fragmented landscape.

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 : H3 – Improve connectivity and access to recreation – improving protected lands for wildlife watching and hunting

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.

The Little Cannon River is a coldwater stream in southern Minnesota. Through years of land use change and streambank erosion, the channel has become incised and impaired with sediment loads. In the stream's current state, increased frequency and intensity of precipitation events create larger flood risk potential, nutrient runoff, and erosion. Recreating a meandering stream will increase the floodplain region which will increase water holding capacity. Stabilizing the eroding stream banks will decrease sediment load and nutrient runoff. Limiting sediment into the river will increase the quality of gravel spawning beds for multiple fish species including rainbow, brown, and brook trout. Using current precipitation climate models, intervention in stabilizing the river banks is necessary to ensure the health of not only the Little Cannon habitat, but downstream watershed water quality as well.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

Southeast Forest

Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

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:

This project will deliver lasting habitat, ecological and recreational benefits by restoring a 5-mile stretch of the Little Cannon River to a natural stream pattern. The work will stabilize the channel, reducing erosion and preventing both sediment buildup and channel downcutting, so the stream maintains productive in-stream habitat for many decades.

Diverse habitat features, including pools, cover habitat, rock riffles, oxbows, and spawning gravels, will support naturally reproducing fish populations and long-term population health. Native vegetation plantings along the banks will further improve wildlife habitat.

Restored habitat where permanent protection and public fishing easements exit will ensure the public can enjoy a lasting legacy of productive fisheries

By combining habitat restoration and public access, this project will create a permanent conservation legacy: a healthier river system, stronger fish and wildlife populations, and recreational access for current and future generations.

Outcomes

Programs in southeast forest region:

Rivers, streams, and surrounding vegetation provide corridors of habitat ~ *Enhancement of in-stream and riparian corridor habitat creates miles of connected habitat. Outcomes in aquatic life are measured through surveys of fish, macro invertebrates and/or exposed substrates. Abundance, size structure and species diversity are considered.*

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

Clean Water Fund

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.

This proposal does not substitute or supplant previous funding that was not from a Legacy fund.

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

In collaboration with the DNR. Information gathered will be used to develop site-specific scope of work plans for restoring ecologically desired habitats. Project management plans will detail the methods and practices to be used and a timeline for the successful completion of each site/project along with management guidelines and maintenance outline for the future. After funds are expended, sites will be in a condition that the landowner will be able to maintain.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
-	-	-	-	-
2032	Agency staff visits and/or MNTU volunteers	Inspect structural elements and vegetation	If needed, alert DNR and develop action plan	Conduct maintenance with volunteers and/or contractors if DNR does not
Every 3 years thereafter	Agency staff visits and/or MNTU volunteers	Inspect structural elements and vegetation	If needed, develop action plan with DNR	Perform or assist DNR with maintenance if 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:

This project significantly increases equitable access to Minnesota's outdoor heritage by restoring five miles of the Little Cannon River where permanent public angling access is being established. The site features easy-to-navigate streambanks, a parking area, and access bridges at both ends—allowing people to fish without the need for waders, watercraft, or specialized gear. There are no restrictions on angling equipment, which lowers the barriers to entry for beginners and for those from low- and moderate-income households.

Located in a part of the state without natural lakes, the Little Cannon River provides one of the few local stream fishing opportunities for area residents. This project will make it easier for all Minnesotans—regardless of income, background, or ability—to experience the cultural tradition of stream fishing close to home. Based on past experience with nearby restoration projects, we anticipate that this work will draw more local visitors and increase community awareness of and connection to the river.

Currently, most anglers at this site are visitors from the south metro on weekends, with local users more common during the week. We believe that restoring the river's habitat and improving access will encourage more year-round, local use and create a welcoming destination for diverse communities in the Cannon River region and beyond.

Activity Details

Requirements

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?

AMA

Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

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 proposal either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?
No

Other OHF Appropriation Awards

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?
No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Begin planning, design and implementation of habitat enhancements	July 2026
Complete implementation of habitat enhancements, including native vegetation work.	June 2031

Budget

Grand Totals Across All Partnerships

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$257,000	$87,000	-, federal, Clean Water Fund	$344,000
Contracts	$4,214,000	$135,000	federal, Clean Water Fund	$4,349,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$14,000	$1,000	Private	$15,000
Professional Services	$300,000	-	-	$300,000
Direct Support Services	$151,800	$60,000	-, Private	$211,800
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$6,000	-	-	$6,000
Supplies/Materials	$232,000	$1,000	-, Private	$233,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$5,174,800**	**$284,000**	**-**	**$5,458,800**

Partner: Great River Greening

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$72,000	-	-	$72,000
Contracts	$250,000	-	-	$250,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$4,000	-	-	$4,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$59,000	$60,000	Private	$119,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$4,000	-	-	$4,000
Supplies/Materials	$230,000	-	-	$230,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$619,000**	**$60,000**	**-**	**$679,000**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	0.19	5.0	$72,000	-	-	$72,000

Partner: Clean River Partners

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$85,000	$87,000	federal, Clean Water Fund	$172,000
Contracts	$4,000	$135,000	federal, Clean Water Fund	$139,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	$1,000	Private	$1,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$27,200	-	-	$27,200
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	$1,000	Private	$1,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$116,200**	**$224,000**	**-**	**$340,200**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Clean River Partners Staff	0.2	5.0	$85,000	$87,000	federal, Clean Water Fund	$172,000

Partner: Minnesota Trout Unlimited

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	$100,000	-	-	$100,000
Contracts	$3,960,000	-	-	$3,960,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	$10,000	-	-	$10,000
Professional Services	$300,000	-	-	$300,000
Direct Support Services	$65,600	-	-	$65,600
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$2,000	-	-	$2,000
Supplies/Materials	$2,000	-	-	$2,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$4,439,600**	**-**	**-**	**$4,439,600**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Habitat Enhancement Staff	1.0	4.0	$100,000	-	-	$100,000

Amount of Request: $5,174,800
Amount of Leverage: $284,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 5.49%
DSS + Personnel: $408,800
As a % of the total request: 7.9%
Easement Stewardship: -
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
$284,000	$179,000	63.03%	$105,000	36.97%

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
CRP's federal leverage is a Fishers & Farmers Partnership grant, slated to begin on July 1, 2025. CRP's CWF leverage is from the BWSR. Goodhue SWCD's $20,000 local leverage is funding from their general fund for staff time; they also have $30,000 WBIF leverage.

Does this proposal 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?
Because we would design and permit the entire project site and install as much as the reduced construction funding allows, the acre amount completed might be less than strictly proportional.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
MNTU & GRGs personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted downward but not strictly proportionally. Design and permitting would be frontloaded and personnel and DSS costs would track those efforts and project oversight will remain consistent. CRP's administration is consistent to manage the program and maintain partner and community relationships.

If the project received 30% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Because we would design and permit the entire project site and install as much as the reduced construction funding allows, the acre amount completed might be less than strictly proportional.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
MNTU & GRGs personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted downward but not strictly proportionally. Design and permitting would be frontloaded and personnel and DSS costs would track those efforts and project oversight will remain consistent. CRP's administration is consistent to manage the program and maintain partner and community relationships.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?
No

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
MNTU's includes earthwork contracts by service providers for contracted services to construct the project on the ground, and includes heavy equipment use (with operators), other labor, & materials that the contractor must incorporate into the project features.

GRG's includes restoration/enhancement contracts by service providers.

CRP's includes accounting fees.

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Design/Engineering

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?
Yes

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging
NA

I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:
Yes

Direct Support Services

How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?
MNTU's Direct Support Services parallels Trout Unlimited's federal rate, which is approved every two years. It is based only upon the amount of personnel time, travel, and professional services actually expended on the habitat project.

GRG – DSS rate approved by the DNR in 2024, GRG's DSS rate includes the allowable direct and necessary expenditures that are not captured in other line items in the budget. A portion not exceeding 50% of these costs are requested from the grant and the balance is contributed as leverage.

CRP's DSS rate was approved by the DNR in 2024.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?
Primarily hand tools and safety gear for cutting trees and brush, raking and seeding areas. Also saws, brush cutters, personal protective equipment, burn equipment, seed collection equipment, repairs and other necessary equipment to complete restoration and enhancement activities.

Federal Funds

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

Are the funds confirmed?
No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?
7/1/2025

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
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	140	140
Total	**0**	**0**	**0**	**140**	**140**

Restoration/Enhancement Acres Breakdown of Existing Protected Lands (Table 1a.2)

	RESTORE		ENHANCE	
	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF	Lands acquired with OHF	Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc)	-	-	84	-
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	-	-	-
Easements	-	-	35	21
Total	**-**	**-**	**119**	**21**

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	$5,174,800	$5,174,800
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$5,174,800**	**$5,174,800**

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
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	140	0	0	140
Total	**0**	**0**	**140**	**0**	**0**	**140**

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	$5,174,800	-	-	$5,174,800
Total	**-**	**-**	**$5,174,800**	**-**	**-**	**$5,174,800**

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	$36,962

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	$36,962	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

5

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?
No

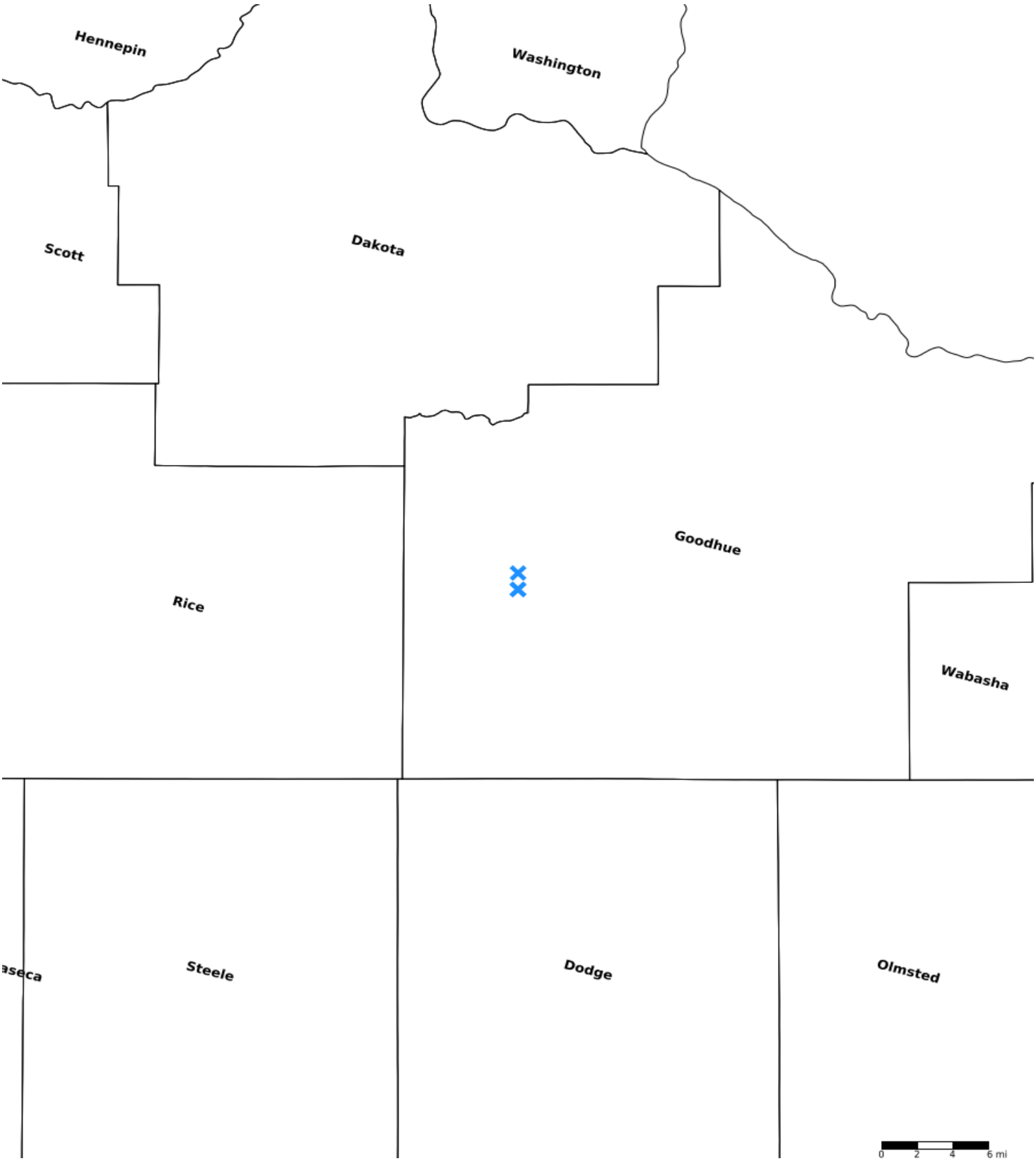
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Great River Greening works with land owning entities (public and protected private) and interested stakeholders to identify parcels where there is a need for restoration or enhancement of lands and water resources. Parcels are selected using the following criteria: permanently protected status (WMA, AMA, SNA, Forestry, County Conservation, etc.), ecological and habitat value and potential (biodiversity, size and location), congruence with existing plans and priority areas, willing and committed landowners (demonstrated through leveraged match), and leveraging opportunities.

MNTU focuses habitat enhancement and restoration efforts on those watersheds likely to continue to support viable, fishable populations of naturally reproducing trout fifty years and more from now. Work is done only where degraded habitat is a limiting factor for a quality, sustainable fishery. Priority locations are determined through consultations with MNDNR professionals, MNDNR management plans and surveys, other habitat and conservation planning efforts, MNTU members' knowledge of watersheds, and science-based criteria.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Little Cannon River 1 (S.)	Goodhue	11018201	25	$1,174,800	Yes	Restore habitat in re-meandered channel totaling 5.0 miles at completion
Little Cannon River 2 (N.)	Goodhue	11118236	31	$2,000,000	Yes	Restore habitat in re-meandered channel totaling 5.0 miles at completion
Little Cannon River AMA	Goodhue	11018201	84	$2,000,000	Yes	Restore habitat in re-meandered channel totaling 5.0 miles at completion

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- Restore
- Enhance
- Other

Little Cannon River

Stream Habitat Restoration

Program Overview

In a region where healthy coldwater streams are increasingly rare, this project will restore 5 miles of the Little Cannon River and its surrounding riparian corridor—delivering enduring habitat benefits for fish, wildlife, and people. Located in a high-priority conservation area, this work is tailored to stabilize the river, reduce erosion, and reconnect land and water.

Aerial view of the Little Cannon River Aquatic Management Area

Key Habitat Benefits

Coldwater Fish Habitat

- 1.7 miles of new stream channel created through a meandering design
- Deepened pools, riffles, and undercut banks improve habitat for brook and brown trout at all life stages
- Spawning beds and food-producing riffles increase reproductive success and fish abundance

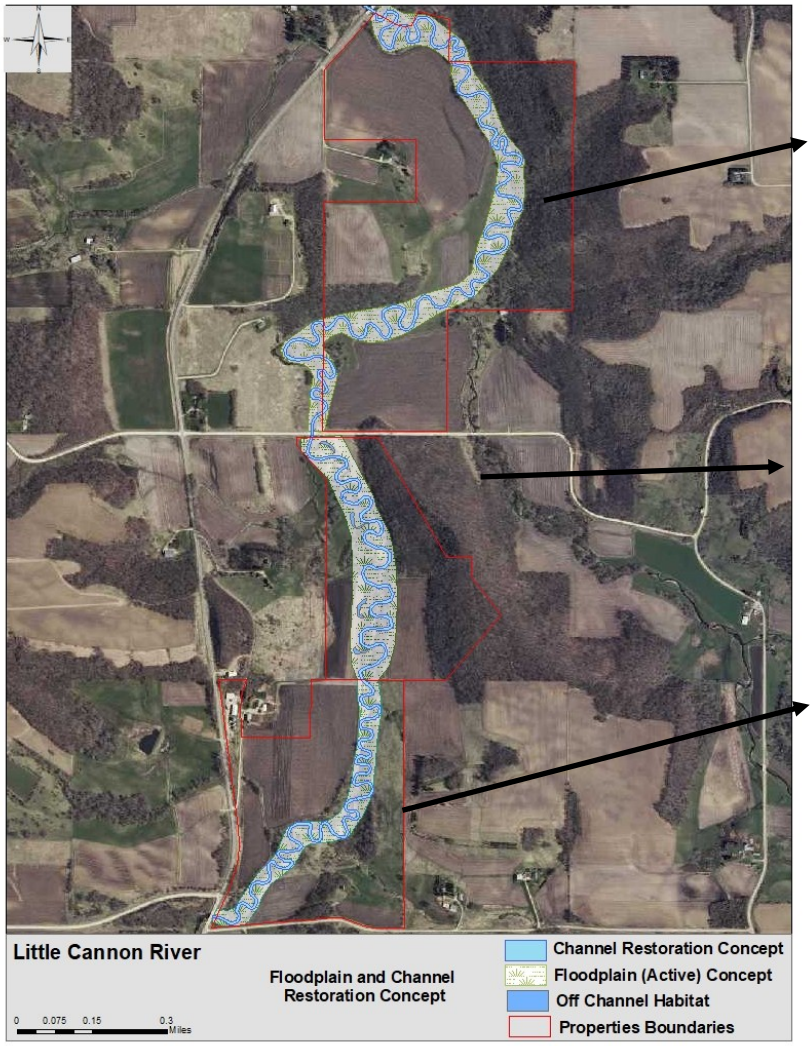
Wildlife and Rare Species Protection

- Restoration supports habitat for the red-sided dace, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- New oxbow and floodplain features benefit amphibians, reptiles, waterfowl, and mammals
- Native plantings boost pollinator and bird habitat

Angler with a brook trout caught in the Little Cannon

This project delivers permanent, one-time restoration benefits and strengthens ecological resilience in southeast Minnesota.

All work is coordinated with the Minnesota DNR and grounded in long-term stewardship.



This project would restore five miles of the Little Cannon River, left.

Downstream easement secured in 2025 to expand public access and improve habitat.

The central parcel on this map is the Little Cannon Aquatic Management Area.

Upstream easement secured in 2025 to expand public access and improve habitat.

Our Partnership

Minnesota Trout Unlimited is leading in-stream restoration and stream channel reconstruction

Great River Greening is restoring native upland and riparian vegetation

Clean River Partners is connecting this work to watershed-wide conservation initiatives and farmer-led practices as well as project coordination

Goodhue SWCD is supporting with funding, landowner relationships, and long-term planning