Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase X

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/12/2026

Project Title: Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase X

Funds Recommended: $1,770,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Kevin Roth
Title: Easement Programs Coordinator
Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources
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Location Information

County Location(s):

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

Protect in Easement

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Forest

Narrative

Abstract

Phase 10 of the Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Program will utilize permanent conservation easements to protect 420 acres and 6,000 feet of wild rice shoreland habitat. Development trends pose a serious threat to wild rice habitat. Sites are selected through a ranking process that considers development risk, surrounding habitat, and existing wild rice lake quality. BWSR will utilize the RIM easement process in partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) within the Northern Forest and Forest Prairie Transition to accomplish protection. Previous phases of this project have protected 7,124 acres of wild rice shoreland protection.

Design and Scope of Work

Historically, wild rice occurred throughout Minnesota and extended into northern Iowa. Wild rice has since been extirpated from most of its southern range due to human impacts including changes to water quality and chemistry, sedimentation, drainage, flow alteration, boat traffic and competition from introduced aquatic invasive species. Today, the heart of the state's wild rice acreage falls within this project work area comprised of 15 counties -- Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Morrison, Otter Tail, St. Louis, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena.

Development trends have reduced the availability of developable shoreline on recreational lakes, resulting in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays containing wild rice being increasingly targeted for shoreline development; posing a serious threat to remaining wild rice habitat. Many wild rice shoreland complexes are still intact with good water quality, but are subject to development pressure that, if allowed, will degrade the resource. This proposal will continue to fill a need for shoreland protection on key water bodies supporting wild rice in the Northern Forest and Forest Prairie Transition Sections.

Most wild rice waterbodies are public waters and offer some form of public access. Protecting wild rice by protecting parcels from shoreland development leads to assurance that recreation opportunities on public wild rice waterbodies are maintained.

The Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) and fifteen local SWCDs will continue to offer permanent watershed protection on shallow lakes, rivers and shallow bays that produce wild rice. BWSR's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program will acquire approximately 420 acres of shoreline habitat through permanent conservation easements. Parcels will be selected based on the degree to which they help permanently protect the land around a given wild rice water body and protect existing habitat.

SWCD generated landowner applications will be reviewed and parcels ranked by the local technical committee using the "Wild Rice Shoreland Protection scoresheet" (attached).

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

Wild rice shoreland encompasses a complex of shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays of deeper lakes that support rice and provide some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota. Wild rice habitat is especially important to Minnesota's migrating and breeding waterfowl. More than 17 species of wildlife listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) use wild rice areas as habitat for breeding, migration, and/or foraging.

Targeted SGCN are as follows: Common Loon, Trumpeter Swan, Bald Eagle, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Red-necked Grebe, Sora Rail, Virginia Rail, Yellow Rail, Black Tern, Rusty Blackbird, Sedge Wren, Lesser Scaup, Northern Pintail, and American Black Duck.

Wild rice is some of the most important habitat for wetland-dependent wildlife species in Minnesota as noted in the MNDNR's Natural Wild Rice in Minnesota report to the legislature (2008). Important game species supported by wild rice include the Ring-necked Duck, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Scaup, and Bufflehead.

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

Lake lot development has reduced the availability of developable shorelines on recreational lakes, resulting in shallow lakes, rivers, and shallow bays containing wild rice being increasingly targeted for shoreline development. Many of these wild rice shoreland complexes currently remain intact with good water quality, but are subject to development pressure that, if allowed, will degrade the resource.

Easement acquisition is critical at this time to head off development and habitat fragmentation along these sensitive lakes. Beyond public ownership, current shoreline protection on wild rice shoreland is limited to county shoreland ordinances, and limited conservation efforts by non-governmental organizations. Shoreland ordinances do not prevent wild rice habitat fragmentation and degradation. Further, even the most stringent ordinances still allow for some subdivision and development, which is detrimental to wild rice shoreland complexes.

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

To target sites, aerial photos of wild rice waterbodies are reviewed during a preliminary screening to find those that are the most intact, provide the most wild rice, have the most waterfowl use, and can be protected for the lowest cost. Waters are sorted into Low, Medium and High categories. Once the waters have been ranked, the SWCD contacts landowners on the high and some of the medium priority waters. Prioritization is done in collaboration with DNR shallow lakes staff.

Easement selection occurs with a goal of maximum wild rice habitat complex protection along shorelands. Easement parcels are further targeted and prioritized by adjacency to current protected lands/public lands and a low level of lake development. The following additional factors are considered to ensure site selection reflects current science-based measures for wild rice habitat protection: DNR wild rice water designation, feet of shoreline protected, development potential of site, acquisition urgency, depth from shore, watershed considerations, easement size relative to the parcel, and an analysis of stakeholder support. Sites that contain a wild rice lake outlet are also prioritized for potential DNR management of water levels to ensure protection.

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

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

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 forest-prairie transition region:

Protected, restored, and enhanced nesting and migratory habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need ~ *Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species. A summary of the total number of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes.*

Programs in the northern forest region:

Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *Healthy populations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species as well as more common species. A summary of the total number of wetland acres and associated forest land secured under easement through this appropriation will be reported. We expect sustained populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as these easements are secured. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure maintained outcomes.*

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 funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

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

BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry out oversight, monitoring and inspection of conservation easements. Easements are inspected every year for the first five years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations are identified.
Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs are $10,000 per easement. This value is based on using SWCD staff for monitoring and preliminary enforcement. The amount includes costs of BWSR and local government unit staff time as well as costs for encouraging voluntary compliance, addressing potential violations and legal enforcement.

Monitoring by local staff also provides a local connection with the landowner to provide current and future strategies for maintenance and management of easement lands.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2027-Ongoing	Stewardship Account	Inspections every year for the first five years; then every third year.	Corrective actions of any violations	Enforcement action by MN Attorney General Office
2027-Ongoing	Landowner Responsibility	Maintain compliance with easement terms	-	-

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

Wild rice is a culturally important resource for Native Americans in Minnesota. This proposal specifically works to protect wild rice resources. BWSR will continue to engage tribes in the easement selection and future funding proposals process. BWSR hopes to add wild rice lake restoration to this proposal in the future. Initial discussions with the Fon du Lac tribe on this have already begun.

Activity Details

Requirements

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

Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?
Yes

Who will manage the easement?
SWCD, Landowner, BWSR

Who will be the easement holder?
BWSR

What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?
6

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

Will the eased land be open for public use?
Yes

Describe the expected public use:
This easement program specifically allows for more recreation opportunities on wild rice water bodies with public access.

RIM easements do not require that private land is open to the public; however, this question is also evaluated on public benefit and RIM easements do provide a significant public benefit; often expand wildlife habitat near public lands. Many of these easements will be taken where there already is a large percentage of public land. Strategically placed easements improve habitat for wildlife that use wild rice water bodies in addition to improving terrestrial habitats located adjacent to these water bodies.

RIM easement land remains in private ownership and the landowner still pays property taxes. Statutory goals of the Outdoor Heritage Fund for protection and restoration of habitat. Minnesota Statute 97A.056 states ". . .the fund must be expended to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife." and "The council shall make recommendations . . . that directly relate to the restoration, protection, and enhancement of wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife, and that prevent forest fragmentation, encourage forest consolidation, and expand restored native prairie."

Criteria in all RIM program scoresheets used to evaluate and prioritize parcels funded include proximity of the easement land to lands that are in public ownership and/or open to public hunting. Parcels adjacent to public land or that would connect or expand larger existing habitat areas receive additional points in the scoring and ranking process. Wildlife typically travel far enough distances where a mixture of habitat on public and private land is necessary in order to maximize wildlife carrying capacity in that area. Private lands provide refuge in heavily pressured hunting areas as well.

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved, beyond those used for maintenance and management, as a result of the proposed acquisition?

Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Though uncommon, new trails may be developed if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (fire breaks, berm maintenance, forest stewardship) and are noted on the conservation plan. Narrow mowed trails for personal use are allowed for landowner access on RIM easements. Unauthorized trails are a violation of the easement.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

Under the terms of the easement, a conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement and the conservation plan. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms and the conservation plan.

Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?

Yes

The potential for habitat enhancements will be considered for each easement. No funding from LSOHC will be used for these projects, other funding methods will be considered when opportunities arise.

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
Final Report Submitted	November 1, 2035
RIM easements secured	June 30, 2031

Date of Final Report Submission: 09/30/2031

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, 2031;
(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, 2035;
(3) money appropriated for restoring or enhancing other land is available until June 30, 2032;
(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	$115,600	-	-	$115,600
Contracts	$15,000	-	-	$15,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	$1,539,900	-	-	$1,539,900
Easement Stewardship	$60,000	-	-	$60,000
Travel	$3,100	-	-	$3,100
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$30,700	-	-	$30,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$4,400	-	-	$4,400
Supplies/Materials	$1,300	-	-	$1,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$1,770,000**	**-**	**-**	**$1,770,000**

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Easements	0.21	4.0	$115,600	-	-	$115,600

Amount of Request: $1,770,000
Amount of Leverage: -
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 0.0%
DSS + Personnel: $146,300
As a % of the total request: 8.27%
Easement Stewardship: $60,000
As a % of the Easement Acquisition: 3.9%

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?
Proportional reductions across the entire budget as well as acres protected have been made.

Does this project have the ability to be scalable?
Yes

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A 50% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?
Yes

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
The contracts line is used for payments to SWCD staff for easement acquisition and technical assistance, as appropriate. Estimated restoration costs are included in the easement acquisition line.

Easement Stewardship

What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?
6 easements at $10,000 per easement. The total stewardship amount will ultimately be dependent on the cost of easements and if the proposed easement number is reached. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs are $10,000 per easement. This value is based on using SWCD staff for monitoring and preliminary enforcement. The amount includes costs of BWSR and local government unit staff time as well as costs for encouraging voluntary compliance, addressing potential violations and legal enforcement.

Travel

Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?
No

Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging
The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

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?
BWSR annually reviews and updates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done and the program staff time involved.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?
Steel posts and signs to mark easement boundaries.

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	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	30	-	390	-	420
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**30**	**-**	**390**	**-**	**420**

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	$50,000	-	$1,720,000	-	$1,770,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**$50,000**	**-**	**$1,720,000**	**-**	**$1,770,000**

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	50	-	-	370	420
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**50**	**-**	**-**	**370**	**420**

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	-	$250,000	-	-	$1,520,000	$1,770,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**$250,000**	**-**	**-**	**$1,520,000**	**$1,770,000**

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	$1,666	-	$4,410	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

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	-	$5,000	-	-	$4,108
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

6,000 ft

Parcels

Parcel Information

Sign-up Criteria?
Yes - Sign up criteria is attached

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Wild Rice waters are identified for priority protection by DNR shallow lakes staff in conjunction with BWSR and SWCD staff. Each waterbody is given a high, medium or low priority based on several factors including the water's ability to produce the most wild rice, attract the greatest numbers of waterfowl and has currently intact shoreline .

SWCDs complete outreach to landowners on high and medium priority waters.

Further prioritization is made utilizing the scoring and ranking sheet and a technical review committee. Scoring and ranking places an emphasis on adjacent public lands, other permanently protected lands and critical habitat features are priorities. It also considers the amount of shoreland protected and percentage of the lake that has protection. Once a lake has adequate protection, we move that lake to a low priority and move to protection of additional lakes.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase X

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2027 - Wild Rice Shoreland Protection Phase X
Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources
Manager: Kevin Roth

Budget

Requested Amount: $3,500,000
Appropriated Amount: $1,770,000
Percentage: 50.57%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	$228,500	-	$115,600	-	50.59%	-
Contracts	$30,000	-	$15,000	-	50.0%	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	$3,043,200	-	$1,539,900	-	50.6%	-
Easement Stewardship	$120,000	-	$60,000	-	50.0%	-
Travel	$6,100	-	$3,100	-	50.82%	-
Professional Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	$60,800	-	$30,700	-	50.49%	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	$8,800	-	$4,400	-	50.0%	-
Supplies/Materials	$2,600	-	$1,300	-	50.0%	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$3,500,000**	**-**	**$1,770,000**	**-**	**50.57%**	**-**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A 50% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A 30% reduction in funding would reduce outputs proportionately.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
A small portion of easement staff time specifically for appropriation and program management and reporting remains relatively consistent regardless of appropriation amount.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	840	420	50.0%
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	$3,500,000	$1,770,000	50.57%
Enhance	-	-	-

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	0	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	840	420	50.0%
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	$3,500,000	$1,770,000	50.57%
Enhance	-	-	-