Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/12/2026

Project Title: Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2

Funds Recommended: $1,641,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Gabby Menomin
Title: Director of Land and Environment
Organization: Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi
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Location Information

County Location(s): Ramsey.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Habitat

Narrative

Abstract

Phalen Creek is a long-buried waterway that previously flowed through Saint Paul's East Side from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River. Until the early twentieth century, it was a thriving wildlife corridor and cultural resource for Dakota people. Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, with support from LSOHC and others, has built strong momentum to daylight Phalen Creek. We are requesting a) 100% design development for the portion of the creek within Wakan Tipi Sanctuary, and b) 10% design development of the remaining creek channel between these two sites (key areas only to keep up with other development projects along the corridor).

Design and Scope of Work

Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (WTA) is nearing completion of engineering design to daylight a ¼-mile creek stretch south of Lake Phalen with previous support from LSOHC and others. We begin construction of this first section in 2027. Daylighting the full creek will restore aquatic habitat and reconnect Lake Phalen, Wakan Tipi Sanctuary, and the Mississippi River. The ecosystems to be restored include wet meadows, shallow fresh marshes, and seasonally flooded wetlands. Within Wakan Tipi Sanctuary, there will be approximately 3,230 linear feet /16 additional acres brought to 100% design. The remaining creek channel will be designed to 10% between Lake Phalen and Wakan Tipi Sanctuary - a stretch that is 11,135 linear feet/anticipated 12-15 acres.

We request support to complete 100% design reintroducing the creek to ongoing habitat restoration efforts at Wakan Tipi. Currently, the sanctuary includes mesic prairie, oak savanna, woodland bluff, riparian and wetland ecosystems that are under active habitat restoration outside of this proposal. Some considerations for the design of this creek section will be connecting water from Swede Hollow to Wakan Tipi and continuing into the Mississippi River through existing culvert systems. During design, we will analyze options to determine the optimal water flow in consultation with the railroad and MNDOT. Wakan Tipi Center opens to the public this month. We are actively managing the sanctuary and ready to implement this work.

Finally, we're requesting funding to complete 10% design for key areas between Wakan Tipi and Lake Phalen. This is critical to ensure the project coordinates with community projects and developments within the corridor, including the Bronze Line BRT, Hamm's Brewery redevelopment, habitat work in Swede Hollow and Eastside Heritage Park.

The 5 year scope includes:

Site Investigation (Reaches 1-6): Topographic survey, geotechnical investigation, and environmental (soil) analysis to support design, permitting, bidding, and construction phases. The survey includes topography, transportation/recreation infrastructure, existing utilities/easements, soil conditions, and major vegetation.

Design (Reaches 1-6): Engineering, ecological, soil, and geomorphic assessment and design of the proposed restored channel, associated wetland, and upland areas. Deliverables include concept through 10% design for Reaches 4-6 (the central section of the creek), and final construction drawings and bid documents for Reaches 1-3 (Wakan Tipi Sanctuary). Construction drawings will be signed by a Professional Engineer licensed in the State of Minnesota. Construction costs will also be estimated as part of the design process.

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

Daylighting will restore lost aquatic habitat and support the ecological health of a lake and stream system that once formed the ecological backbone of the local environment. The restoration of the creek and riparian habitat will support the return of a range of terrestrial, avian, insect, and aquatic species formerly endemic to this area.

It will restore the specific aquatic habitats including stream, inland shallow fresh marsh, inland deep fresh marsh, inland open fresh water, and inland fresh meadow.

Planned creekbed design at the Lake Phalen site incorporates standing dead wood in the naturalized area, which will provide immediate habitat opportunities for bats, including the Eastern Pipistrelle, Northern Long-eared Bat, and Big Brown Bat (species of Special Concern).

Insect species we anticipate to colonize the creek channel include aquatic macroinvertebrates and terrestrial species like Monarch Butterflies. Insect species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern in Minnesota, which are anticipated to return, include Rusty Patched Bumblebee, Caddisfly, Ghost Tiger Beetles, Iowa Skipper, Leadplant Flower Moth, Regal Fritallary, and Whitney's Underwing.

The creek will provide habitat for a range of endemic turtle species, including the SGCN "threatened" status Blanding's Turtle. The restored naturalized shoreline will be paired with areas allowing for nesting sites.

The creek outfalls to the Mississippi River and will provide enhanced forage and spawning habitat for many fish species including green sunfish, pumpkinseed, large-mouth bass, and bluegill. The proposed stream habitat will have sections that will be fishable for these species, offering a unique fishing experience to the residents and visitors.

Lake sedge, white turtlehead, and joe pye weed are a few of the native species that will help with the establishment of healthy native plant communities. These will help stabilize shoreline conditions, trap sediment to improve water quality and enhance the terrestrial and aquatic habitat value. Upland areas are also being re-established with native plant and pollinator species. Flowering species such as Bottle Gentian, asters, butterfly milkweed and white wild indigo - a state-listed species of special concern native to prairie habitats- provide critical forage and nesting habitat for specialist pollinators.

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

The community has been advocating for creek restoration since 1997. Over the past decade, WTA has made significant progress with support from LSOHC and a broad coalition of partners. Continued momentum is critical for future phases of this restoration. Urban development pressures are ever-present; including development of the Bronze Line BRT, Eastside Heritage Skate park, and Hamm's Brewery Redevelopment. Developing and advancing design for the full creek corridor will ensure this vision is included in local projects and in larger regional planning documents. Since receiving previous support from LSOHC, WTA has secured additional public funding, additional support from private and corporate foundations, and a broad base of individuals invested in the project. Beyond the phase outlined in this request, we anticipate a future final phase of the project to complete creek construction at Wakan Tipi and to accomplish design/construction for the remaining creek (Reaches 4 - 6).

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

Similar to the efforts at the Trout Brook Nature Sanctuary, 2 miles to the west, this project continues the process of creating and planning for expanding north-south habitat corridors that enhance and support the overall Mississippi River flyway. There is a distinct lack of connectivity between the Mississippi River and riparian resources to the north of Saint Paul. This project will restore and plan for critical habitat to reduce the isolation and fragmentation, bridging the gap between resources north and south of Saint Paul. To achieve those goals, Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi previously completed a feasibility study (2017) which included the scientific evaluation of geology (surficial and bedrock) hydrology, topography, and soil types to identify the likely location of the lost riparian and creek habitat resources. Based on these foundational elements, WTA has identified targeted habitats and appropriate locations to leverage the natural site conditions to achieve the ecological restoration goals.

Specific areas of habitat connectivity included in the design of Reaches 1-6 are the connection to the Mississippi River, which was previously lost when the creek was buried in the 1930s. As well as connecting to the already established habitat restoration in Wakan Tipi and the creek and woodland habitats located in Swede Hollow. For the creek site at the south end of Lake Phalen, the continued habitat restoration will expand on the already existing Lake Phalen aquatic and shoreline habitat and beyond into the large chain-of-lake system.

WTA has also conducted a series of preliminary habitat evaluations in the project area, with support and consultation from wildlife ecologists at the University of Minnesota, conservation professionals with Saint Paul Natural Resources, the DNR and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, technicians from Capitol Region and Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed Districts, and other knowledgeable stakeholders. Additional research has been conducted to ensure that the daylighting of Phalen Creek is designed for targeted habitat improvements and expansions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, in addition to the expansion of valuable riparian habitat.

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

Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Metro / Urban

Protect, enhance, and restore riparian and littoral habitats on lakes to benefit game and nongame fish species

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *Success for this project is measured in the planned length of the restored stream channel and in the acreage of restored riparian habitat. We will conduct habitat surveys throughout the planned creek corridor. Vegetation community will be assessed with transect surveys and/or confirmation of the presence of targeted plant species on-site. WTA will also conduct regular wildlife habitat surveys to track presence of indicator species in the project area. University of Minnesota and additional academic institutions will act as support in these studies, surveys, and evaluations.*

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 request is not supplanting or substituting for any previous funding not from legacy funds or used for the same purpose.

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

This project will apply U.S. Fish and Wildlife Strategic Habitat Preservation principles throughout the project to ensure that project outcomes are achieved and maintained after the listed funding period. Namely, this project: (1) is prepared to monitor and encourage the positive watershed-wide impacts of extending riparian habitat from the north metro to the Mississippi River; (2) will continue a legacy of collaboration by working in partnership with community members, government entities, scientists, conservation professionals, and other stakeholders; (3) will utilize an adaptive management framework that incorporates biological planning, conservation design, and monitoring and research in the project and post-project activities; and (4) will rely on science and related tools to evaluate gaps in knowledge and implement best management practices.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2032	Public, Corporate, Private Foundation Grants and Individual Donor support	Maintenance of riparian plantings	Routine water-quality monitoring	IBI assessment
2031	LCCMR ENTRF - Co-Management between WTA and City of Saint Paul	Maintenance of riparian plantings	Routine water-quality monitoring	IBI assessment

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

The project to daylight Phalen Creek represents a unique opportunity to restore a natural resource with longstanding cultural value to the Dakota people of Minnesota, and presents a rare opportunity for stream restoration in the urban core. The project directly serves environmental justice and social equity needs. More than 1,000 community members will be directly engaged during this project. Community engagement will parallel the development of compelling graphics and renderings, and community members will have direct input on project designs throughout the process. This is of particular importance to the East Side, where many residents lack access to naturalized public green spaces, and to the knowledge and health benefits these spaces provide. The area has the second-highest vacancy rate among all Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty in Minnesota; 40% of households report an annual income of less than $35,000, and over 64% of residents identify as People of Color. In the Payne-Phalen neighborhood alone, 37% of residents are Asian or Pacific Islander; 14% are Black or African American; 13% are Hispanic or Latino, and the neighborhood's 400+ Native American and Alaska Native residents are bolstered by a strong East Metro Indigenous community. Consistent engagement will ensure that community interests shape how the creek channel is designed and best utilized by residents.According to the EPA, residents living within ½-mile of the Phalen Creek corridor are, statewide, in the 90th percentile or higher for wastewater discharge, traffic proximity and volume, respiratory hazards, and cancer risk. For nearly 25 years, WTA has engaged local residents about restoring Phalen Creek. Numerous community surveys and targeted outreach events have shown overwhelming support for bringing Phalen Creek back to the surface—to recognize and celebrate the creek's value to the Dakota people, to whom this land has belonged for time immemorial and which holds unique value as a trade route and resource cache; to improve access to natural spaces and water resources in a heavily

industrialized area of the city; and to align with regional watershed management plans surrounding water quality, storm-water runoff, and flood risk mitigation.

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?

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
Site Investigation - Reaches 1 - 3	April 2028
100% Design - Reaches 1 - 3	June 2030
Site Investigation - Reaches 4 - 6	September 2028
10% Design - Reaches 4 - 6 (Key Areas Only)	June 2030

Date of Final Report Submission: 10/01/2032

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	-	-	-	-
Contracts	$1,641,000	$180,000	Great Lakes Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program	$1,821,000
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	**$1,641,000**	**$180,000**	**-**	**$1,821,000**

Amount of Request: $1,641,000
Amount of Leverage: $180,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 10.97%
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?
We are reducing our design scope for Reaches 4-6, removing community engagement work, and removing five-year habitat establishment period for Reaches 7-8.

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
We have a pending proposal of $180,000 to the Great Lakes Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program.

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?
We would reduce the project scope and not complete 60% design development for the stretch of the creek between the Lower Phalen Creek site and the Lake Phalen Creek site.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and design costs would be scaled to accomplish 30% design for Wakan Tipi site.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?
Working with water and civil engineers and site investigation contractors.

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	-	-	-	$1,641,000	$1,641,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$1,641,000**	**$1,641,000**

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	$1,641,000	-	-	-	-	$1,641,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**$1,641,000**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**$1,641,000**

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	$1,641,000
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	$1,641,000	-	-	-	-
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

Parcels

Parcel Information

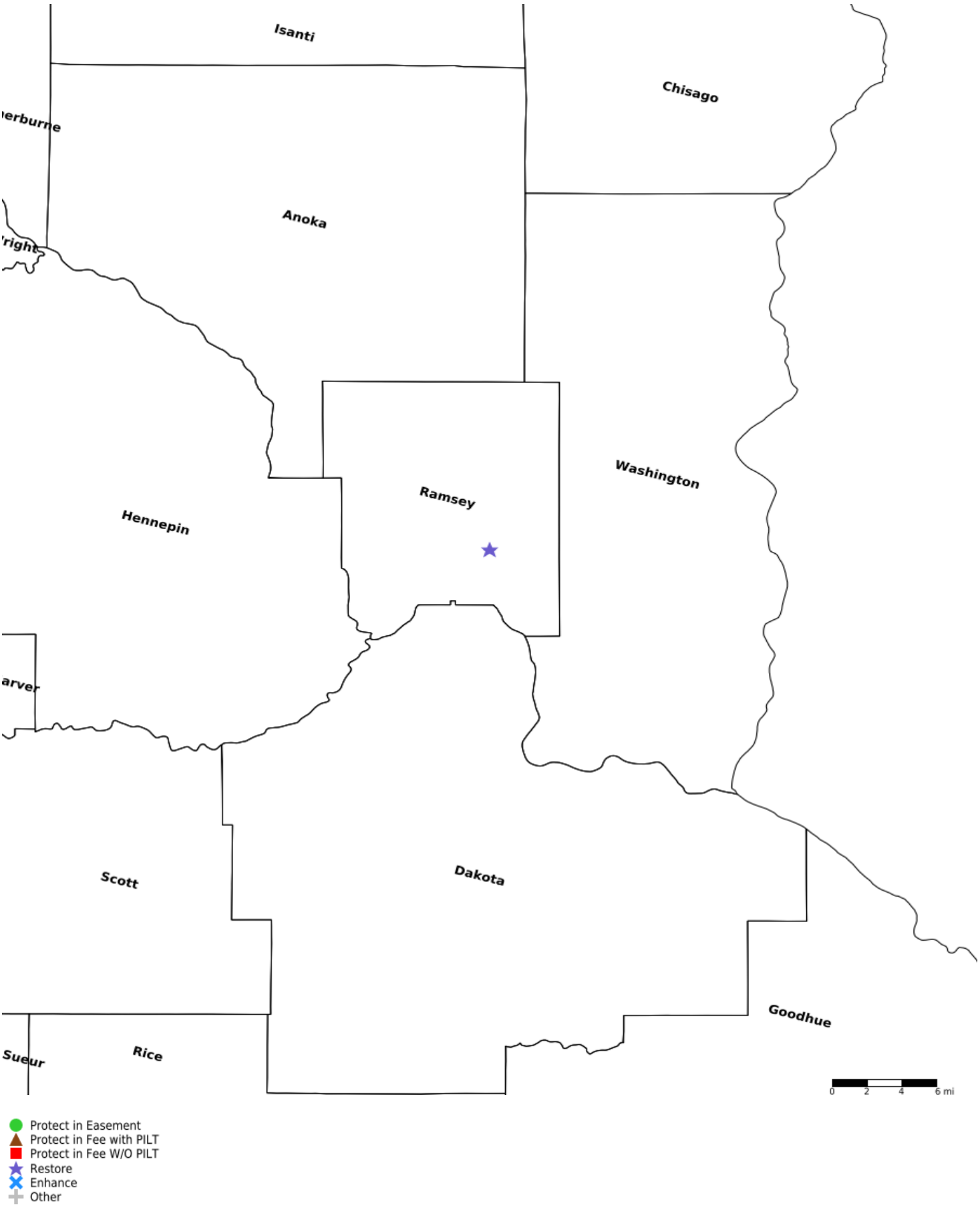
Sign-up Criteria?
No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
The project area encompasses Wakan Tipi (formerly Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary) as well as key project areas near Hamm's Brewery, Eastside Heritage Park, Swede Hollow and Phalen Blvd (Bronze Line BRT). The parcel was identified during a 2017 feasibility study commissioned by WTA to evaluate ideal portions of Phalen Creek to be daylit.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Phalen Creek	Ramsey	02922228	9	$395,965	Yes	Habitat restoration for establishment period.

Parcel Map


Isanti
Chisago
Anoka
Ramsey
Washington
Hennepin
Scott
Dakota
Goodhue
Rice
0 2 4 6 mi
Protect in Easement
Protect in Fee with PILT
Protect in Fee W/O PILT
Restore
Enhance
Other

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2027 - Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2
Organization: Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi
Manager: Gabby Menomin

Budget

Requested Amount: $6,781,400
Appropriated Amount: $1,641,000
Percentage: 24.2%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	$588,300	$235,000	-	-	0.0%	0.0%
Contracts	$4,975,300	$257,000	$1,641,000	$180,000	32.98%	70.04%
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	$1,217,800	$513,900	-	-	0.0%	0.0%
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$6,781,400**	**$1,005,900**	**$1,641,000**	**$180,000**	**24.2%**	**17.89%**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
We would reduce the project scope and not complete 60% design development for the stretch of the creek between the Lower Phalen Creek site and the Lake Phalen Creek site.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and design costs would be scaled to accomplish 60% design for Wakan Tipi site.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
We would only accomplish habitat establishment for reaches 7 & 8 and only 30% design development for reaches 1 - 3. This would hamper our ability to have a shovel ready project at Wakan Tipi at the end of this grant period and reduce overall success for daylighting the full creek.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel and design costs would be scaled to accomplish 30% design for Wakan Tipi site.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	9	1	11.11%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	$6,781,400	$1,641,000	24.2%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	9	1	11.11%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	0	-	-

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	$6,781,400	$1,641,000	24.2%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-