Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Swift Coulee Channel Restoration/ Enhancement - Phase 2

Laws of Minnesota 2027 Accomplishment Plan

General Information

Date: 10/06/2026

Project Title: Swift Coulee Channel Restoration/ Enhancement - Phase 2

Funds Recommended: $1,842,000

Legislative Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Morteza Maher
Title: Administrator
Organization: Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District
Address: 453 North McKinley St.
City: Warren, MN 56762
Email: morteza.maher@mstrwd.org
Office Number: 2187454741
Mobile Number: 2182305703
Fax Number:
Website: www.mstrwd.org

Location Information

County Location(s): Marshall.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Prairie

Forest / Prairie Transition

Activity types:

Enhance

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Habitat

Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

The Swift Coulee Channel Restoration Project is located in Marshall County and considered a Prairie Ecological-section.
Phase 2 of this project when completed will create perpetually protected habitat under the RIM program. Phase 2 will restore over 6 miles of altered natural channel and create a habitat corridor over 400 acres through a natural channel design.
While phase 1 indirectly received funds from LSOHC for land acquisition through RIM in 2024 and constructed using other funds in 2025. This application will cover construction cost for phase 2 which will complete the whole (10 miles long) project.

Design and Scope of Work

Problem:
The Swift Coulee is not an exception to what is known as problem in the Prairie region of MN consisting of an altered natural waterway with degraded grasslands and native habitat adjacent to the coulee due to agricultural practices. Currently, the situation is unfavorable and fails to benefit the farmers and the ecosystem, as the waterway suffers from issues such as siltation, hybrid cattail proliferation, and recurrent flooding.
This project aims to address these critical challenges through the following initiatives:
1. Creation of a new low-flow meander and floodplain valley designed to reduce further siltation and side slope washouts.
2. Implementation of setback levees on both sides of the low-flow meander to establish a wider protective corridor. This will allow nearby farms to utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) for effective drainage.
3. Development of habitats within the low-flow meander and floodplain valley corridor that will provide both upland and wetland habitat species, providing essential resources for resting, feeding, and living.
4. Vegetated protection of the entire project footprint through perpetual easements, with the MSTRWD assuming responsibility for ongoing maintenance according to established design criteria.
Scope of work:
The scope of work for Phase 2 related to this application includes: - Finalize engineering, permitting, and begin construction in 2027 of the described project in Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8 of McCrea Township, as well as Section 36 of Alma Township in Marshall County, Minnesota.
Priority Setting:
The Swift Coulee project has been a priority for the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District (MSTRWD) for over two decades and has consistently been included in the Watershed Management Plan. From the early 2000s, MSTRWD adopted a structured approach by forming a project work team that engaged all relevant state and federal agencies involved in permitting, as well as local authorities and landowners. This collaborative effort led to the development of an agreed-upon Purpose and Need statement (P&N) and resulted in the identification of 13 alternative solutions to address this statement. After screening these alternatives, the team reached consensus on the most feasible option in 2021. The project directly enhances fish and wildlife habitat by enhancing and restoring wetlands and uplands and converting agricultural lands to habitat for waterfowl, grassland and migratory birds as well as grazing animals through a natural channel design that supports pool-riffle sequences for aquatic species and low-flow conditions suitable for fish passage. This is a sustainable solution that not only

enhances the environment, through use of BMPs and the environment resiliency design will meet the agricultural drainage needs.
This project is now recognized as a high priority in the MSTR Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP), which has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), endorsed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

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

This project is designed to permanently restore and enhance a vital ecological corridor within the Lake Agassiz Glacial Plain, a region that once supported vast upland and wetland prairie communities. This phase of the project will reestablish over 6 miles of previously straightened and farmed stream into a sinuous, functioning two-stage channel with native vegetation and broad riparian buffers, creating approximately 400 (just in phase 2) acres of perpetual conservation easements for upland and wetland habitat. These easements are secured through the BWSR Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program, ensuring long-term habitat protection.
The project directly enhances fish and wildlife habitat by enhancing and restoring wetlands and uplands and converting agricultural lands to habitat for waterfowl, grassland and migratory birds as well as grazing animals through a natural channel design that supports pool-riffle sequences for aquatic species and low-flow conditions suitable for fish passage. Grade control structures in the form of rock riffles will be installed at key locations, helping maintain streambed stability while facilitating fish movement across varied flows.
This project in total (phase 1 and 2) will set the stage for a long-term plan to provide fish habitat and passage to places over 25 miles away from Red River of the North. It will reduce sediment by 8,200 tons per year and phosphorus by 7,600 pounds per year, greatly improving water clarity and reducing turbidity—a key limiting factor for aquatic habitat quality.
The broader wildlife benefits include approximately 720 acres of restored and protected wetland and upland prairie habitat across Phases 1 and 2 combined, providing critical refuge for migratory birds, game species, pollinators, and other wildlife. The site falls within the Lake Agassiz Aspen Parklands ecoregion, a transition zone between tallgrass prairie and forest ecosystems, and the restored habitat will reconnect fragmented wildlife corridors within an intensively farmed landscape.
Through a science-based and community-supported approach, the Swift Coulee project will transform a degraded watercourse into a resilient, diverse, and permanently protected landscape supporting fish, game, and wildlife for generations to come.

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

Several elements of the Swift Coulee Phase 2 proposal are time-sensitive:
1st, timely completion of engineering and permitting in 2026 is critical and we are currently on path to meet this, with the proposed construction window beginning in 2027. Delays in planning would postpone project readiness and jeopardize coordination with state agencies on permits and inflation of contractor bid prices.
2nd, landowner confidence hinges on a clear and credible timeline. The RIM easement sign-up period benefits from visible momentum, and uncertainty can slow enrollment.
3rd, alignment with funding cycles—particularly LSOHC and other state programs—requires adherence to established milestones to secure construction funding and leverage match sources.
4th, delaying construction could lead to increased costs and obviously delay realization of benefits.

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

Phase 2 will add approximately over 470 acres of perpetual habitat corridor to the 247.2 acres already protected under Phase 1, expanding the Swift Coulee complex to approximately 720 acres of continuous restored wetland, riparian, and upland prairie habitat. This project reconnects fragmented habitats within an otherwise agriculturally dominated landscape by restoring a meandering stream system with wide native buffers, functioning as a linear wildlife corridor. The location within the Lake Agassiz Aspen Parklands ecoregion enhances the strategic value of this restoration by providing connectivity between isolated habitat patches that support migratory birds, pollinators, grassland species, and aquatic life. The wide channel corridor further serves as a buffer from adjacent land uses, improving ecological function and long-term habitat viability.

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

Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan

Northern Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion: A River and Stream Conservation Portfolio

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

Forest / Prairie Transition

Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for waterfowl, upland birds, and species of greatest conservation need

Prairie

Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

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 ~ *The meandering low flow channel with designed water pools at bends will create a rest area for migratory and waterfowl in the region.*

Programs in prairie region:

Agriculture lands are converted to grasslands to sustain functioning prairie systems ~ *This phase of the project will reestablish over 6 miles of previously straightened and farmed stream into a sinuous, functioning two-stage channel with native vegetation and broad riparian buffers, creating approximately 400 acres of perpetual conservation easements for upland and wetland habitat. These easements are secured through the BWSR Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program, ensuring long-term habitat protection.*

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/ proposal is neither supplanting nor a substitution for any previous fund from any legacy fund.

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

The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District will assume full responsibility for operation and maintenance under the terms of the RIM easement agreements. Design specifications will include provisions for long-term maintenance of grade control structures, vegetation, and sediment control features. Regular inspections, adaptive management, and coordination with BWSR technical staff will ensure functionality over time. A benefit of the engineered design is the reduced need for future intervention, as naturalized systems are more self-sustaining. Local support and district funding will backstop periodic maintenance needs beyond the grant period.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Annual	Established Water Management District through the MSTRWD	Inspection of the project performance in coordination with BWSR/SWCD staff	Monitor & maintain vegetation	Monitor & maintain vegetation

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

Since the land for this project is through perpetual easement with individual landowners, although we would encourage them to consider the BIPOC priorities if that becomes the case as for their land use for recreational purposes, as the project sponsor we do not have more authority. However, MSTRWD adheres to non-discriminatory practices when awarding contracts for construction. We at the project management level will do all we can to provide equal opportunity and encourage BIPOC to be involved in this project.

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?

Permanently Protected Conservation Easements

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
Construction	July 2028
Permitting	May 2027
Engineering - Construction Management - Other sources are sought to aid this as well as OHF	July 2028

Date of Final Report Submission: 01/31/2029

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	$1,692,000	$396,000	WBIF, RRWMB	$2,088,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	$2,000	MSTRWD	$2,000
Professional Services	$150,000	$142,000	MSTRWD, RRWMB, WBIF	$292,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$1,842,000**	**$540,000**	**-**	**$2,382,000**

Amount of Request: $1,842,000
Amount of Leverage: $540,000
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 29.32%
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?
This reduced appropriation will be used the same way if it was fully funded.

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:
WBIF: this project is in the list of known capital projects and all partners agree to fund it as appropriate.
RRWMB: Water quality base funding will be sued and is 100% secured.
MSTRWD: This is an established project under MN Stat. 103D. 605 and has a budget line item.

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?
Another phase could be added to the project and make the proposed Phase 2 into two separate phases and

shorten the upstream length of channel to be restored. This would not only reduce the restored channel length by approximately 3 miles but also reduce the 400 acres of proposed corridor.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel would be reduced but not proportionately as phasing physical activity does not necessarily reduce logistical tasks.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Design/Engineering

Other : Project Management

Surveys

Title Insurance and Legal Fees

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	-	-	-	88	88
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	15	-	-	-	15
Total	**15**	**-**	**-**	**88**	**103**

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	$1,563,000	$1,563,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	$279,000	-	-	-	$279,000
Total	**$279,000**	**-**	**-**	**$1,563,000**	**$1,842,000**

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	0	-	88	-	88
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	15	-	0	-	15
Total	**-**	**15**	**-**	**88**	**-**	**103**

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	$1,563,000	-	$1,563,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	$279,000	-	-	-	$279,000
Total	**-**	**$279,000**	**-**	**$1,563,000**	**-**	**$1,842,000**

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	$17,761
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	$18,600	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	$17,761	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	$18,600	-	-	-

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Parcel Information

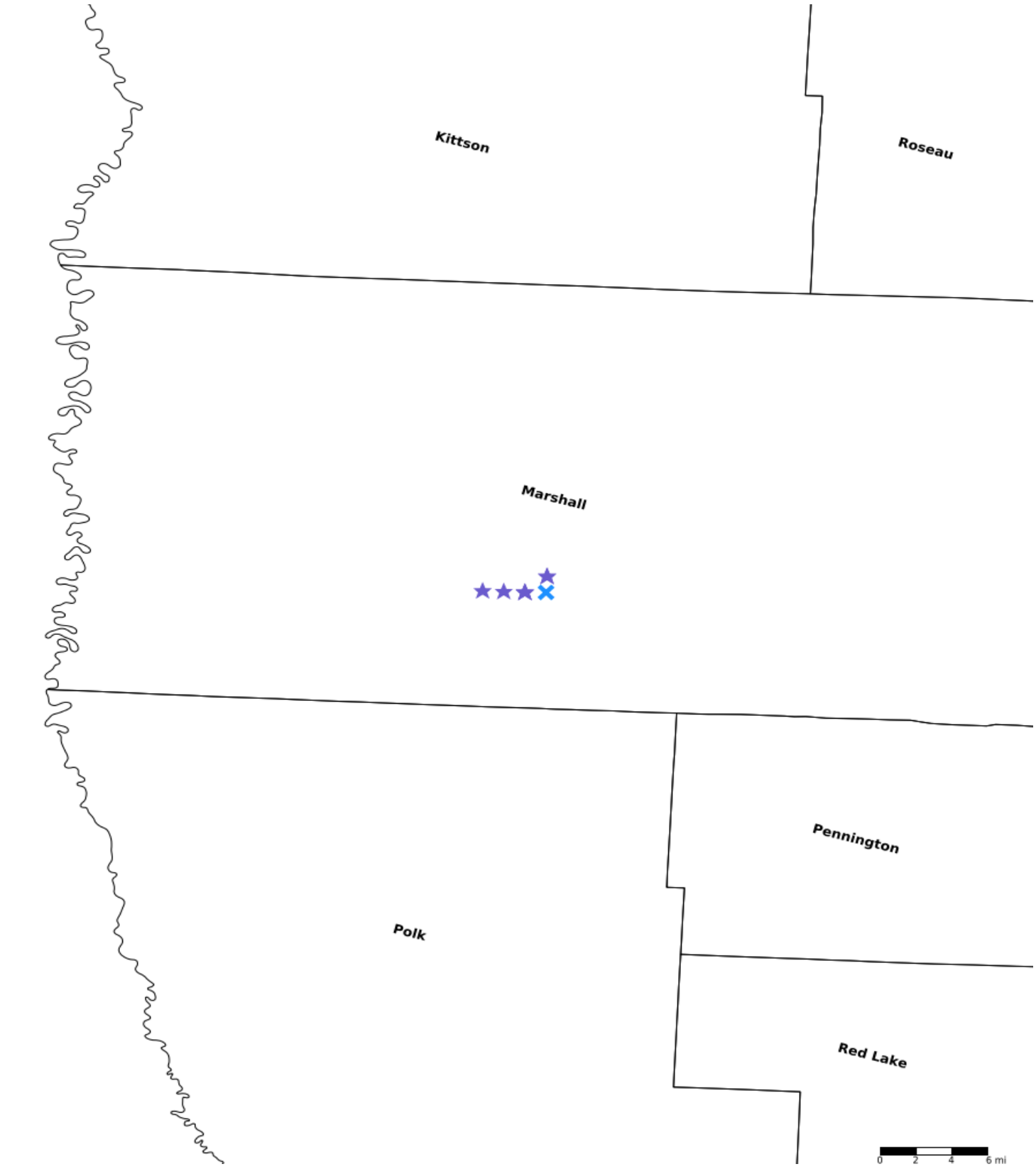
Sign-up Criteria?
No

Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:
Items on this list are reflective of the balance of what we had in original ML 2026 application and then adjusted through accomplishment plans and also more refined acres based on current project design information as it has progressed since then. acres under Kruger and Fagerstrom Trust adjusted on 6-18-26 to reflect the total acres of the phase 2 considering the ML 2026.
All the parcels on our list are the ones the Swift Coulee directly runs through. So, they are equally important and highly prioritized as for acquisition. While many of them are eligible under RIM program some are not due to the total acres. Although those excluded from RIM will be acquired through local funds, this project/ funding request would be allocated towards the overall engineering and construction of phase 2. Hence not really excluded from this application.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Fagerstrom Revocable Trust	Marshall	15547202	6	$106,591	Yes	-
Jacob Anderson	Marshall	15547201	17	$302,008	Yes	10 acres of this parcel included in ML 2026 accomplishment plan.
Jacob Anderson	Marshall	15547204	20	$355,304	Yes	-
Loren Anderson ETAL	Marshall	15647236	20	$355,304	Yes	-
Michele Diehl/ETAL	Marshall	15547202	9	$159,886	Yes	-
Robert Fagerstrom ETAL	Marshall	15647236	19	$337,539	Yes	-
Tracy Anderson	Marshall	15547203	9	$159,886	Yes	107 acres of this parcel included in ML 2026 accomplishment plan.
Virginia Kruger	Marshall	15547202	15	$266,478	Yes	-

Parcel Map


Kittson
Roseau
Marshall
Pennington
Polk
Red Lake
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

Swift Coulee Channel Restoration/ Enhancement - Phase 2

Comparison Report

Program Title: ML 2027 - Swift Coulee Channel Restoration/ Enhancement - Phase 2
Organization: Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District
Manager: Morteza Maher

Budget

Requested Amount: $2,043,000
Appropriated Amount: $1,842,000
Percentage: 90.16%

Item	Requested Proposal	Leverage Proposal	Appropriated AP	Leverage AP	Percent of Request	Percent of Leverage
Personnel	-	$152,900	-	-	-	0.0%
Contracts	$1,893,000	$443,000	$1,692,000	$396,000	89.38%	89.39%
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	$2,000	-	$2,000	-	100.0%
Professional Services	$150,000	$142,000	$150,000	$142,000	100.0%	100.0%
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	**$2,043,000**	**$739,900**	**$1,842,000**	**$540,000**	**90.16%**	**72.98%**

If the project received 70% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Another phase could be added to the project and make the proposed Phase 2 into two separate phases and shorten the upstream length of channel to be restored. This would not only reduce the restored channel length by approximately 3 miles but also reduce the 400 acres of proposed corridor.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel would be reduced but not proportionately as phasing physical activity does not necessarily reduce logistical tasks.

If the project received 50% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?
It would not be feasible to break the project in smaller phases as it will lose the local trust and will create political issues for the future of the project.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?
Personnel would be reduced but not proportionately as phasing physical activity does not necessarily reduce logistical tasks.

Output

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	98	88	89.8%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	17	15	88.24%

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	$1,735,700	$1,563,000	90.05%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$307,300	$279,000	90.79%

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	98	88	89.8%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	-
Enhance	17	15	88.24%

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Total Proposed	Total in AP	Percentage of Proposed
Restore	$1,735,700	$1,563,000	90.05%
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-
Enhance	$307,300	$279,000	90.79%