



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities

ML 2027 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/22/2026

Proposal Title: Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities

Funds Requested: \$2,968,000

Confirmed Leverage Funds: -

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Rebecca Tucker

Title: Twin Cities Metro Program Manager

Organization: Great River Greening

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Location Information

County Location(s): Hennepin, Washington, Anoka and Ramsey.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Metro / Urban

Activity types:

Restore

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Forest

Narrative

Abstract

Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities, led by Great River Greening, will work with eight public landowners to restore 264 acres of permanently protected woodlands across nine sites in Anoka, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties. These shovel-ready projects address the most urgent threat to metro forest health – low native plant diversity – and solve this problem through invasive species control and native tree and understory plant establishment. Forests will be monitored for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, pollinator forage, and wildlife habitat diversity with conservation outcomes publicly showcased for the more than three million Minnesotans in the region.

Design and Scope of Work

Forests in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Region serve as an increasingly rare refuge for both local and migratory wildlife. City expansion and rapidly changing rural land use has degraded the forested acres across the seven-county metropolitan area. These remaining forested acres have been impacted by lack of upfront initial restoration funding and required staff capacity, allowing invasive plant species to suppress native species diversity. However, public ownership has preserved the overall habitats from development, maintaining the structure for healthy environments given a targeted investment in vegetative restoration.

Great River Greening has partnered with eight public landowners to prioritize 264 acres of forested uplands, oak woodlands, and floodplain forests on nine sites in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Region. All are publicly accessible with shovel-ready restoration projects planned and cash (or in-kind) match committed. At every site, work includes invasive tree and shrub removal as well as native plant establishment, with species and methods tailored to each site's target habitat goals.

Locke Park, Fridley: 83 acres of oak and mesic woodlands encompassing 1.5 miles of Rice Creek. The Ramsey County Rice Creek West Regional Trail connects remnant oak pockets to the 31,000 residents. Requires invasive tree and shrub control to prevent further homogenization of habitat.

East River Flats and Mississippi River Bluffs, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and Saint Paul: 28 and 22 acres, respectively, of connected habitat along four miles of the Mississippi River. Floodplain and savanna woodlands in Minneapolis lead to river bluffs in Saint Paul which require invasive removal for diverse native habitats and erosion control.

Marsh Lake Phase 2, Bloomington: 31 acres of oak woodland and mixed forest on the Marsh Lake wetland complex along Nine Mile Creek. Extends current habitat restoration efforts (20 acres), connecting a two-mile-long upland corridor.

River Park, Brooklyn Park: 12 acres of greenspace along the Mississippi River. Extends current city habitat restoration efforts by adding native trees to developing prairies and preparing woodland edges for diverse understory plantings.

Chatham Trails, Arden Hills: 23 acres of floodplain forest connects city and county parks through a larger regional open space complex. Expands efforts by city volunteers on the initial invasive removal on partial sections to the full woodland.

Bayport South WMA, MNDNR: 50 acres of oak woodland represents a WMA close to urban cities, rare in this

region. Requires invasive species and preventative actions to ensure the longevity and natural regeneration of this forest within the larger WMA.

Sunrise Confluence and Houle Parcels, Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District: 15 acres of upland and mesic forests along connected wetlands and the Sunrise River in Forest Lake. Connects adjacent restoration efforts by the Watershed District through concurrent efforts on these parcels.

These nine sites strengthen the network of restored forest habitat spanning four counties, five watershed systems, and the most densely populated conservation landscape in Minnesota. Greening brings 30 years of metro forest restoration experience, established crew capacity, and active relationships with each of these partners to uniquely deliver this work at scale starting July 2027.

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

Restoring forest habitat (structured canopy, native ground layer, snag retention) directly improves the breeding, foraging, and migratory stopover habitat these species depend on. Additionally, five of the nine sites are riparian, where forest restoration stabilizes banks, reduces sediment delivery, and supports aquatic habitats in the Mississippi, Nine Mile Creek and Rice Creek systems. Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities projects will improve habitats needed by wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Many of Minnesota's forest SGCNs are migratory. Wildlife habitat in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Region intersects with the primary mid-continent migratory corridor along and adjacent to the central Mississippi flyway.

Activities will include extensive invasive tree and shrub removal using standard practices as well as newer tested practices such as targeted, growing-season hand cutting which reduces the need for herbicide use in biologically sensitive areas. The subsequent wood waste from these deliberate activities can then be converted into biochar on-site to reduce carbon emissions, prevent soil scarring, and improve soil health. These actions prime the area for native plant reintroduction and establishment which will be achieved through planting and seeding of species that will be sustainable by the landowners and beneficial to the unique wildlife needs of each site. This mosaic of forested habitats and corridors within the urbanized portion of the state provides crucial resources for species navigating through and existing in a human developed landscape.

Additionally, the proposed passive acoustic and ultrasonic monitoring will document the impact value this restoration work has on wildlife. Recording systems will capture sounds of birds, bats, and other wildlife; staff will use acoustic classification software to identify species and track activity over time. Wildlife species that can be recorded as present in these sites through this monitoring include the SGCN red-shouldered hawk, peregrine falcon, Bell's vireo, cerulean warbler, big brown and tri-colored bats as well as common native wildlife species whose presence conveys the overall health of the habitat.

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

While protected, these public lands need robust initial forest restoration which these partners have identified as critical and time-sensitive opportunities to begin during this funding period.

Ecologically, invasive species do not pause between grant cycles. Every year without treatment advances understory canopy closure, increases the non-native seed bank, and raises the cost of restoration. Several sites have partners who have already begun limited volunteer and locally funded work, enough to confirm the need and demonstrate commitment, but not enough to reverse the decline at these sites alone. Delay makes restoration less realistic and more expensive in the future.

Practically, partners have confirmed match commitments, approved defined project scopes, and known staff ready to assist during this period. This alignment is the result of years of relationship-building and it does not hold indefinitely. Great River Greening has the project management capacity, crews, and the partner relationships to begin work July 2027.

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

Forest habitat in the Metro region exists almost entirely as fragments; publicly owned open space separated by development, roads, and infrastructure connected at the landscape level through corridors and habitat complexes. The OHF's own 25-year framework confirms the scale of the challenge, stating at the time of writing, the Metropolitan Urbanizing Section contained only 12 percent permanently protected habitat, accounting for just 3 percent of the state's permanently protected acres, despite being home to more than half its public population. Invasive and non-native plant species accelerate the decline of these limited fragments from within by closing the canopy, eliminating the native ground layer, and reducing habitat function.

Great River Greening's nine sites address fragmentation at two scales. At the site scale, restoration converts degraded forest into functioning diverse ecosystem with a sustainable canopy, native ground layer, and the structural complexity that supports movement, foraging, and breeding habitat for wildlife. At the landscape scale, sites distributed across four counties reinforce existing protected land networks rather than creating isolated restoration patches. Community restoration work at these nine publicly accessible sites reaches Minnesota's densest concentration of residents, turning active restoration into visible entry points for a broader conservation ethic that sustains habitat corridors over time. With 30 years of experience and more than 8,000 members of the public engaged annually, Great River Greening brings proven capacity to connect diverse metro communities to the restoration work happening in their own backyards.

In addition to the woodland species listed previously that will directly benefit and be monitored by this proposal, other wildlife that are crucial to the health of these larger habitats will gain temporary nesting or migratory refuges in these woodlands through the mosaic of habitat in the metro. These species include the federally endangered rusty patched bumble bee, Blanding's and wood turtles, and other wildlife common in the metro but dependent upon healthy woodland habitats for survival.

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 proposal?

Metro / Urban

Protect from long-term or permanent endangerment from invasive species

Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife:

This program works with public landowning partners to complete the large, upfront plant community restoration that is required for long-term sustainable habitats. The resulting diverse plant community becomes increasingly

manageable as the native base competes effectively against reinvasion in ways that bare or degraded ground cannot. The partners behind this work are not temporary. Each of the eight partners owns and manages their land for the long term. As part of this project, each partner commits to ongoing stewardship following restoration completion. The required monitoring and follow-up treatment on the restored habitat will be within the ability of their existing natural resource programs.

The direct and positive impact this vegetative restoration has on wildlife can be measured. Great River Greening would deploy acoustic and ultrasonic wildlife monitoring equipment at sites before, during, and after restoration; staff will use acoustic classification software to identify species and track activity over time. Passive monitoring captures data on birds, bats, and other wildlife that directly respond to changes in forest structure, providing measurable, reportable evidence of habitat improvement that goes beyond vegetation establishment alone. Monitors purchased joint OHF and private matching funds will be available for use on future OHF-funded projects, extending the investment beyond this appropriation period. Staff time to support this portion of the Metro Forests Program is included in the requested labor to strengthen our ability to communicate the success and legacy of the program.

Great River Greening brings the restoration expertise and capacity these partners are lacking to accomplish this initial vegetative restoration phase. These sites will need less intervention with each passing decade, directly benefiting native wildlife. Functioning forest habitat, wildlife corridors, and habitat for Species of Greatest Conservation Need, on land already open to more people than any other conservation landscape.

If this project/program does not have permanent outcomes, describe why it is important to undertake at this time:

All restoration activities in this proposal are conducted on permanently protected public land. Each partner will receive a written management document at project close with monitoring results and recommended long-term stewardship actions. Permanent outcomes with continued stewardship and maintenance from the landowning partner are a foundational criterion for site selection.

Outcomes

Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

A forest land base that contributes to the habitat picture ~ Restored and enhanced acreage will be reported for each of the nine sites. Habitat quality will be evaluated by reporting the diversification of native plant species (numbers and acres planted) and assessing wildlife use (species observed in public records and through Greening monitoring efforts). Community engagement will be measured by counts of volunteer participation, attendance at outreach events, and tracked public communications throughout the grant. Together these metrics will document improved forest health across nine project sites, measurable wildlife response to restored habitat, and expanded community awareness of and investment in conservation in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Region.

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 any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

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

All public partners are committed to maintaining the restoration of habitat improvements. Greening ecologists work throughout the course of the project with partner agency staff to create documentation of adaptive management techniques to ensure restoration success beyond the funding cycle. For each restoration project, site-specific resource management plans will be developed/adopted to guide effective long-term management. All land managers benefiting from R/E must commit to the long-term maintenance of these sites. A principal goal for each site is to elevate its ecological condition so that on-going management is financially feasible after a grant closes. For the sites and programs that use volunteers, community volunteer engagement promotes an increase in community stakeholders.

Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Ongoing	Greening, Local Partners, Private Landowners	Monitoring and assessment of restoration projects	Target actions, engage local partners and landowners	Take restorative action to correct any damaged or degraded habitat

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

Great River Greening believes Minnesota's high quality natural areas should be accessible to all Minnesotans. Historic and present-day inequities have created real barriers to green space, outdoor education, and conservation careers for communities of color, Indigenous peoples, and low- and moderate-income households. Addressing those disparities shapes where we work and how we design our projects. The seven-county metro is home to 31% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents, the most diverse conservation landscape in Minnesota. Several of the nine sites in this proposal are in or directly adjacent to communities with high concentrations of BIPOC residents and low- to moderate-income households. Restoring habitat quality to publicly owned forests in these neighborhoods does not require residents to travel to access it. It improves the natural areas already in their communities. Great River Greening removes barriers to participation through volunteer events designed to welcome busy families.

Community volunteer events are open to the public to engage in the restoration process, where appropriate and beneficial to the restoration process, with outreach prioritized to adjacent neighborhoods. With over 30 years of community centered conservation in Minnesota, Great River Greening has built a diverse public stewardship program which last year engaged more than 8,000 community members, 40% of whom identified as BIPOC. Our strong volunteer base and active community partnerships mean that engagement does not end when the restoration crew leaves. Every acre restored through this proposal is on publicly owned land open to all. Communities that work alongside Great River Greening staff become invested in these places. The public that sees the impacts of the restoration efforts supported by these funds experience the benefits directly. That investment builds locally rooted stewardship capacity that no grant can fully fund but every grant should support.

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?

WMA

County/Municipal

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

Previous OHF Appropriations

Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC for this program or project in the past?

No

Timeline

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Initiate cooperative agreements and initial designs of planned restoration projects.	December 2027
Record initial vegetative conditions and begin wildlife monitoring and community outreach.	December 2027
Release, award, and initiate habitat restoration contractors with external vendors.	June 2028
Restore 264 acres of metro forest habitat.	June 2032
Provide landowners with project documentation, wildlife monitoring results and proposed continued management activities for continued stewardship.	June 2032

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$369,200	\$110,000	Partner In-Kind	\$479,200
Contracts	\$2,249,900	\$10,000	Partner match	\$2,259,900
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	\$11,000	-	-	\$11,000
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$145,100	\$156,600	Great River Greening Match (Partners and private Foundations)	\$301,700
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$11,000	\$5,000	Inkind Great River Greening contribution	\$16,000
Supplies/Materials	\$181,800	-	-	\$181,800
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$2,968,000	\$281,600	-	\$3,249,600

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	0.83	5.0	\$369,200	\$110,000	Partner In-Kind	\$479,200

Amount of Request: \$2,968,000

Amount of Leverage: \$281,600

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 9.49%

DSS + Personnel: \$514,300

As a % of the total request: 17.33%

Easement Stewardship: -

As a % of the Easement Acquisition: -

Leverage Funding Table

	Leverage Amount Committed	Leverage Amount Confirmed (of Committed Funds)	Leverage Amount Anticipated	Total Leverage
Amount:	\$281,600	-	-	\$281,600
% of Total Leverage:	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	

N/A

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

Leverage includes committed partner cash match and in-kind leverage – Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District, City of Fridley, City of Bloomington, City of Brooklyn Park, MPRB, City of Saint Paul, City of Arden Hills - and other private funds.

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?

If required, this program will reduce the number of acres it will complete on scalable projects or will reduce the proposed scope of work on the original acres while still completing allowable outcomes that are maintainable by the landowning partner.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Personnel and DSS expenses are scalable, but not proportionately, due to grant management, landowner and contractor coordination, implementation of the Great River Greening crew, and other fixed costs.

If the project received 30% of the requested funding

Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?

If required, this program will reduce the number of acres it will complete on scalable projects and will reduce the proposed scope of work on the original acres while still completing allowable outcomes that are maintainable by the landowning partner.

Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?

Personnel and DSS expenses are scalable, but not proportionately, due to grant management, landowner and contractor coordination, implementation of the Great River Greening crew, and other fixed costs.

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

Personnel

Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?

Yes

Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?

Funding for these staff positions has been requested from OHF funding in the past only to support the specific programs associated with the requested funding. This program has not requested any funds for these parcels or for the associated staff labor in the past.

Contracts

What is included in the contracts line?

Restoration contracts with qualified service providers.

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

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?

As approved by the DNR, Great River Greening'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.

Other Equipment/Tools

Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?

Acoustic and ultrasonic wildlife monitors and associated equipment, hand tools, saws, brush cutters, safety gear and other necessary equipment to complete restoration activities. Equipment rental may be required for specific habitat restoration tasks to be completed by the Great River Greening crew such as wood chipping or site preparation. For Acoustic and Ultrasonic monitors, Great River Greening is looking at 9 units, one per parcel. In the equipment/tools line \$5,000 from the L-SOHC would be directed to purchase monitors and associated equipment for wildlife monitoring with \$5,000 through private foundation funds to support this request.

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	0	0	264	0	264
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	0	0
Total	0	0	264	0	264

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

	RESTORE: Lands acquired with OHF	RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc.)	-	-	-	-
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	264	-	-
Easements	-	-	-	-
Total	-	264	-	-

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	\$2,968,000	-	\$2,968,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	\$2,968,000	-	\$2,968,000

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	264	0	0	0	0	264
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	0	0	0	0
Total	264	0	0	0	0	264

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$2,968,000	-	-	-	-	\$2,968,000
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$2,968,000	-	-	-	-	\$2,968,000

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	\$11,242	-
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	\$11,242	-	-	-	-
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

1.5 miles

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

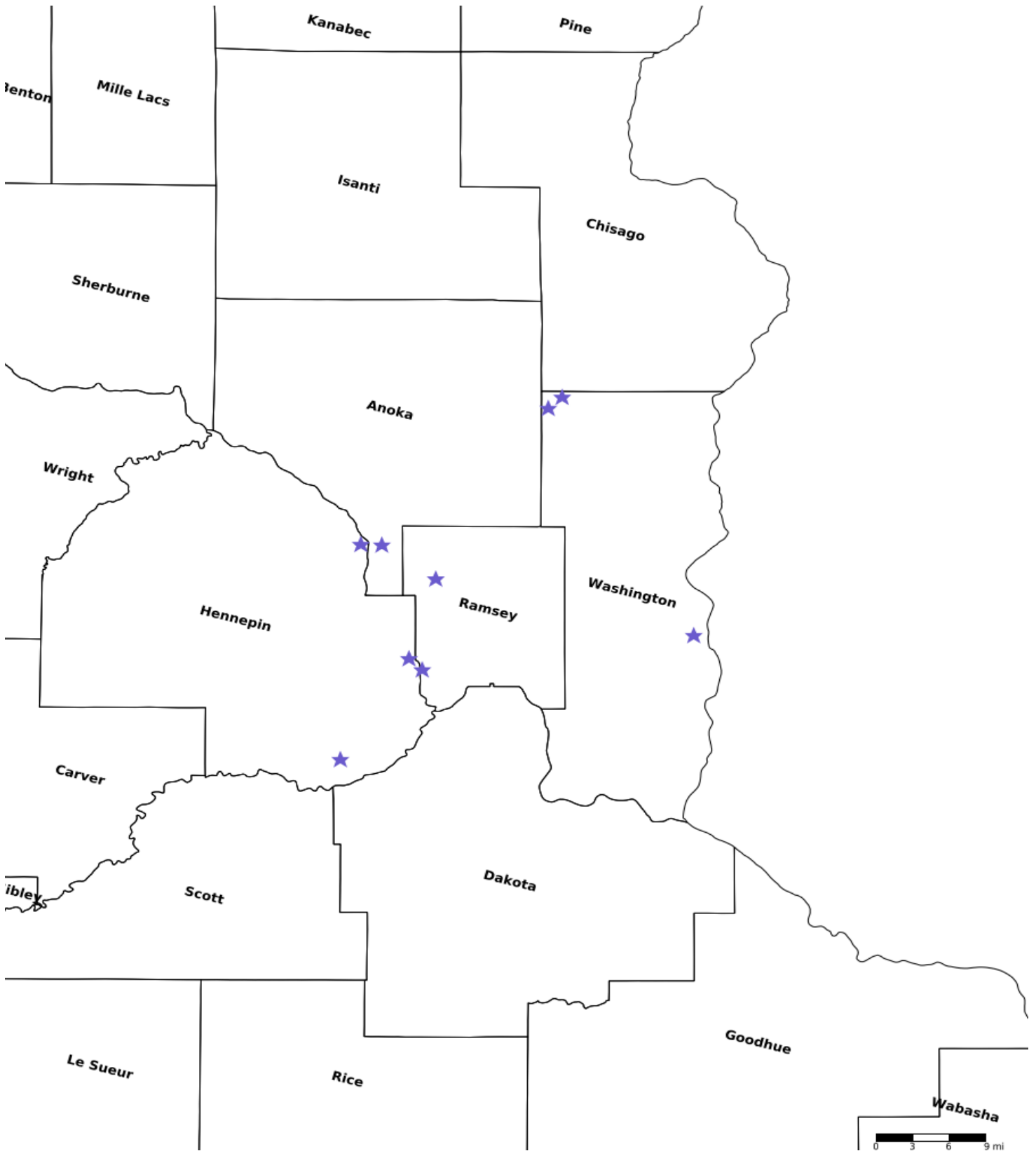
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

Great River Greening works with our public partners and other interested stakeholders to identify priority projects and areas. Criteria include ecological and habitat value and potential (biodiversity, size and location), congruence with existing plans and priority areas, adjacency and connectedness to other public and protected lands and complexes, willing and committed landowners and leveraged opportunities.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Locke Park	Anoka	03024211	83	\$694,700	Yes	Restore 83 acres of upland and lowland forest along Rice Creek
East River Flats	Hennepin	02923231	28	\$409,400	Yes	Restore 28 acres of mesic, floodplain, oak woodland and mesic forest along the Mississippi River
Marsh Lake Phase 2	Hennepin	02724217	31	\$342,200	Yes	Restore 31 acres of oak woodland on the upland edge of the Marsh Lake wetland complex along Nine Mile Creek
River Park	Hennepin	11921224	12	\$97,500	Yes	Restore 12 acres of woodland and savanna on the upland of the Mississippi River
Chatham Trails	Ramsey	03023228	23	\$234,700	Yes	Restore 23 acres of floodplain forest in the Valentine Lake wetland complex
Mississippi River Bluffs	Ramsey	02823205	22	\$463,000	Yes	Restore 22 acres of bluff forests along the Mississippi River
Bayport South WMA	Washington	02920222	50	\$529,600	Yes	Restore 50 acres of oak woodland habitat within one mile of the St. Croix River
Houle Property	Washington	03221207	10	\$121,500	Yes	Restore 10 acres of upland forest and tamarack woodland on a wetland complex
Sunrise Confluence	Washington	03221205	5	\$75,400	Yes	Restore 5 acres of upland forest along the Sunrise River

Parcel Map



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

Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities

Categories: Forest, Restore, Metropolitan Urbanizing Region

Great River Greening (GRG) has partnered with eight public landowners to prioritize 264 acres of forested uplands, oak woodland, and floodplain forests on nine sites in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Region. All are publicly accessible with shovel-ready restoration projects planned, match or in-kind labor, and landowners committed to long-term management.

Request - \$2,968,000 -- Leverage - \$281,600
Acres restored - 264 -- Identified parcels - 9



What Is the Work?

Activities will include extensive invasive tree and shrub removal using standard practices as well as newer tested practices such as targeted, growing-season hand cutting which reduces the need for herbicide use in sensitive areas. The subsequent wood waste can then be converted into biochar on-site to reduce carbon emissions, prevent soil scarring, and improve soil health. Native plant reintroduction and establishment will be conducted on all applicable areas through seeding and planting.



What Are the Outcomes?

Restoring forest habitat (structured canopy, native ground layer, and snag retention) directly improves the breeding, foraging, and migratory stopover habitat Minnesota's wildlife depend on. We will work with partners to improve shovel ready degraded habitats on state, city and other municipal parcels to the benefit of Species of Greatest Concern.



How Will the Outcomes Be Measured?

Habitat acres and restoration quality will be evaluated by reporting the diversification of native plant species (numbers and acres planted) and assessing wildlife use (species observed in public records and through Greening monitoring efforts). Community engagement will be measured by counts of public participation, attendance at outreach events, and tracked public communications throughout the grant. These metrics will document improved forest health, measurable wildlife response to restored habitat, and expanded community awareness of and investment in conservation in the Metro Urbanizing Region.

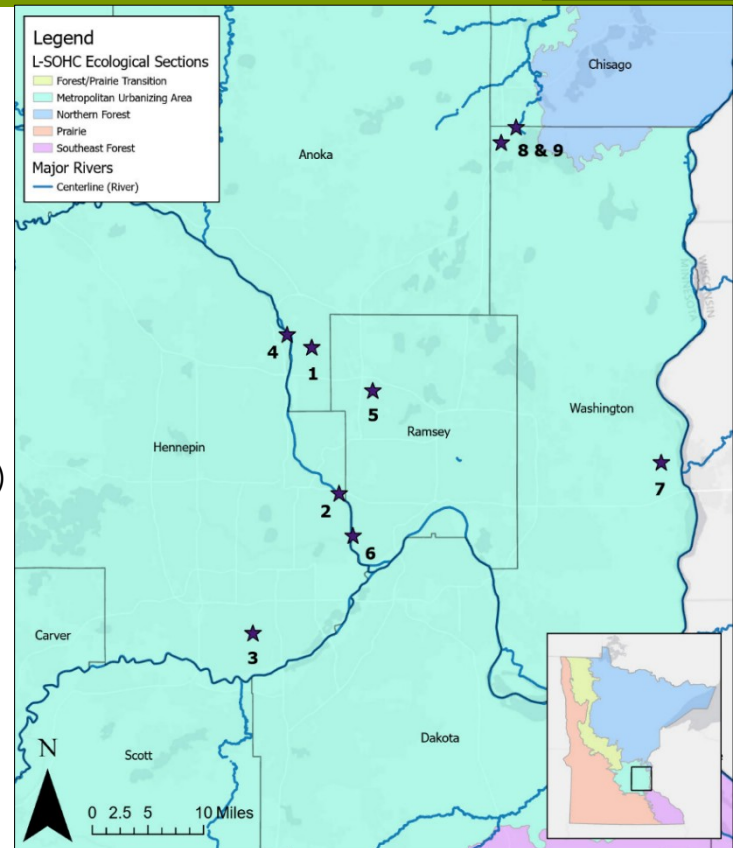
How Does This Program Support State Goals?

These nine sites address fragmentation at two scales. At the site scale, restoration converts degraded forest into functioning woodland and oak savanna with open canopy, native ground layer, and the structural complexity that supports movement, foraging, and breeding for declining species. At the landscape scale, sites distributed across four counties reinforce existing protected land networks rather than creating isolated restoration patches.



9 Sites, and 8 Partners, 264 acres -

1. Locke Park - City of Fridley (83 ac)
2. East River Flats - Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (28 ac)
3. Marsh Lake Ph 2 - City of Bloomington (31 ac)
4. River Park - City of Brooklyn Park (12 ac)
5. Chatham Trails - City of Arden Hills (23 ac)
6. Mississippi River Bluffs - City of Saint Paul (22 ac)
7. Bayport South WMA - MN DNR (50 ac)
- 8 & 9. Houle Property and Sunrise Confluence - Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District (15 total ac)



Selected Priority Sites (indicated by stars)

While they are already protected, these projects require robust initial years of forest restoration. Addressing this critical and time-sensitive need allows for continued stewardship by the partners.

For over 30 years, GRG has worked to inspire, engage and lead local communities in conserving and caring for the water and land that enrich our lives. With state and local funding, we restore and revitalize Metro habitat to provide pollinator habitat, expand tree canopy, and engage communities in planting and environmental learning.

Questions? Contact: Rebecca Tucker, Metro Program Manager | rtucker@greatrivergreening.org | (651) 272-3982