



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Enhancing Agate Bay's Coastal Wetland Habitat along the Lake Superior Shore in Lake County,
Minnesota

ML 2027 Request for Funding

General Information

Date: 06/24/2026

Proposal Title: Enhancing Agate Bay's Coastal Wetland Habitat along the Lake Superior Shore in Lake County, Minnesota

Funds Requested: \$745,300

Confirmed Leverage Funds: \$12,000

Is this proposal Scalable?: Yes

Manager Information

Manager's Name: Tara Solem

Title: Community Conservationist

Organization: Lake County (MN) Soil & Water Conservation District

Address: 408 1st Ave

City: Two Harbors, MN 55616

Email: tara.solem@co.lake.mn.us

Office Number: 218-834-8514

Mobile Number:

Fax Number:

Website: lakecountyswcd.org

Location Information

County Location(s): Lake.

Eco regions in which work will take place:

Northern Forest

Activity types:

Enhance

Priority resources addressed by activity:

Wetlands

Narrative

Abstract

Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District (Lake SWCD) is partnering with the City of Two Harbors (City) to implement the goals in the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan. The Plan arose when the State conveyed 20+ acres of Lake Superior waterfront property to the City, making it possible to undertake waterfront revitalization activities. Lake County SWCD requests funds to complete design and engineering plans for the wetlands on Agate Bay property by 2029 to enhance degraded coastal wetland habitat, protect water quality in Agate Bay (which is impaired for aquatic recreation), and improve public access to greenspace.

Design and Scope of Work

Lake SWCD (lead) requests funds to complete the engineering and design phase of the wetland habitat enhancement component of the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan. A wetland delineation was completed on the site in 2005 by Foth Wetland Delineation, and the City of Two Harbors intends to update the delineation in 2028 with other funding. The 2005 delineation, in addition to a 2025 Level 1 wetland determination, identifies depressional coastal wetlands on site, supporting wet meadow, shrub-carr and forested wetland plant communities. All wetlands on site are degraded due to past industrial activity, and Agate Bay is impaired for swimming due to excessive bacteria. To address the water quality impairment and begin improving wetland function, Lake SWCD used Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds to install a two-stage ditch in one set of the degraded wetlands on site, and route the stormwater captured from the city into a debris-separating baffle box and biochar basin in 2025. Now, Lake SWCD proposes funding to expand wetland enhancement work to all identified coastal wetlands near Agate Bay as outlined in the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan. The plan prioritizes enhancing ecological health and promoting public access and connectivity to support long-term resiliency. We plan to use grant funds to complete engineering and design plans for wetland enhancement in the first phase of this project through 2029, which will support implementation in the second phase in following years, including clearing and grubbing, site remediation, boardwalk construction, trail improvements, remediating a disintegrated parking lot, wetland restoration work, landscaping and planting native wetland plants, shrubs and trees. This work complements waterfront revitalization work taking place on many fronts. In 2024, Lake SWCD and the City formed a team that received coastal engineering design support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide initial design plans for the immediate Agate Bay coastline on Lake Superior. These plans were part of a joint effort to envision improved public access to the water while reducing erosion and restoring wildlife habitat. We incorporated community interests from the citizen group Friends of the Waterfront, and expert advice on the best methods to restore shoreline habitat and address erosion concerns from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the University of Minnesota. Meanwhile, the City formed a Waterfront Task force that completed the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan, motivated by the conveyance of 20+ acres of North Shore waterfront from the State to the City. These actions have given Lake SWCD and the City (the team) a consequential opportunity to restore its relationship to the Lake. By applying for LSOHC funds in the same year as the City requests LCCMR funds to support permitting work for the entire site and design plans for park spaces, we have the exciting one-time opportunity to move the waterfront project forward in one concerted effort. This avoids efficiency issues related to phasing these projects over multiple years.

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

There are very few natural coastal wetlands along the shore of Lake County, due to steep bedrock lining most of the County's Lake Superior coast. Agate Bay is unique for its flat topography and coastal wetlands in a publicly accessible setting. The Agate Bay coast includes sites of Biological Significance along Burlington/Lighthouse Points,

and important bird habitat occurs in the vicinity, including Colonial Waterbird Nesting Habitat and North Shore Peregrine Falcon Eyries, according to the Natural Heritage Information System. The US Fish and Wildlife Service includes Two Harbors in the range for the tricolored bat, which is proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Several rare plants occur along the coast, including Hudson Bay eyebright, spike trisetum and neat spikerush, the latter of which occurs in depressional wetlands. The wetlands in Agate Bay drain into an area where the following fish occur in Lake Superior: lake chub, lake sturgeon and shortjaw cisco; the nearshore also has the potential to support spawning habitat for coaster brook trout. However, the coastal wetlands near Agate Bay are severely degraded for multiple reasons: past industrial use and soil contamination, altered hydrology due to shoreline development, water quality impairment due to failing stormwater infrastructure, and unchecked spread of multiple invasive species (mainly Emerald ash borer, common tansy, Tatarian honeysuckle, Canada thistle and reed canary grass). iNaturalist observations at Agate Bay include diverse shorebirds, neotropical migrants including warblers, and mammals including muskrats, river otters, beavers, skunks, deer and numerous types of rodents. LSOHC funds will support the design phase for improving wetland hydrology and enhancing the existing but degraded native wetland plant communities, including fresh meadows, shrubs-carrs and forested wetlands. These enhanced wetlands will provide climate resiliency by absorbing floodwaters, moderating erosion, retaining water during droughts, and providing refugia for wildlife as temperature and precipitation patterns change. They will also provide breeding and overwintering habitat for species that require wetland conditions including amphibians, migratory birds, and mammals. Healthy wetlands also support native plants that serve as nectar sources for at-risk pollinators, and they provide clean water for nearshore fish and shorebirds.

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

Community support for Agate Bay Waterfront revitalization, both locally and statewide, is high right now, as evidenced by positive media coverage in the Star Tribune and support from state lawmakers. The beautiful Agate Bay waterfront features pebble beaches, coastal wetlands and a rocky point with a lighthouse. However, a long history of industrial use has resulted in decaying infrastructure, legacy contamination, and degraded wetland habitats. Conveyance in 2026 by the State of 20+ acres of North Shore waterfront to the City has provided the pathway for our intergovernmental team to act now. The Waterfront Task Force developed a waterfront vision including parks, trails, greenspace, educational/interpretive features, and wetland habitat enhancement. By applying for LSOHC funds in the same year the City requests LCCMR funds to support permitting work for the entire site and design plans for park spaces, we have the exciting opportunity to move the waterfront project forward.

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

Urban areas with fragmented habitat like Two Harbors are key locations along the Lake Superior shore to provide restored habitat and increased connectivity for native species at the regional scale. The proposed wetland enhancement project within the Agate Bay Waterfront is within the North Shore Management Zone, which includes strict land use and wetland permitting protections because of its high biodiversity significance and sensitivity. Locally, there are 255 ac of permanently protected land (zoned Park Preserve or Parks and Recreation) within a one-mile radius in Two Harbors. The Skunk Creek Shore Impact Zone serves as a habitat corridor between the shore and rural areas. The proposed project is adjacent to the Minnesota Biological Survey's Superior Shore-Burlington/Lighthouse Points Sites of Biological Significance, and to the DNR's Southern North Shore Conservation Opportunity Area (COA). COAs are planning areas at the statewide level to focus conservation efforts for protecting rare species, biodiversity areas, and native plant communities. COAs are selected for their contributions to a conservation network that provides pathways for species mobility. This COA omits most of Two Harbors, but wraps around the lakeshore to include Agate Bay, Lighthouse Point and Burlington Bay as important areas to meet conservation targets related to habitat connectivity. The Lake Superior South Watershed is rated "Above Average"

in the DNR Watershed Health Assessment Framework, meaning that on a regional scale, habitat connectivity is good. The Nature Conservancy's analysis of landscape resilience, connectivity and biodiversity classifies most of the Lake Superior Basin in Lake County as high resilience, high flow, and as having recognized biodiversity value. The Wildlife Action Network map shows that Agate Bay is rated as "High." However, urban areas with fragmented habitat in Two Harbors create a break within this high-functioning connected ecosystem, threatening the regionally high scores for quality habitat. The disturbed plant community along Agate Bay is a key location along the Lake Superior shore to provide enhanced wetland habitat and increased connectivity within a regionally functioning ecosystem

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

Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025

Other : the Lake Superior North Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan: Two Harbors is a priority area within the plan, and emphasizes protecting and restoring water quality through native plant restoration.

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?

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

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

The enhanced wetland habitat is within public land conveyed by the DNR to the City of Two Harbors, and zoned as parkland. It is also within the state Shoreland Zoning Overlay District under the North Shore Management Zone; a wetland replacement plan would be required if more than 20 square feet of wetland was impacted. A replacement plan would also require wetland mitigation procedures, including avoidance and minimization sequencing practices, which is an insurmountable bar for any future proposed land use changes. Conversely, wetland habitat projects sponsored by an SWCD typically fall under no-loss criteria in the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act. These enhanced coastal wetlands would provide significant beneficial habitat outcomes for fish, game and wildlife. Coastal lacustrine depressional wetlands like the ones at Agate Bay provide habitat for multiple life stages of insects, amphibians, birds and mammals. Habitat types provided by coastal wetlands include including overwintering habitat, nesting and rearing sites for offspring, sources of nectar for obligate pollinators, cover from predators, and habitat corridors within the urban setting of Two Harbors. Some of these wetland complexes already have experienced wetland habitat uplift through the installation of a two-stage channel planted with native species on each bank. The two-stage ditch allows stormwater to spread out onto the new floodplain during heavy rain events, which slows flow into Lake Superior, preventing erosion and sediment inputs into the lake. Cleaner water discharging into Agate Bay also provides improved water quality for fish that use Agate Bay for spawning and foraging. The wetland habitat surrounding the ditch remains degraded, and enhancing the entire wetland complex will provide a biodiverse wet meadow and shrub-carr habitat. Additional wetland enhancement work will focus on forested pocket wetland habitat. These enhanced coastal wetlands will also provide a lasting conservation legacy by serving as demonstration sites to showcase examples of nature-based solutions to improve coastal resiliency around the Great Lakes. Providing accessible trails and boardwalks within the enhanced wetlands also provides prime opportunities to showcase to Minnesotans how LSOHC funding is supporting habitat enhancement. These access points also provide opportunities for outreach and education on wetland ecology.

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

Outcomes

Programs in the northern forest region:

Improved availability and improved condition of habitats that have experienced substantial decline ~ *Plant surveys and wetland assessments will be conducted before and after wetland enhancement using the Floristic Quality Assessment (FQA) method, which measures wetland quality and biological integrity. Changes in FQA scores will reliably reflect improvements in habitat outcomes for the wetland complex. We can pair the FQA data with ongoing beach water quality monitoring supported by MDH to track changes in water quality. Habitat use data can include insect surveys, citizen science observations of wildlife on iNaturalist, and game cameras to capture presence/absence of mammals and birds. Frog call surveys can be used to track changes in amphibian presence.*

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.

Although the two stage ditch restores hydrology to the immediate zone of influence around the ditch and both GLRI and CPL funds were allocated to support native plantings along the ditch, no funds were allocated to enhance the wider complex of degraded wetland habitat at Agate Bay.

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

This proposal focuses on the planning phase: engineering and design for wetland enhancement in Agate Bay. Lake SWCD will work closely with partners during the planning phase to incorporate operations and maintenance plans that are tailored to the finished design plans. After LSOHF funds have been expended, the City as the landowner will be the lead on long-term monitoring maintenance, with Lake SWCD providing technical assistance and expertise. Operations and maintenance plans can follow Natural Resources Conservation Practice Standards, such as those outlined in the Conservation Cover practice standard, and include required maintenance activities for each growing season after project implementation. The team will also adhere to statutes under the MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program, and operations and maintenance methods outlined in the DNR's Pollinator Best Management Practices and Habitat Restoration Guidelines

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

EPA-led research on cleanup projects in Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes use a "Remediation to Restoration to Revitalization" approach. This approach links community well-being to the positive environmental outcomes of restoration projects, which can be achieved by incorporating public outreach into our plan in an equitable way that incorporates residents' input. For example, Two Harbors is within the 1854 Ceded Territory, so we will reach out to the 1854 Treaty Authority to ask for input on native species selection and habitat design, and incorporate any species they recommend for their cultural values. The team has applied for a grant from the University of MN Regional Sustainable Partnership to include interpretive signs and outreach around the rich cultural and archaeological history at Agate Bay. Interpretive materials will acknowledge the historic homeland of Anishinaabe people, and commemorate the old Scandinavian Commercial Fishing Village, settlements including "Whiskey Row," the ore docks and the link to Agate Bay's role as an active fishing and shipping port, and a celebration of maritime history on Lake Superior. Lake County Historical Society will serve as the historical advisor. In addition, Two

Harbors should be considered for poverty issues, meaning residents may have limited access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Agate Bay is within walking distance of much of Two Harbors, and within the Arrowhead Transit's public transportation service area, making it an ideal location for a wetland enhancement project to be shared with the public. Two Harbors Tree and Trail Commission will provide expertise and input on how the project fits in their community plans. Our vision includes an Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible trail and boardwalk within the enhanced wetland complex, to provide access to this natural area for all and to enhance education and outreach for visitors and community groups. This is consistent with the LSOHC scoring principles, which supports projects of primary benefit to wildlife as high quality habitat, while additionally supporting and expanding public access, use, and benefit.

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?

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 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
Complete archaeological survey to inform site assessments, interpretive features/outreach materials (completed by University of MN)	July 2027
Coordinate on Gap Analysis & Report Updates: Phase I, Phase II Env Site Assessment; Archaeological Survey (completed by City and Lake SWCD)	September 2027
RFP for Design & Engineering	December 2027
Contract Negotiation - Design & Engineering	December 2027
Discovery & Proof of Concept (35% Design)	February 2028
Wetland Delineation (completed by City)	May 2028
35% Design Review	June 2028
Schematic Design (65% Design)	July 2028
65% Design Review	November 2028
Design Development (95% Design) and Cost Estimate	November 2028
95% Design Review	February 2029
Coordinate Construction Management Advisor (completed by City and Lake SWCD)	February
100% Design Development	April 2029
100% Design Review	April 2029
Ongoing Project Management (Lake SWCD)	July 2027-May 2029

Budget

Totals

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	\$30,000	In Kind Staff Time, state and federal funds	\$30,000
Contracts	-	\$87,000	Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	\$87,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$745,300	\$131,200	Staff time from in-house engineers at Technical Services Area 3, engineering support from state and federal funds	\$876,500
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	\$745,300	\$248,200	-	\$993,500

Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Lake SWCD Conservation Specialist	0.05	1.0	-	\$5,000	In Kind Staff Time, state and federal funds	\$5,000
Lake SWCD District Manager	0.08	4.0	-	\$10,000	In Kind Staff Time, state and federal funds	\$10,000
Lake SWCD Community Conservationist, project lead	0.1	3.0	-	\$15,000	In Kind Staff Time, state and federal funds	\$15,000

Amount of Request: \$745,300
Amount of Leverage: \$248,200
Leverage as a percent of the Request: 33.3%
DSS + Personnel: -
As a % of the total request: 0.0%
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:	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$236,200	\$248,200
% of Total Leverage:	4.83%	4.83%	95.17%	

Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:

We plan to apply for a federal Great Lakes Restoration Community Grant Program when the next round of funding is announced in fall 2026. Initial conversations with the grant program managers indicate support for Agate Bay Waterfront revitalization projects.

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?

Lake SWCD could take the wetland engineering and design phase to 50% instead of 100%, and then pause to acquire additional funding, though this approach introduces the risk that the design phase may never progress to 100%.

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

Staff time and professional services costs would be reduced proportionately as less review and coordination would be needed.

If the project received 30% of the requested funding

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

Lake SWCD could take the wetland engineering and design phase to 30% instead of 100%, and then pause to acquire additional funding, though this approach introduces the risk that the design phase may never progress to 100%.

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

Staff time and professional services costs would be reduced proportionately as less review and coordination would be needed.

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

Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund

Parks and Trails Fund

Professional Services

What is included in the Professional Services line?

Design/Engineering

Federal Funds

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

Yes

Are the funds confirmed?

No

What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?

Winter 2026 to Spring 2027

Output Tables

Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	6	0	0	0	6
Total	6	0	0	0	6

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.)	-	-	-	6
Easements	-	-	-	-
Total	-	-	-	6

Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$745,300	-	-	-	\$745,300
Total	\$745,300	-	-	-	\$745,300

Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	0	0	0	0	6	6
Total	0	0	0	0	6	6

Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	\$745,300	\$745,300
Total	-	-	-	-	\$745,300	\$745,300

Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	\$124,216	-	-	-

Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	\$124,216

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Parcels

Sign-up Criteria?

No

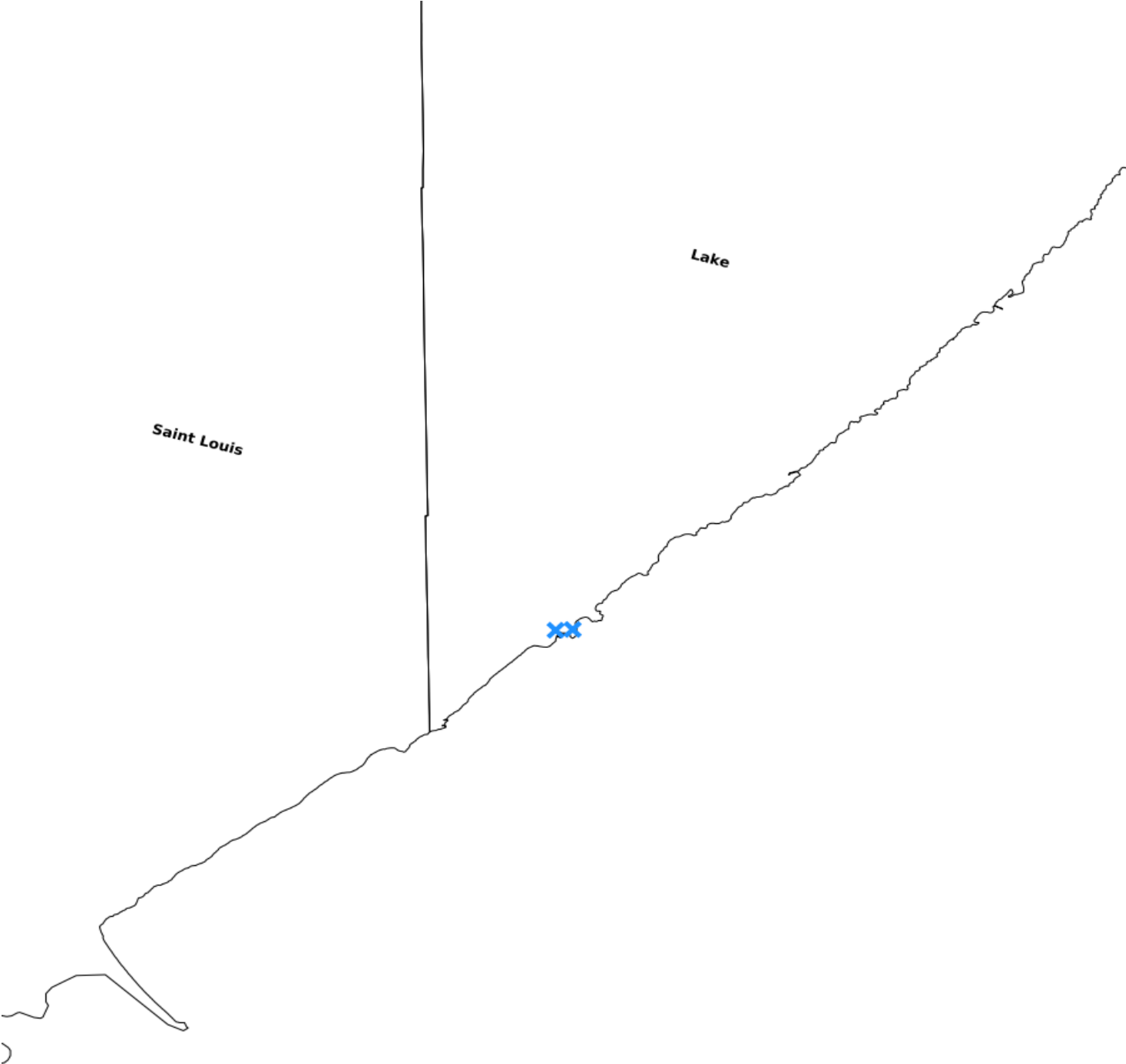
Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

The Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan arose when the State conveyed 20+ acres of Lake Superior waterfront property to the City, making it possible to undertake waterfront revitalization activities, including wetland enhancement. Coastal wetlands are a rare feature on the rocky coast of Lake Superior, and even rarer on public land. The coastal wetland complex at Agate Bay, which is degraded by past industrial land use, provides a prime opportunity to undertake wetland enhancement activities. This will improve habitat for wildlife that use these wetlands for multiple life stages, while also providing a unique opportunity to create accessible recreation pathways and opportunities for education and outreach about the importance of wetland habitats. The Waterfront Task Force Prioritized wetland enhancement in the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan.

Restore / Enhance Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Description
Wetland Enhancement 1	Lake	05211W01	15	-	Yes	State PIN 27075-23-7600-01415
Wetland Enhancement 2	Lake	05210W06	6	-	Yes	State PIN 27075-23-7600-06605

Parcel Map



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





Agate Bay Wetland Enhancement Project, Two Harbors, Minnesota



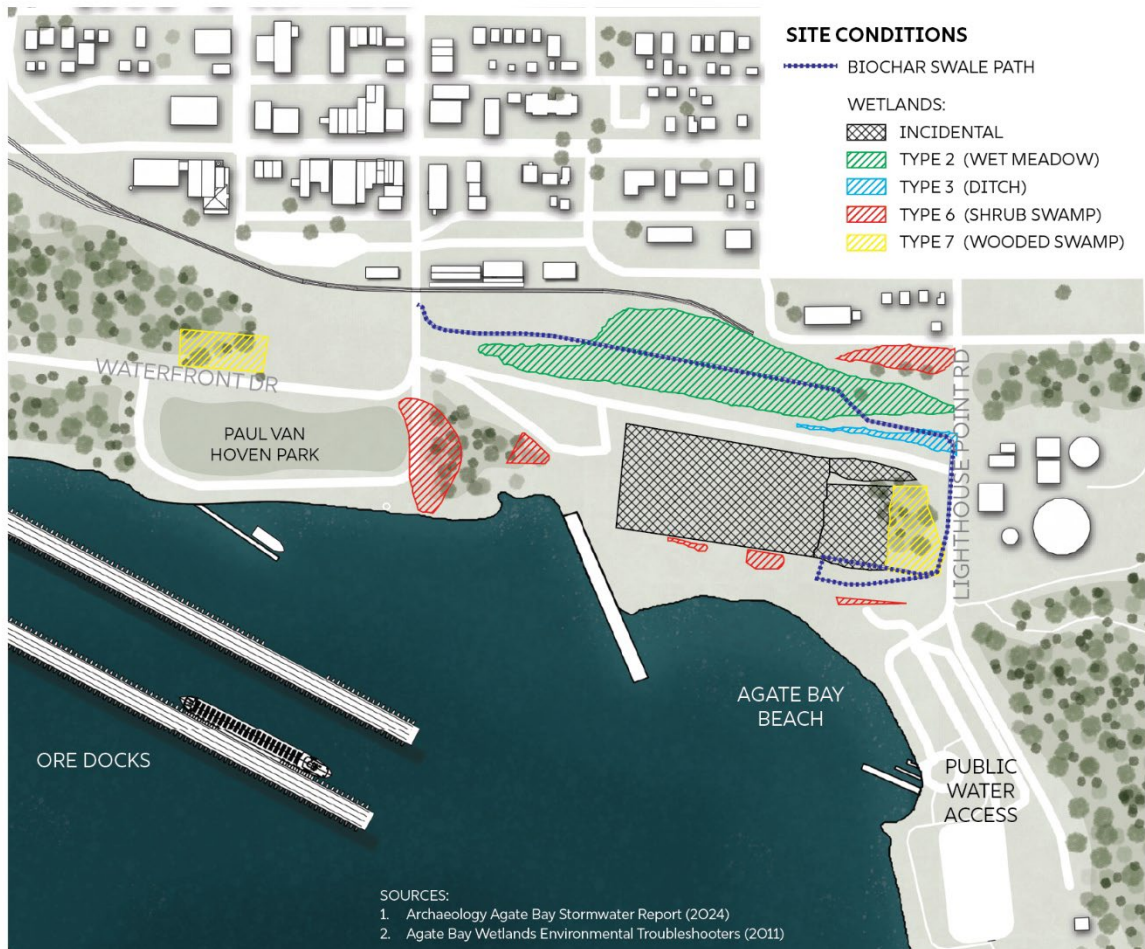
An artist's rendering of adults and children visiting a boardwalk within a thriving wetland near Agate Bay that provides habitat to many animals.

Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District (Lake SWCD) is partnering with the City of Two Harbors (City) to implement the goals in the **Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan**. The Plan arose when the State conveyed 20 acres of Lake Superior waterfront property to the City, making it possible to undertake waterfront revitalization activities. Lake County SWCD **requests funds to complete engineering and design plans** for the wetlands on the Agate Bay property by 2029 **to enhance degraded coastal wetland habitat**, protect water quality in Agate Bay (which is impaired for aquatic recreation), and improve public access to greenspace. A complex of depressional coastal wetlands exists on site, supporting wet meadow, shrub-carr and forested wetland plant communities, but they are degraded due to past industrial activity. . They have altered hydrology and low biodiversity. Much of the plant community consists of invasive plants and shrubs, creating low-quality habitat. There are **very few natural coastal wetlands** along the shore of Lake County, due to steep bedrock lining most of the County's Lake Superior coast. Agate Bay is unique for its flat topography and coastal wetlands in a publicly accessible setting.

To begin improving wetland function, Lake SWCD used Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds to install a two-stage ditch in one set of the degraded wetlands on site, and route the stormwater captured from the city into a debris-separating baffle box and biochar basin in 2025. Now, Lake SWCD proposes funding to expand wetland enhancement work to all



identified coastal wetlands near Agate Bay as outlined in the Agate Bay Waterfront Development Plan. The plan prioritizes **enhancing ecological health and promoting public access** and connectivity to support long-term resiliency.



A map of wetland boundaries at Agate Bay, along with a schematic of the existing two-stage ditch that runs through a portion of the wetland complex. The ditch connects to a biochar basin before draining into Agate Bay.

We plan to use the complete engineering and design plans funded by Fiscal Year 2028 Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) in Phase I to support implementation in Phase II, which will include clearing and grubbing, site remediation, boardwalk construction, trail improvements, remediating a disintegrated parking lot, wetland restoration work, landscaping and planting native wetland plants, shrubs and trees. By applying for LSOHC funds **in the same year as the City requests LCCMR funds** to support permitting and archaeological site assessments for the entire property and design plans for park spaces, we have the exciting one-time opportunity to move the waterfront project forward in one concerted effort. Community support for Agate Bay Waterfront revitalization, both locally and statewide, is high right now, as evidenced by positive media coverage in the Star Tribune and support from state lawmakers.