

Memo

Date: 12/29/2020

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

From: Randy Prachar, Wildlife Area Supervisor, Roseau River WMA

Subject: Extension Request, Roseau Lake Rehabilitation project, ML16-5j

Project Background

The Roseau Lake Rehabilitation project will restore shallow marsh conditions during spring and summer to Roseau Lake, which was drained better than a century ago to promote agriculture. This will improve production of wetland wildlife (in particular, waterfowl) within Roseau Lake WMA while also improving fish habitat on the adjacent Roseau River. Fall migratory stopover habitat for ducks and waterfowl hunting opportunities will also improve with the project.

This project is complex with many of the aspects of its development supersized as compared to most other projects (e.g., wetland mitigation for this project is in the neighborhood of 200 acres). We are making significant progress in the areas of environmental assessment, infrastructure design, operating plan, and acquisition.

Suggested Motion

Motion by Councilmember X to approve/deny the legislative extension of appropriation availability for ML 2016 5(j), Roseau Lake Rehabilitation project until June 30, 2023, to be included in the ML 2021OHF recommendations bill.

Summary of Request

- The project received \$2.763 million in funding from the council for ML16 (see subpart 5j).
- We would like to request an additional 1-year extension of our current LSOHC grant that is set to expire in June of 2022.
- As cited in our previous extension request, there have been numerous project delays caused by the complex nature of this large project. Among the reasons for delays are: large and complex wetland mitigation requirements, considerable citizen outreach and partner coordination efforts, avoidance of known archaeological sites on the old lakeshore, siting of project infrastructure, development of operating plans that satisfy the project goals for both wildlife habitat and flood damage reduction, and an extended environmental assessment due to project complexity, etc. These delays have affected

subsequent steps, such as acquisition/easement within the project footprint. Acquisition/easement funds totaling \$770,000 were not spent by the original June 30, 2019 deadline for use of such funds. The project has progressed and now has at least two willing sellers identified for the acquisition funds. (One of these, a 250-acre parcel, is in the final stages of acquisition.)

- The acquisition/easement funds were restored in last year’s legislation and all unspent project funds were extended to June 30, 2022. Since that time, COVID-related restrictions have caused additional delays in necessary administrative and regulatory processes. For example, progress in environmental assessment has lagged due to key staff [taking leave to cover](#) COVID-related child care and schooling issues.
- Due to these ongoing delays, we are requesting an additional extension to June 30, 2023 in order to allow a couple of field seasons for construction. The majority of the dikes and other infrastructure will be built in a drained lake. Because of the chronic wetness inherent in this site, delays in construction will likely occur. As it stands now, we only would have one full construction season (2021) to complete the grant. It is highly unlikely that the weather would cooperate to allow for all grant money to be spent in one construction season. Winter work is not an option for the majority of the infrastructure involved.

Project Spending to Date

| Project Fund Allocation | Restoration/Enhancement | Acquisition/Easement | Professional Services |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Original | \$1,493,000 | \$770,000 | \$500,000 |
| Spent to date | \$0 | \$0 | \$475,600 |

Language for the appropriation bill:

Subd X. Carryforwards

(a) The availability of the appropriation in Laws 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 5, paragraph (j)

for Roseau Lake Rehabilitation project is extended to June 30, 2023.