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David Hartwell  
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, Chairman  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: MnDOT Easement for a Living Snow Fence

Chairman Hartwell, the Shell Rock River Watershed District (SRRWD) used OHF funding to purchase fee title acquisition of 80 acres of property out of our Phase 6, ML 17 appropriation. This property has closed and is now in SRRWD ownership. Phase 1 of restoration is complete, while Phase 2 is currently being engineered. The end owner of this property will be the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and will combine to their existing, adjacent tract of property, known as their IC&E Waterfowl Production Area. This complex, with the SRRWD addition, will now be over 250 acres in size.

Recently, as current owner of the property, we were approached by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) on their wanting to install a living snow fence on this property due to public safety concerns. The property is bordered on the southern edge by Interstate 90, where blowing wind and snow has been the direct cause for accidents. The District is looking for approval from the Council to enter into an easement to allow the easement and planting of said living snow fence. It's also important to note that a current living snow fence is located on adjacent properties, and MnDOT is working with other landowners in the area to install new living snow fences as well.

The District has contacted USFWS staff and notified them of this easement. After review and revisions, it looks promising that they will accept the easement upon the property when transferred to them. USFWS as well as SRRWD staff has been working with MnDOT to make sure the living snow fence will include native species with local origins that are consistent to the area and restoration of the site.

The District feels strongly that public safety needs to be addressed while keeping true to OHF funding that was used on the site for restoration and habitat. We have confirmed with MnDOT that this easement area would still be open for public use and benefit.

Thank you,

Courtney Phillips,  
Program and Project Manager