

Memo

Date: 9/14/2022

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 have made significant progress since our last request for a funding extension:

- The project's EAW concluded that the project would create no significant environmental impact.
- Infrastructure design and dike alignments were finalized.
- The operating and maintenance plans were finalized and signed by the project partners.
- Cultural resources surveys were completed with a final report to SHPO pending.
- Permitting for the project has commenced; the wetland mitigation plan is near approval.
- Land acquisition is mostly complete. Purchase agreements are in the works for a few of the remaining parcels needed for the project.

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, 2024, to be included in the ML 2023OHF 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 2023.
- 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 and maintenance 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; a key 255-acre acquisition was completed in summer 2021. Other important acquisitions, undertaken by the Roseau River Watershed District (RRWD), either have signed purchase agreements or have been agreed to in principle and are awaiting final action.
- Due to ongoing delays, we are requesting an additional extension to June 30, 2024 in order to complete Phase I construction. Phase I will include a couple of stream restorations located within the project footprint, construction of a water control structure, development of a portion of the Northwest Embankment (see attached figure) , and wetland mitigation for the project (to be paid for by the RRWD). \$1.9 million of the original appropriation is available for Phase I. As the majority of the dikes and other infrastructure will be built in a drained lake, and because of the chronic wetness inherent in this site, delays in construction will likely occur. Practically speaking, as it stands now with the June 30, 2023 deadline, the project would only have the 2022-23 winter for construction and that is assuming completion of all project permitting by December 2022. It is highly unlikely that the weather would cooperate to allow the remaining grant money to be spent in only part of a winter. Though winter work for Phase I infrastructure is possible, it is not preferable.

Project Spending to Date

Project Fund Allocation	Restoration/Enhancement	Acquisition/Easement	Professional Services
Planned	\$1,900,000	\$278,000	\$585,000
Spent to date	\$0	\$258,000	\$536,600

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, 2024.**