

ML 24/FY 25 Accomplishment Plan Follow-up Responses

WA02

From: Jon Schneider <jschneider@ducks.org>

Sent: Tuesday, November 7, 2023 9:24 AM

I just fixed WA02 by simply removing the check in box by AMA to simplify it to focus on WMA, WPA, and NWR, and resubmitted. Please be sure to include NWR along with WMA and WPA in the appropriation language, as sometimes there are key parcels for sale at Hamden Slough NWR and a few other NWRs, although the vast majority of our land acquisitions will be for WMAs and WPAs in that order, I envision. Thanks for waiting for me to make this fix. Jon

WRE01

From: Lien, Ricky (DNR) <ricky.lien@state.mn.us>

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 1:47 PM

Hi All,

The following comment was made about WRE01 – “Want to better understand how acre outputs are calculated and prioritized. Contract funding drastically cut.”

Our proposal requested \$12,713,000. This was made up of two components – the Wetland Management Program (\$1.47 million to keep staff going for 5 years) and a slate of individual projects (\$11.014 million for 27 projects), plus some change for Direct and Necessary costs.

The recommended funding amount was \$3,136,000. Once we got this number, our first step was to figure out what staff we can fund in the Wetland Management Program. We reduced this to four years for two staff people and that resulted in the Wetland Management Program portion of the funding going down to \$1,172,000. Subtracting this - and the amount needed for Direct and Necessary- from our recommended funding amount left only \$1,858,000 to spend on our individual projects, or 17% of what was needed. We immediately eliminated those projects whose costs exceeded what we had available (Carlos Avery Sunrise Dams at \$2.9 million and Casey Lake at \$2.0 million). We also eliminated those projects that while they could have fit within the budget, would take a significant proportion of what was available (Staples WMA Dike at \$803,000 and Mille Lacs WMA Water Control Structures at \$900,000). These projects are largely made up of contract costs. To finish out our process, we took the remaining projects on our list and asked the Regional Wildlife Supervisors to rank those projects within their Region. These rankings were taken into consideration by the supervisors within the Wetland Habitat Team to decide what projects would go into the Accomplishment Plan. This final list resulted in

the acres shown in the Accomplishment Plan and explains why the Contract portion of our budget was cut at a higher percentage.

Please let me know if you have further questions.

Ricky

Ricky Lien

Wetland Habitat Team Supervisor | Division of Fish and Wildlife
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

WRE02

From: Morteza Maher <morteza.maher@mstrwd.org>

Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 2:01 PM

Hello LSOHC team,

Thank you for your review of the APs for the ML2024 applications.

As requested in the table of “follow up edits and questions” for our WRE02 (Nelson Slough-East Park WMA) please see below the question raised and the answer to it:

Q: Accomplishment plan states current funding allows completion of Phase 1 and 2 and leaves phase III without any funding. How does Phase III get completed? Will construction of phase 1 and 2 start without funding identified for phase 3? Please clarify.

A: In the original application under “**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**” it was mentioned that an application with DNR’s FHM grant was submitted but since the funding was not secured, that fund was not included in our calculations for OHF application. While we will continue working with LSOHC to get the phases 1 and 2 completed, we will continue following up with the DNR’s application to get the phase 3 funded as well. It would be best if we will receive the FHM fund while we are working on Phase 1 and 2 as we will pay less on site mobilization and some other activities. With that, I want the LSOHC be assured that we will do our best to complete the project without interruption.

I hope this answers your question. If you have further clarification or questions, please feel free to contact.

All the best,

Mori

WRE03

From: Wayne Ostlie <wostlie@mnland.org>

Sent: Friday, November 3, 2023 9:12 AM

Sandy:

MLT's response related to WE03:

Administrative costs for 799 acres appears to be high. Does MLT have wetland professionals on staff or do you rely on USFWS for technical restoration work? Please expand on the partnership and the roles each partner plays.

WRE03. There are higher personnel costs associated with this program. We have increased the number of FTE working on this program because of its success. MLT is increasing our capacity to assist FWS implement restoration projects. MLT is expanding our role to include more on-the-ground design, construction management, field work and performance inspection (tasks previously done by FWS or other partners); this allows FWS personnel to re-deploy to complete habitat easements and plan future R/E projects to advance the program.

Let me know if you have any further questions.

Wayne

Wayne Ostlie

Director of Land Protection

HA04

From: Courtney Phillips <Courtney.Phillips@co.freeborn.mn.us>

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 11:41 AM

Joe, we reviewed our comment of "Average cost per acre for restoration and acquisition seems to be much higher than normal. Why?" The reason for the acquisition being higher is because it is wrong. We were having issues in our output tables when submitting, so I'm not sure what happened. But if you look on our parcel list it has an acquisition of 40 acres but in the output table it lists 20. Our acquisition costs will be cut in half for our per acre price. Would you please unlock our AP so we can make this edit?

As for the restoration, a priority project that needs to be completed is a streambank restoration, streambank restorations have a high cost per acre as the overall footprint of the project is small compared to the cost needed to complete the work. This is a large river and after completing similar restorations, the costs listed in our AP are comparable to our previous restorations for streambank work.

Thanks, Courtney

HA05

From: Alan Kraus <alan@cleanriverpartners.org>

Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 2:44 PM

Hi Joe,

Regarding HA05, below is our response to: Average cost per acre for restoration and enhancement appears higher than other APs with similar projects. Why?

Costs for restoration and enhancement are based on subcontractor bids for similar projects in this specific region over the past 3 years. Bids for these types of activities have risen significantly since the pandemic and due to inflation. Some parcels in this proposal are also on terrain that will make costs above the average for enhancement activities.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and please confirm receipt of this email.

Thank you.

Al

Alan Kraus
Conservation Program Manager
Clean River Partners

HA15

From: Wayne Ostlie <wostlie@mnland.org>

Sent: Friday, November 3, 2023 12:19 PM

Joe and Sandy:

HA 15. The accomplishment plan states, "The Land Trust will assess the R/E needs of each parcel protected through this appropriation. Should R/E needs exist, funding for those projects will be built into a forthcoming proposal." What happens if you don't receive future OHF? Is this common practice?

This is standard practice for the Land Trust. Since we undertake an RFP process to identify conservation easement projects during the course of each grant, the restoration needs are unknowable in advance of proposal submission. We can't estimate the R/E needs associated with those future projects and build those needs into a grant proposal at the same time the conservation easement proposal is submitted. MLT has found a more successful approach through identifying and completing conservation easement projects in one grant, then addressing specific R/E needs in subsequent proposals. The process is much more cost effective and time efficient. MLT has been using this approach across all of our grants for several years,

and it is working well. When we are unsuccessful in securing funds for R/E, we are able to park the project for future proposals, pursue other funding sources such as CPL, or redeploy surplus land protection funds.

Also, you opened up the accomplishment plan to correct the map. Let me know if there is anything we need to do relative to that.

Wayne

Wayne Ostlie
Director of Land Protection

HA17

From: Deborah Loon <dloon@mnvalleytrust.org>

Sent: Monday, November 6, 2023 1:09 PM

Sandy & Joe -

I revised MBR 14 / ML2024 AP and resubmitted it but forgot to answer the climate change question! Please unlock it for me one more time.

Answers to your questions for us (HA17) --

The accomplishment plan states, "Restoration and enhancement needs associated with fee title and easement projects completed under this grant will be assessed. Needs identified will be addressed through private sources, Conservation Partners Legacy Grant proposals and/or future funding proposals to LSOHC. If funds remain in this grant, an amendment may be submitted to allow those funds to be reallocated to restoration and enhancement on lands protected by this grant. For the restoration / enhancement on eased lands, MLT restoration personnel will conduct outreach with easement landowners to evaluate, scope, design and schedule additional restoration projects. These activities will improve the project selection, cost estimates and outcomes for future OHF funding requests." What happens if you don't receive future OHF? Is this common practice?

This is standard practice for the Land Trust. Since we undertake an RFP process to identify conservation easement projects during the course of each grant, the restoration needs are unknowable in advance of proposal submission. We can't estimate the R/E needs associated with those future projects and build those needs into a grant proposal at the same time the conservation easement proposal is submitted. MLT has found a more successful approach through identifying and completing conservation easement projects in one grant, then addressing specific R/E needs in subsequent proposals. The process is much more cost effective and time efficient. MLT has been using this approach across all of our grants for several years, and it is working well. When we are unsuccessful in securing funds for R/E, we are able to park the project for future proposals, pursue other funding sources such as CPL, or redeploy surplus land protection funds.

It appears that MLT budget is higher than normal? Personnel and DSS totals \$560k with total acre outputs of 212 acres. The cost per acre for personnel and DSS is \$2,665/acre. Why are the costs so high?

MLT's personnel cost in this grant for easement acquisition is on par with other accomplishment plans developed for MLT's other grant programs before the Council when comparing \$\$/project. Since parcel size in the Metro tends to be smaller than elsewhere in the state, personnel cost/acre is skewed.

Additionally, LSOHC staff has adopted a practice of not approving Personnel budget amendments in excess of 110% of original accomplishment plan. In line with MLT testimony before the Council earlier in 2023, MLT has included a conservative Personnel budget line to ensure adequate funding is in place given program uncertainties that may disproportionately tap these funds (projects failing to close when well advanced; donations of easement value above expectations; etc.).

MLT has included 0.52 FTE to implement 110 acres of R/E through this grant (note: this was just revised in the AP submitted). Restorations on private lands include some additional steps not usually found when working on public natural areas, including substantial in-depth conversations with Landowners to ensure they agree with the ecological goals and understand the requirements of the Outdoor Heritage Fund. During the construction phase of any project, each new step brings new unfamiliar actions that often can bring up concerns. Landowner education is a continuing need during this time. The Land Trust also meets with landowners to answer questions that arise about the long-term maintenance and management requirements of the property after projects are complete. This is a need that is increasing as we complete more restorations with Outdoor Heritage Funds.

Deborah Loon
Executive Director
Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc.

From: Wayne Ostlie <wostlie@mnland.org>
Sent: Monday, November 6, 2023 10:50 PM

Sandy and Joe:

Our restoration team took a significant cut to their initially proposed Personnel/DSS lines, dropping \$60K from the request, and reallocated that to Contracts. That modification added 15 acres to their outputs. The combination should change the dynamics to a degree. You won't be aware of that by merely reading the response to the question below, but at some level the question may have changed.

Wayne

Wayne Ostlie
Director of Land Protection

HRE02

From: Wendel, Jamison L (DNR) <jamison.wendel@state.mn.us>

Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 12:35 PM

Hey Joe,

Thank you for reaching out. Below is the additional information regarding personnel funding that you requested.

Most (70%) of the personnel funding for this appropriation is for two Stream Habitat Specialist positions. These positions support partners working on Legacy-funded stream restoration and enhancement projects by providing critical technical assistance, permitting guidance, and construction oversight. These two positions focus on partner led projects and rarely work on projects funded through this proposal.

The remaining positions included in this proposal work directly on projects funded through this request. These positions improve coordination efficiency by providing single points of contact and enhance outcomes of aquatic habitat projects through technical expertise. Funding for these positions not only provide oversight for the projects included in this appropriation but also allow us to develop future projects with partners.

I realize I made a typo in the original proposal. Funding for the positions included in this request were previously funded in ML 20 and ML 22. I should have added two to ML 20 instead of subtracting two! Our ML 18 appropriation is closed and a final report has been submitted.

We expect to begin charging personnel costs within a few months of ML 24 becoming active. Funding for the two Stream Habitat Specialist positions is only included in our ML 20 appropriation. We currently project about 13 months of funding remaining in ML 20 to support these two positions. The Restoration Coordinator, NR Specialist and Intern salaries are a couple of years ahead of the allocations. Currently, we expect salaries will shift to ML2024 funds in 2026. This ensures that staff are in place for the whole duration of the appropriation and that all projects are coordinated to completion.

Thanks,

Jamison

HRE05

From: Sjolund, Melissa (DNR) <melissa.sjolund@state.mn.us>

Sent: Wednesday, November 1, 2023 10:39 AM

LSOHC staff,

I have made the following required edits to the St. Louis River Restoration Initiative Phase 11 (HRE05) Accomplishment Plan:

- “Blue Column” Comment: using the online system, I entered a complete answer to the question about supplanting/substituting funds.
- “Tan Column” Comment: see the attached map showing the potential work areas for the Avian habitat work. These work areas correspond to the designated St. Louis River Natural Area, and are all directly adjacent to the St. Louis River estuary. I have also included the map as an attachment to the ML2024 Accomplishment Plan in the online system.

Please reach out with any questions.

Thank you,

Melissa Sjolund (pronounced Show-lund)

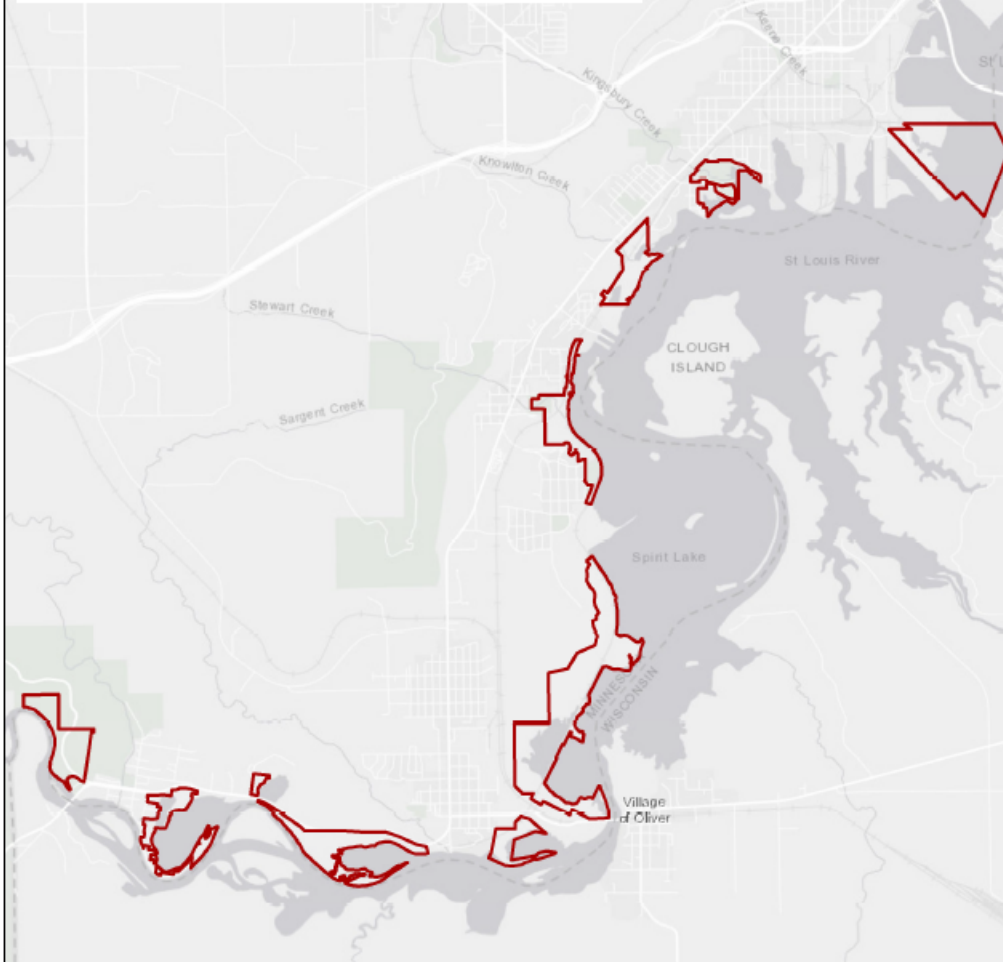
she/her/hers

Lake Superior & St. Louis River Program Supervisor | EWR


Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

[\[Map Attached Below\]](#)

Project Limits for Avian Forest Habitat Restoration City of Duluth, St. Louis County, Minnesota



Legend

 St. Louis River Natural Area Boundary

Service Layer Credits: Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

Site Location



HRE09

From: Kjersti Duval <kjersti@thefalls.org>

Sent: Thursday, November 2, 2023 1:30 PM

Joe,

Thank you for your time just now as I work through addressing staff's comments on our Accomplishment Plan. As discussed, I added the following language to paragraph 3 of our narrative under Design and Scope of Work:

"LSOHC funds will be used only for site grading, oak savanna, and habitat restoration, including aquatic habitat."

Is this ok?

There was also a question about leverage. Here's the explanation: for the main budget associated with the LSOHC contribution, I reflected 100% secured leverage. However, additional leverage exists. Here are our non-LSOHC funding sources and their status:

\$2,500,000 (Anonymous) - secured

\$1,000,000 (FOF) - secured

\$300,000 (McKnight Foundation) - secured

\$50,000 (Minneapolis Foundation) - secured

\$45,000 (St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board) - secured

\$1,918,000 (LSOHC) - recommended for ML24/FY25

\$2,500,000 (Bush Foundation) - recommended pending Board approval on Nov 16th

I am re-submitting the AP, but if you have additional changes you need me to make, please advise.

All the best,

O2

From: Johnson, Wade A (DNR) <wade.a.johnson@state.mn.us>

Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 2:43 PM

Hi Joe,

Regarding the question in the blue column for O2 Restoration Evaluations:

There is \$1k in budget for contracts. How will restoration panel expenses be paid for? (It is our understanding that they were paid out of the contracts budget.)

The Panel are unpaid experts who do not receive funding.

Our contracts are professional/technical contracts with outside vendors. Qualified contractors are established through a Master Contract process, where work orders can be executed with vendors as needs are identified and budgets allow. There are 4 contract vendors currently in our master contract that were selected through an RFP process in 2023.

I attached one example of a contracted evaluation as it appears in the 2021 report appendix. This is an example of the evaluations that are brought to our Panel for discussion. The contracted assessor and State evaluation staff involved with the project participate in discussions with the Panel at their meetings.

Our program is currently staffed with a coordinator and a specialist. These two positions comprise the core of our program and majority of our budget. The reduction from the original request (\$200,000 request -> \$160,000 recommended to legislature):

1. Reduces proportion of state staff (0.66 FTE to 0.59 FTE)
2. Eliminates dedicated funding for State Agency assessors (\$8,000)
3. Reduces ML24 contracts budget (\$18,000 to \$1,000)

Completing the full level of project evaluations indicated in the ML24 request (up to 25 new evaluations; additional 3 to 5 revisits) I estimate would require full State staffing plus ~\$30,000 in contracts. The reason the initial request was lower (\$18,000) was the cost savings of utilizing State assessors (\$8,000) for a portion of projects and funds rolling forward from existing appropriations to cover contract expenses in excess of ML24 budgeted amounts.

I placed \$1,000 in the contacts budget line in anticipation that we will be using this appropriation for contracts by leveraging funds from current OHF appropriations, as well as potentially shifting some staffing allocations to Clean Water Fund work as needs, capacity and budgets allow. I will inform the Council if I anticipate a shift in budget allocations in our OHF appropriation.

Let me know if you have further questions or would like to discuss.

One additional item. Statute currently directs "other projects" to be available for only one fiscal year:

(5) money appropriated for other projects is available until the end of the fiscal year in which it is appropriated.

I anticipate requesting an amendment to extend availability to two fiscal years.

Thanks

Wade

Wade Johnson

Restoration Evaluations Program Coordinator | Division of Ecological and Water Resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources