

5/8/2026

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Centennial Office Building, 1st Floor
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Letter of Support, LSOHC ML 2027

Dear Members of the LSOHC,

We, Connie and Nick LaFond, are strong supporters of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal titled "Restoring Priority Habitats for Hennepin County's Sensitive Wildlife."

We recognize the importance of Hennepin County's ongoing efforts to protect, preserve, and restore natural systems. The work proposed ensures residents have clean air and water, healthy habitats, and communities resilient to climate change. In addition, this work creates a sense of place, community, well-being, and wonder by increasing access to high-quality habitats and abundant wildlife.

Over the past seven years, the Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program has permanently protected 528 acres of land and restored and enhanced 427 acres through previous LSOHF grant dollars. The county's biomonitoring program has observed 644 species associated with LSOHF conservation projects, including 33 different Species of Greatest Conservation Need and 3 Federally Threatened, Endangered, and candidate species, including the monarch butterfly and rusty-patched bumblebee.

We are proud owners of 51 acres of perpetually protected land in 2 easements that are co-held between Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust in the City of Independence. Our easements provide a unique opportunity for good quality habitat that is close to a major metropolitan area. We've had the pleasure of observing multiple uncommon species on our conservation easements, including Bobolinks, Purple Martins, Eastern Meadowlarks, Sedge Wrens, Henslow's Sparrows, Grasshopper Sparrows, and American Kestrels. Our easements are near other conservation easements, and we have a neighbor actively pursuing a conservation easement to be contiguous with ours along Pioneer Creek. We also are near Lake Rebecca Park. Our south easement borders on Pioneer creek and adjacent lowlands. Taken together, these easements and other protections significantly extend existing managed habitat while providing a safe corridor for wildlife species to travel. Our easements are also an important natural resource for our community by providing pollinator habitat for pollinating nearby crops, protecting wetlands for improving

species diversity and mitigating flooding, providing habitat for local game including grouse, pheasant, and turkey; and supporting native vegetation to promote better water quality for Pioneer Creek, Lake Independence, and the Minnehaha watershed.

We are eager to continue ongoing conservation efforts on our easement with Hennepin County through restoration and enhancement activities that will benefit the many species of wildlife on our easement, our local community, and water quality for the Minnehaha watershed for years and years to come.

As our region continues to face development pressure with limited funding for protection and preservation, we see this phase of funding for Hennepin County as immensely important. We strongly encourage the Council to fund this proposal and recognize the transformative impact it will have on the people, wildlife, and water quality for the region.

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is more stylized and appears to be 'Nick LaFond'. The signature on the right is more legible and appears to be 'Connie LaFond'.

Connie and Nick LaFond
Independence, MN