

May 12, 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 are Easement Owners, Rick and Susan Staunton and we are pleased to offer our strong support for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund proposal titled “Restoring Priority Habitats for Hennepin County Sensitive Wildlife.”

Our family recognizes 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 own a 19 acre perpetually protected conservation easement that is co-held between Hennepin County and the Minnesota Land Trust near Mound, MN. Our easement provides a unique opportunity for good quality habitat that is close to a major metropolitan area. We’ve had the pleasure of observing fox, dear, and a white hawk, an anomaly for sure on our conservation easement. Our

easement is also near Gale Woods, the Boys & Girls Voyager camp, three other conservation easements and Little Long lake, known for its water quality and extends existing managed habitat while providing a safe corridor for wildlife species to travel. Our easement is also an important natural resource for our community by providing beautiful wooded lands and a medium sized pond habitat, way too many pollinators that pollinate nearby crops, wetlands to mitigate flooding, native vegetation which promotes better water quality for other watershed areas through to the Minnehaha watershed district, learning opportunities for local youth groups and teaching prospective wildlife management youth who have walked our property.

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 Minnehaha watershed district 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,

Richard Staunton