



Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation Program (REP)

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Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Wade Johnson | Program Coordinator

Kyla Tripp | Evaluation Specialist

Meet REP Staff



Wade Johnson



Kyla Tripp



Restoration Evaluations 2012 – 2025 - 325 Projects

On Track to Meet Stated Goals



- Exceed the stated goals
- Achieved the stated goals
- Minimally achieved stated goals
- Not achieve the stated goals

Utilized Current Science



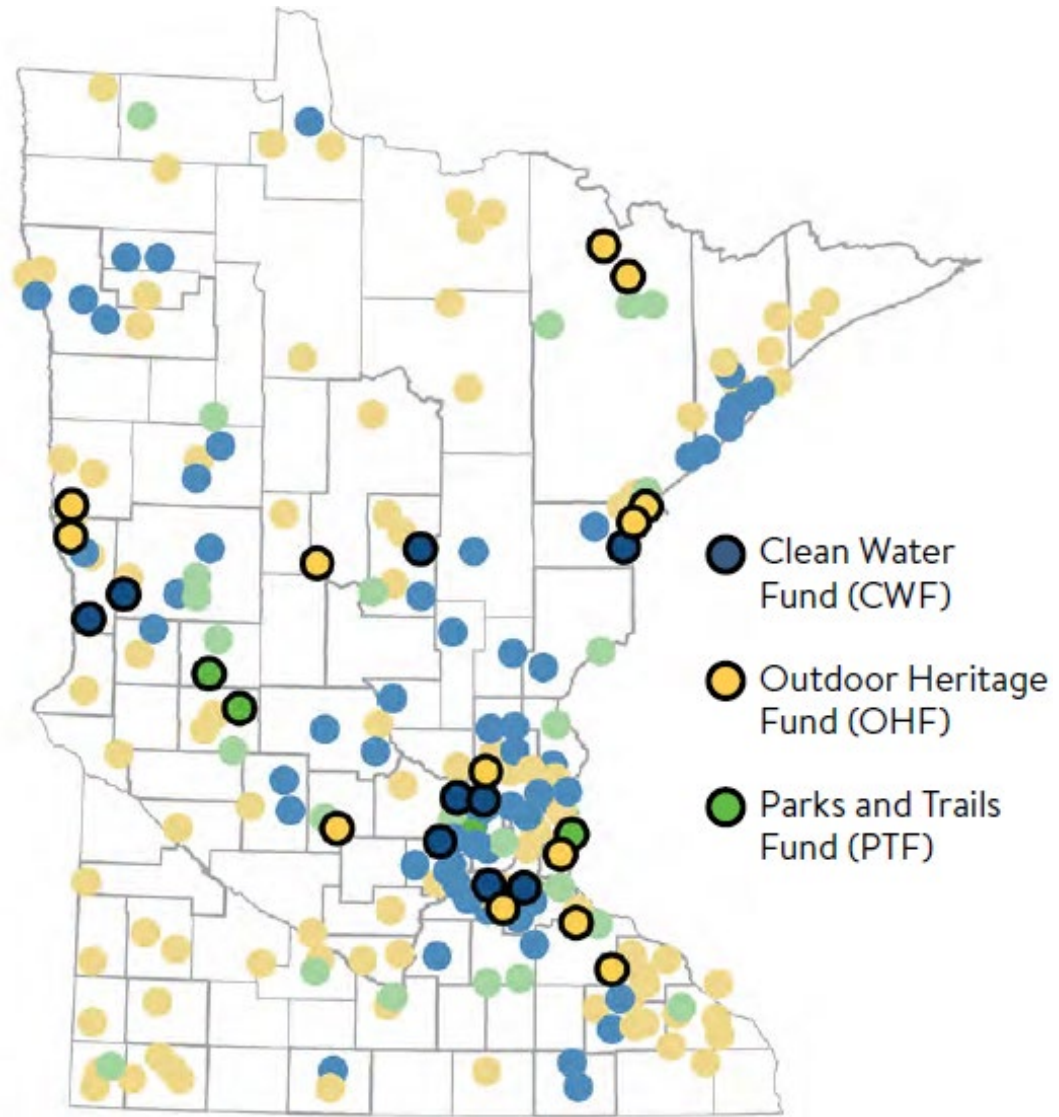
- No
- Portions
- Yes

Problems with Implementation



- No
- Yes

Where We Have Been



Restoration Evaluation Process

- **Third party assessments**

- Gather Project Background
- Conduct Site Visit
- Complete Project Evaluation
- Convene Panel Discussion



2025 Panel Members

Diverse affiliations and expertise

Greg Berg, Stearns County SWCD

Dan Larkin, U of M

Karen Gran, UMD



Chris Lenhart, U of M

Dean Paron, DNR

Pat Schultz, BWSR

Dan Shaw, BWSR



2025 Evaluation Report – Streams Focus



Areas for Improvement

- Understanding site conditions
- Project scale
- Integrating expertise
- Goals and objectives
- Vegetation maintenance

LEGACY FUND

RESTORATION EVALUATION REPORT

Technical Panel Findings and Recommendations—2025

2025 Evaluation Report – Recommendations

Comprehensive Approach for Stream Projects

Recommendations

- Strengthen planning and baseline data
- Establish clear measurable objectives and monitoring
- Scale project with underlying drivers
- Interdisciplinary technical review
- Incentivize multi-benefit projects
- Integrate components of stream health
- Ensure sufficient land access



2025 Evaluation Report – Recommendations



Comprehensive Approach for Stream Projects

Tools

- Watershed health assessment framework (WHAF)
 - 5 component framework
 - Data on watershed scale drivers
- MN stream quantification tool (SQT)
- BWSR wetland restoration guide
- Training: DNR, PRRSUM

2025 Evaluation Report – Recommendations



Comprehensive Approach for Stream Projects

Tools

- Design report template
 - Data to inform cause/processes, scale, objectives and design approach
 - Supports collaboration, environmental review, permitting

2025 Evaluation Report – Recommendations

Improved Vegetation for Stream Projects

Recommendations

- Establish vegetation plans
- Proper plant selection and site preparation
- Establish “offline” and in phases when possible
- Set performance standards and maintenance plans
- Improve coordination and training



2025 Evaluation Report – Recommendations



Improved Vegetation for Stream Projects

Tools

- BWSR
 - Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines
 - Wetland Restoration Guide
 - BWSR Seed mixes

2025 Evaluation Report – Project Successes

Gorman Creek – Wabasha County



2025 Evaluation Report – Project Successes



- ## Gorman Creek – Wabasha County
- Partnership: TU, DNR, Wabasha SWCD
 - Interdisciplinary team: hydrology, biology, geomorphology
 - Diverse vegetation



2025 Evaluation Report – Project Successes



Red River Valley
Clay/Wilkin Counties

2025 Evaluation Report – Project Successes

Red River Valley – Clay/Wilkin Counties

- Partnership: Buffalo-Red WD, DNR, Wilkin SWCD
- Interdisciplinary team: hydrology, biology, geomorphology
- Improved aquatic and upland habitat
- Reduced flooding



2026 Restoration Evaluations

Project Evaluation Theme: **Durability & Longevity**

Measuring Lasting Change by Assessing Restoration Investments 7+ Years Later

2026 Restoration Evaluations

1. Performance & Stability

- **Goal Alignment:** Have the original project goals been sustained over the long term?
- **Project Trajectory:** Are projects generally **stable, improving, or declining** relative to their original goals?
- **Climate Resilience:** How stable are mature projects when facing weather stressors like drought and flooding?



2026 Restoration Evaluations



2. Stewardship & Funding

- **Active Management:** Do previously funded projects have consistent, planned maintenance or passive oversight?
- **Financial Sustainability:** How is ongoing maintenance or continued work currently being funded?

3. Insights & Key Takeaways

- **Best Practices:** What new lessons can we learn from projects that exhibit long-term success?



2026 OHF Projects

Fiscal Year	Project Name	Project Manager	County
2010	Talcot Lake WMA	DNR	Cottonwood
2010	Ewy Lake WMA	DNR	Watonswan
2013	Long Lake WPA	Pheasants Forever	Cottonwood
2013	Storden WPA	Pheasants Forever	Cottonwood
2014	Rock Ridge WMA	DNR	Cottonwood
2013	Mayhew Creek	DNR	Waseca
2015	Hillman WPA	TNC	Big Stone
2015	Hillman WPA	TNC	Big Stone
2012	Big Stone NWR	TNC	Lac qui Parle
2014	Big Stone NWR	TNC	Lac qui Parle
2015	Long Lake-Edwards WPA	Ducks Unlimited	Stevens
2011	Seminary Fen (Revisit)	City of Chaska	Carver
2016/17	Miesville Bluff Prairie	Dakota County	Dakota

2026 OHF Projects

Fiscal Year	Project Name	Project Manager	County
2018	Gizzard Creek	West Otter Tail SWCD	Otter Tail
2020	Stony Creek	DNR	Clay
2022	Otter Tail River	DNR	Otter Tail

These stream projects were carried forward from the 2025 evaluation plan.

2026 Site Visit Invitation

Miesville Bluff Prairie



Join the Field Evaluation

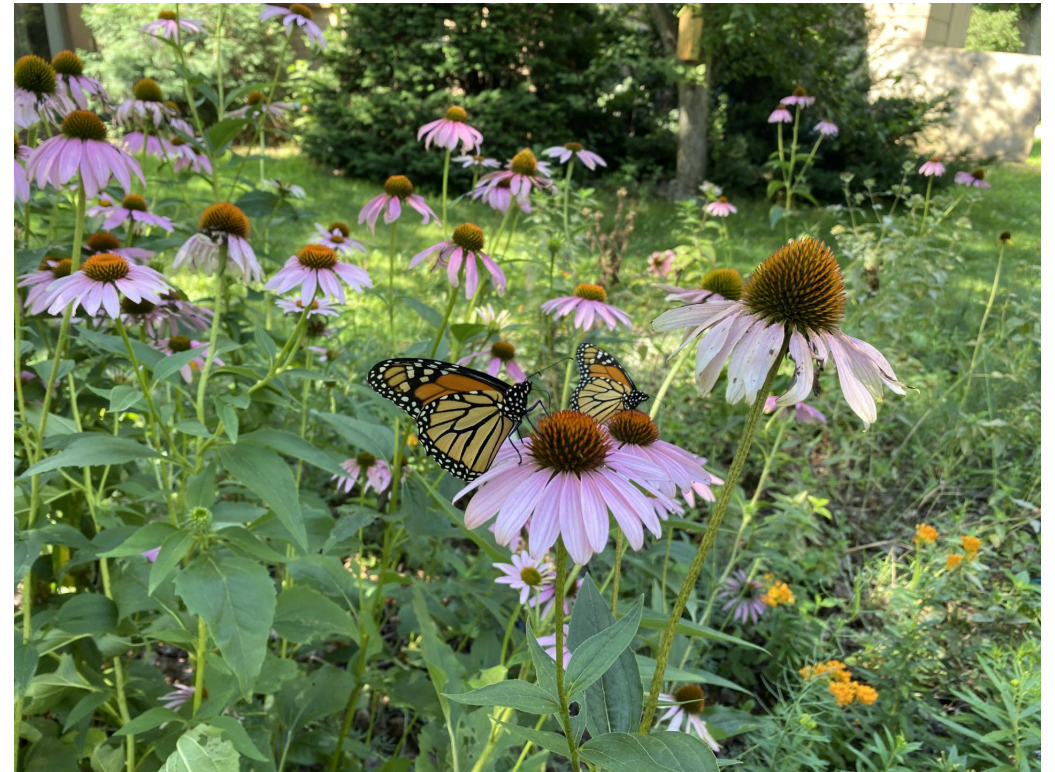
LSOHC members and staff are invited to join us on-site in 2026.



Sharing Evaluation Lessons with Practitioners

Current Initiatives

- **“Improving Restorations” Webinar Series**
(*Partnered with UMN Extension*)
 - **Bi-annual reach:** ~200 practitioners per session (Spring & Fall).
 - **Featured Topics:** *Stream Restoration* (Spring 2026) | *Wetland Restoration* (Fall 2026).
- **Conference Presentations**
 - Sharing insights, case studies, and expert opinions at key industry events.



Sharing Evaluation Lessons with Practitioners

On the Horizon

- **Direct Practitioner Engagement**
 - Offering **1:1 debriefs or group sessions** with project managers to review their site evaluations after the REP panel has identified broad thematic trends.
- **LSOHC Website Update:** Integrating recommendations and key lessons into high-traffic, easily accessible pages.
- **OHF-CPL Pre-Application Workshop:** Meeting with applicants prior to submission to share best practices and evaluation insights.



Thank you

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dnr.state.mn.us/legacy/restoration-evaluation.html