

2,650 stands of invasive *Phragmites* have been found in Minnesota

Total invaded area is less than 200 acres



29% of formerly verified stands appear **eliminated** as a result of statewide cooperative management efforts

68% of remaining stands are **smaller than a tennis court** (2,106 sq ft)

34% of remaining stands are **smaller than a single stall garage** (300 sq ft)

LSOHC funding could support more comprehensive progress toward reversing the spread, protecting wetland and lakeshore habitats throughout Minnesota

2025 Control Efforts

Treated	1196
Not Detected	791
Not Treated, New	158
Not Treated	543

Treat



Remove biomass



Photo credit: Julia Bohnen

Survey



Restore



WRE03: DNR Statewide control and reduction of invasive Phragmites Phase I



LIVING SHALLOW LAKE ENHANCEMENT & WETLAND RESTORATION PHASE XIII

Ducks Unlimited proposes to strategically enhance 1,400 acres of shallow lakes and wetlands, restore 200 acres of wetlands, and restore or enhance 900 acres of uplands on state Wildlife Management Areas, federal Waterfowl Production Areas, permanent conservation easements, and other protected lands.

- Phase 13 of DU's ongoing programmatic shallow lake enhancement and wetland restoration initiative.
- Focus: Provide wetland engineering to improve prairie shallow lakes managed by Minnesota DNR and restore or enhance prairie pothole wetlands on federal Waterfowl Production Areas.

Primary goals:

- ◆ Enhance degraded shallow lakes and large wetlands for migrating and brood-rearing waterfowl.
- ◆ Restore prairie pothole wetlands on federal WPAs and state WMAs for breeding waterfowl pairs in spring.
- ◆ Restore and enhance wetland and grassland habitat for non-game wetland-dependent birds.
- ◆ Enhance public water shallow lakes as public waterfowl hunting areas and birding areas for people too.

Focus Location: Prairie Pothole Region in the south and west regions of Minnesota.

Habitat Outputs: 2,500 acres of enhanced or restored habitat for breeding ducks and other wetland-dependent wildlife.

BUDGET:

\$11,776,000 TOTAL REQUEST

Contracts:	\$9,000,000 for shallow lake water control structure construction and wetland restorations
Professional services:	\$ 50,000 for soil investigations, county ditch petitions, county ditch reviews, etc
Personnel:	\$ 2,200,000 for DU biologists and engineers to plan, design, and implement projects
In-state travel:	\$ 100,000 for DU biologists and engineers over five years to deliver projects
Supplies and materials:	\$ 200,000 for native plant seed to restore wetlands and uplands
Other equipment/tools:	\$ 10,000 for engineering equipment to survey, design and manage construction projects
Capital Equipment	\$ 40,000 for tracked ATVs and/or UTVs for survey and construction management
Direct support services:	\$ 176,000 for DU staff support costs, including administrative support, office, etc.

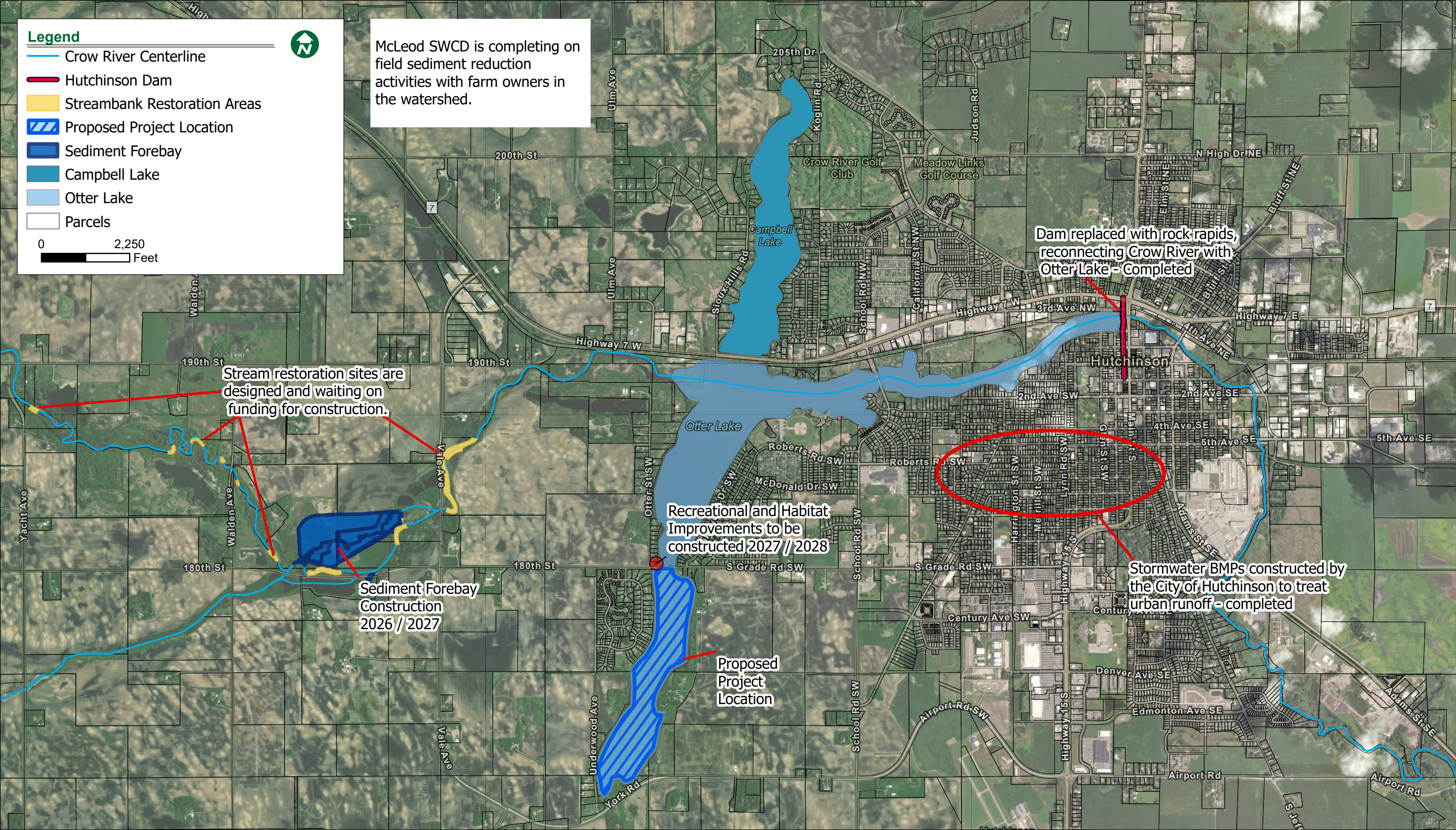
PRIOR DU OHF ENHANCEMENT/RESTORATION APPROPRIATION SPENDING AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Appropriation Year:	Appropriation:	Funds spent:	Funds remaining:	Accomplishments:
2009 (Phase I)	\$2,528,000	\$2,528,000 (100%)	\$ 0	6,882 wetland acres
2010 (Phase II)	\$5,042,000	\$5,042,000 (100%)	\$ 0	7,251 wetland acres
2012 (Phase III)	\$4,490,000	\$4,490,000 (100%)	\$ 0	3,086 wetland acres
2014 (Phase IV)	\$4,910,000	\$4,888,300 (100%)	\$ 0	6,011 wetland acres
2017 (Phase V)	\$4,716,000	\$4,716,000 (100%)	\$ 0	2,856 wetland acres
2018 (Phase VI)	\$3,740,000	\$3,740,000 (100%)	\$ 0	1,129 wetland acres
2021 (Phase VII)	\$3,960,000	\$3,960,000 (100%)	\$ 0	1,236 wetland acres
2022 (Phase VIII)	\$5,155,000	\$5,155,000 (100%)	\$ 0	3,687 acres
2023 (Phase IX)	\$6,634,000	\$4,260,499 (64%)	\$ 2,373,500	Ongoing, 2,524 acres
2024 (Phase X)	\$7,867,000	\$4,386,364 (56%)	\$ 3,480,635	Ongoing, 2,498 acres
2025 (Phase XI)	\$5,601,000	\$919,591 (16%)	\$ 4,681,409	Ongoing, 814 acres
2026 (Phase XII)	\$6,661,000	\$0	\$ 6,661,000	Just started

By end of 2027, DU will have spent or legally obligated most past OHF grant funds for shallow lake and wetland engineering enhancements and restorations through Phase 10 and most Phase 11 funding.

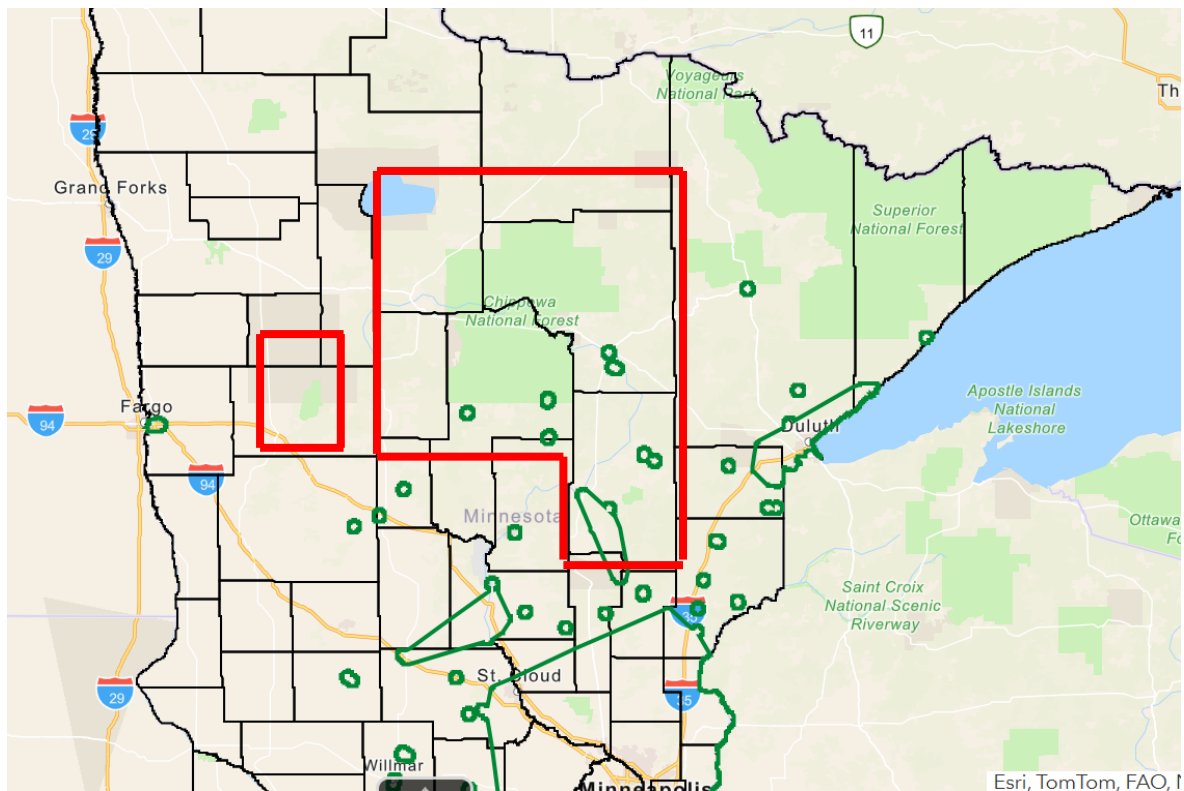
WRE 04 **SHALLOW LAKE ENHANCEMENTS AND
PRAIRIE WETLAND RESTORATIONS**





Enhancing Black Ash Forests for Resilience and Habitat

- The Laurentian Mixed Forest province contain connected and protected mixed forest habitats important to migrant and breeding birds.
 - The emerald ash borer is starting to move into the northern forests that contain larger stands of black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*).
 - The land management actions proposed by Audubon and partners are critical to maintaining this unique area for migrant and breeding birds. Habitat enhancements include thinning, underplanting, and protecting flood tolerant trees and shrubs to ensure these sites remain forested.
- \$4,164,000 to restore and enhance 1,774 acres of mixed forests
 - \$500,000 leverage
 - \$4,664,000 total project cost

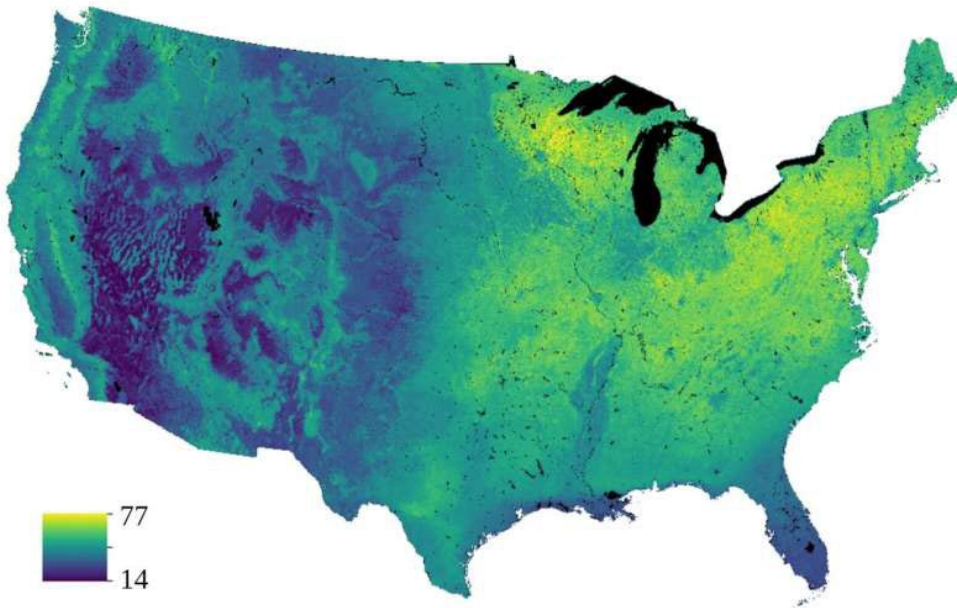


A MN DNR map of areas where emerald ash borer have been detected (green circles) and the project priority impact area (red boxes)

Keeping up with the emerald ash borer

Even though black ash is abundant in northern Minnesota, the emerald ash borer is not! We will focus our enhancement in the areas where emerald ash borer is starting to impact forests!

Enhancing Black Ash Forests for Resilience and Habitat

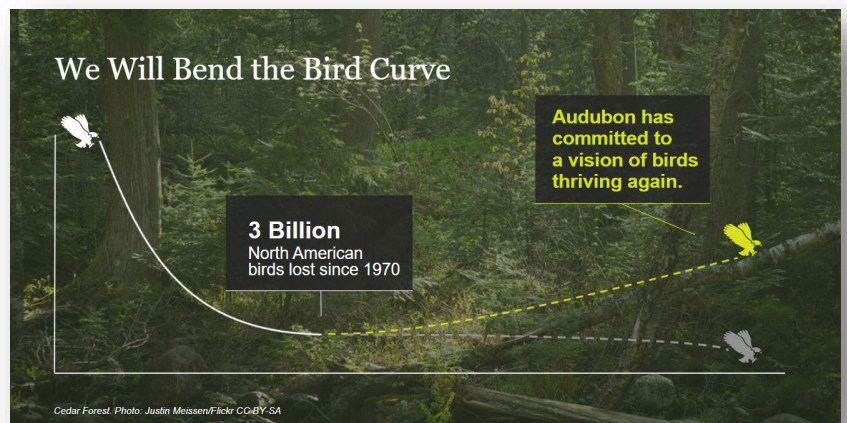


The mixed forests of northern Minnesota contain among the highest diversity of breeding birds in the United States. Losing this forest cover would be catastrophic to migratory birds and other wildlife.

A map of breeding bird diversity in North America. Carroll et al. 2002

Bending the Bird Curve

The restoration and enhancement of Minnesota's important bird areas fulfills Audubon's strategic Flight Plan goals by creating conditions for birds, people, and the planet to thrive while convening a diverse coalition of partners inspired to conserve the most important places for birds.



A figure depicting the decline of North America's bird population and Audubon's goals to bend the curve back up.

Partners



Itasca County
Minnesota



Cannon River Watershed Habitat Protection and Restoration Program - Phase 16

Habitat for Minnesota's Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Why the Cannon River Watershed Matters

The Cannon River Watershed is one of Minnesota's most ecologically diverse landscapes — where Big Woods forest, oak savanna, prairie, and the Driftless Area come together. It's home to rare natural features like goat prairies and calcareous fens, found almost nowhere else in the state. The landscape is now predominately agricultural fields and, to a lesser extent, urban development. Today, only 18% of the landscape remains as forest, wetland or prairie habitat and many of these areas have become degraded. Our programmatic approach is helping to change that, with additional funding we will continue to protect threatened habitat, and restore and enhance our public lands.



Big Woods Heritage Forest



*Sakatah WMA: In-Yan
Bo-Sda-Ta Wa-Kpa Unit*



Medford WMA

This Proposal

Through this partnership, approximately 600 acres will be permanently protected, alongside the restoration or enhancement of 471 acres across riverine, forest, wetland, oak savanna, and prairie habitats within the watershed. The initiative aims to expand high-quality habitat for local wildlife and Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)—including migratory birds along the Mississippi River corridor, pollinators, amphibians, and reptiles.

Funding History

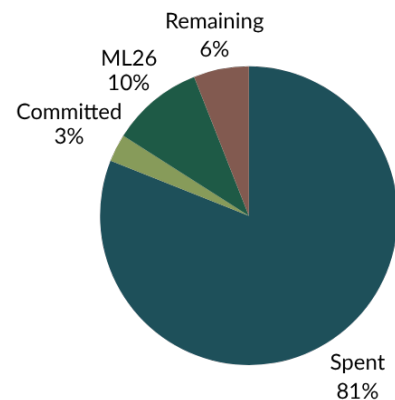
Phase 1-9 (Complete): \$12,395,000

2,508 acres protected (103% of stated goal) with \$1.57 million in leverage (196% of stated goal)

Phase 10-15 (In-progress): \$16,344,000

**Includes ML26 funds that are pending finalized grant agreements.*

To date, these phases have permanently protected 1,051 acres, completed 271 acres of restoration and enhancement, and have over 1,000 additional acres in progress.



Where agriculture dominates, strategic conservation creates refugees.

Building on Previous Investments

Phase 16 continues to build on previous investments by expanding and restoring public lands along the Straight River Corridor (such as Medford WMA II, Faribault WMA II, Kaplan's Woods Park, and Leo Rudolph Nature Reserve), creating a network of complementary protected natural areas connected by the river. Additional strategic fee acquisition, and restoration and enhancement opportunities exist and will be pursued throughout watershed.

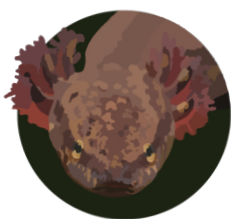
Three Species, Three Reasons This Work Can't Wait

Twelve SGCN could benefit from permanent protection or restoration and enhancement of



Wood Turtle

Agriculture, timber harvest, and development have fragmented and reduced the wood turtle's habitat over time. Our work focuses on conserving habitat along streams and river where



Mudpuppy

The mudpuppy is Minnesota's only fully aquatic salamander and is the only known host for the larvae of the endangered



Loggerhead Shrike

Our proposal restores tiled cropland back to open prairie, extending the vital grassland



For More Information, Contact:

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Clean River Partners
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(507) 786-3913 x 1

HA05

ML2027 – Fisheries Habitat Protection on Strategic North
Central Minnesota Lakes



Northern Waters
LAND TRUST

\$8.476M

TOTAL REQUEST

\$7M

ACQUISITION REQUEST

\$700K

PROPOSED LEVERAGE

875 acres

PROPOSED ACREAGE

Why Protect Coldwater Lakes?

Studies predict lakes with coldwater habitat will decline by 67% by mid-century. Protecting coldwater lake watersheds safeguards water quality and critical habitat for Minnesota's most vulnerable fish and wildlife species.

Minnesota's Coldwater Fish

Photo credit: Rachel
Dunlap, MLT



Lake Trout

Indicator species for water quality and ecosystem health; driver of recreation and tourism



Cisco/Tullibee

Important forage fish for many iconic MN species, including walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, and common loons



Lake Whitefish

Key part of Minnesota's fishing heritage, valued for its recreational, historical, and cultural importance.



Burbot

Supports healthy lake food webs and indicates good water quality conditions.

Celebrating Success: Mantrap WMA Grand Opening



~450 acres protected



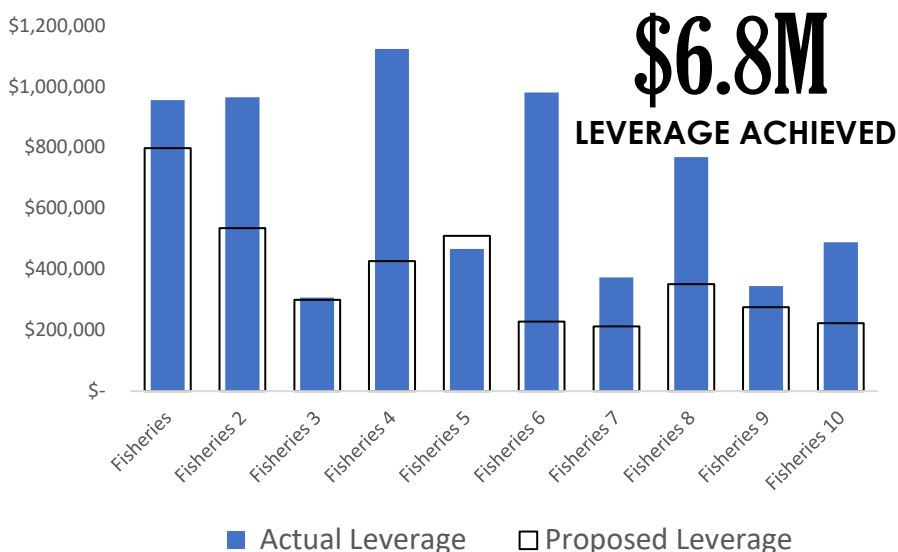
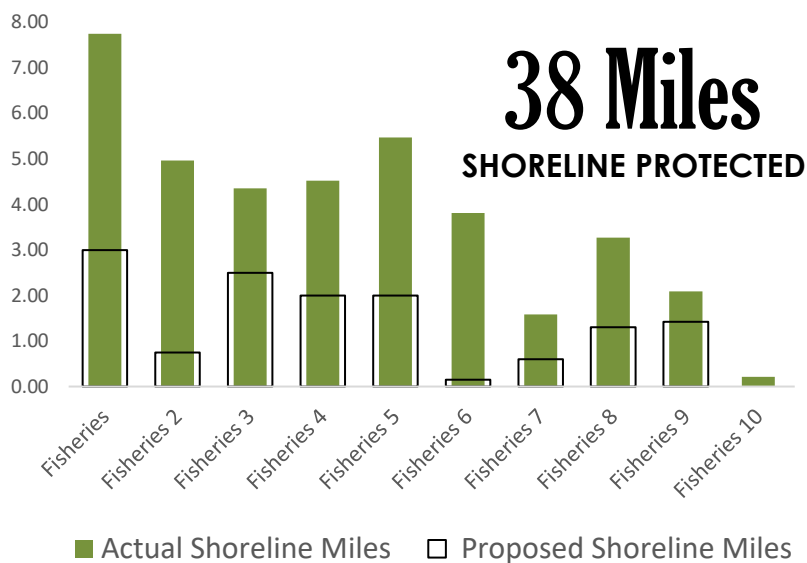
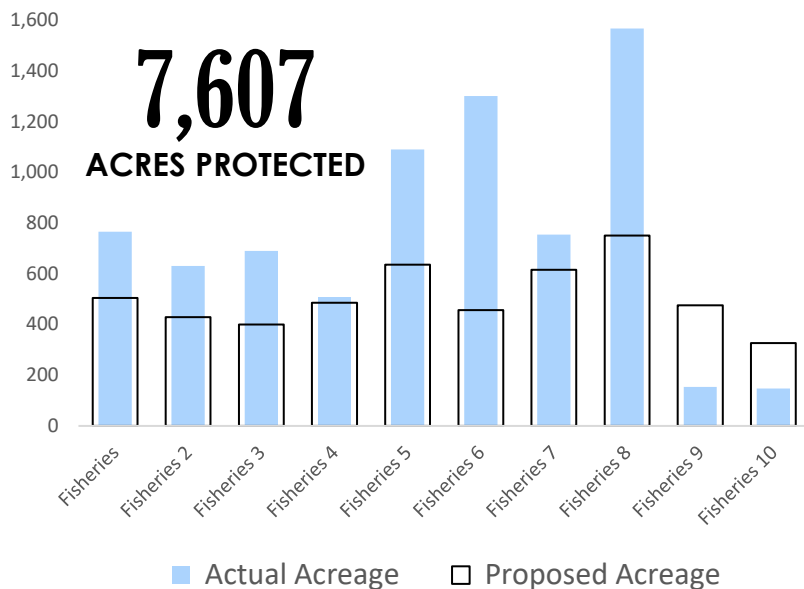
6 miles shoreline protected



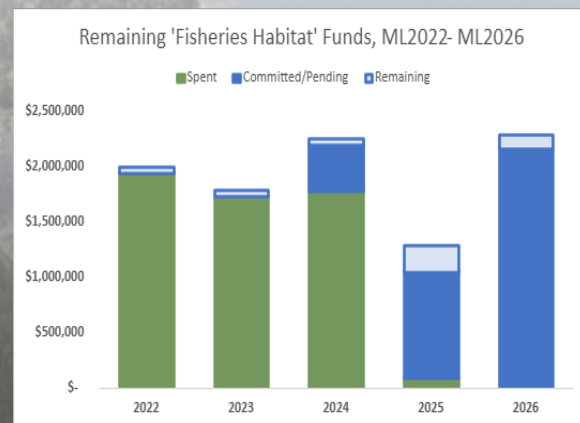
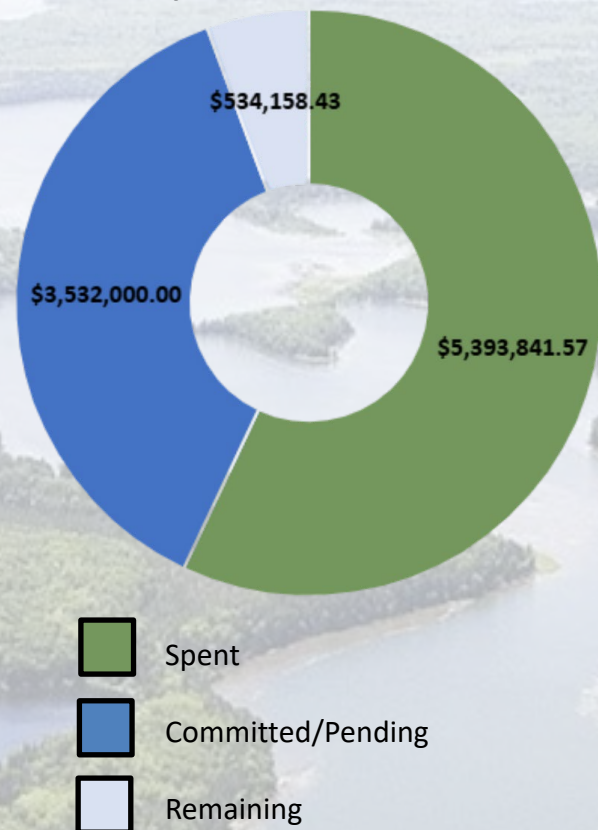
120+ attendees

Program Outcomes

Since the program began in 2014, Minnesota Land Trust and Northern Waters Land Trust have consistently exceeded proposed acreage, shoreline, and leverage goals, and achieved the following outcomes:



Funds Remaining in Open Appropriations (ML2022 - ML2026)



We are currently working to protect (due diligence underway) an additional 366 acres and 6,600 feet of shoreline, projects that, once completed, will fully expend our currently available funds, including those recently appropriated in July of 2026.



HA-06 Metro Big Rivers



Metro Big Rivers (MBR) 17 will protect, restore, and enhance 1,964 acres of priority wildlife habitat in the Metro Urbanizing Area, with an emphasis on the Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix Rivers and their tributaries.

Metro Big Rivers is a proven, dynamic partnership* that gets results with Outdoor Heritage Funds for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. MBR protects, connects and improves conservation lands in the metropolitan urbanizing area, expanding habitat for wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. MBR also creates and enhances opportunities for Twin Cities residents to connect with nature and wildlife near where they live.

Metro Big Rivers Phase 17 – 1,964 acres
Protect 1,100 acres • Restore/Enhance 864 acres

Outdoor Heritage Fund Request – \$20,569,000
Anticipated Leverage – \$1,224,400 (6.0%)

Metro Big Rivers exceeds goals and leverages OHF funds. Results to-date (through Phase 15):

- 11,000+ acres complete plus 2,800 in progress for a total of approximately 13,800 acres
- 100% + of acreage goals achieved
- OHF funds leveraged > 40% with \$20 million of other funds to-date

Why invest OHF funds in the Metro Urbanizing Area:

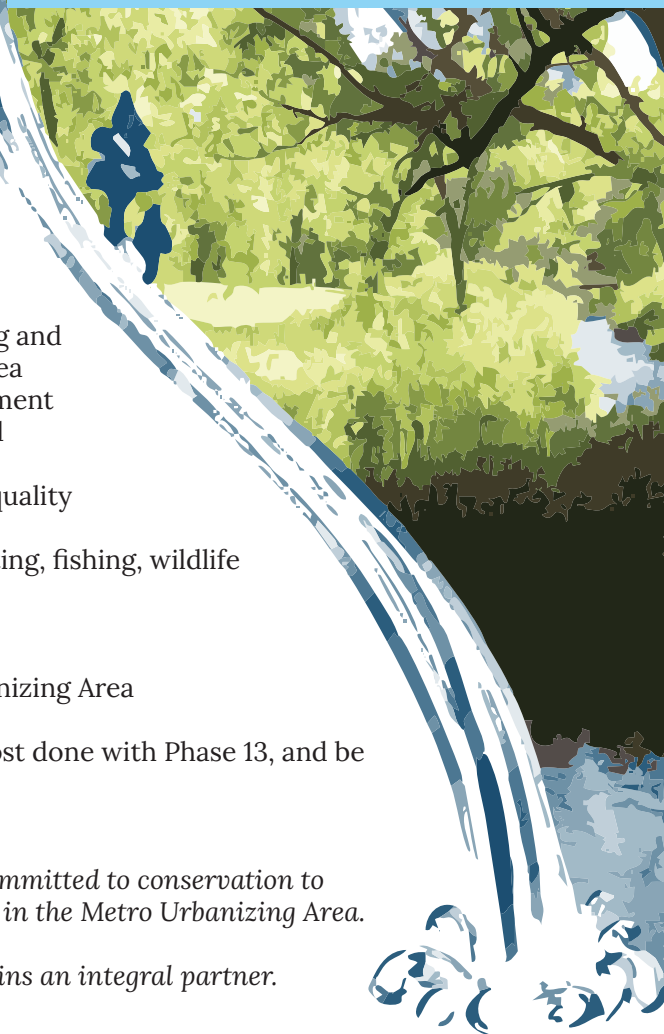
- Protect critical habitat and improve degraded habitat along and near the migratory flyways and tributaries in the metro area
- Protect significant habitat in the metro area from development
- Benefit wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Improve water quality and in-stream food availability
- Ensure 3.8 million Twin Cities metro residents have high-quality opportunities to connect with nature near where they live
- Introduce more people to nature-based activities like hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, hiking and paddling

Why trust and invest in Metro Big Rivers Phase 17:

- MBR achieves the LSOHC's goals in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area
- MBR aggressively leverages OHF funds
- By July 2027, MBR will have completed Phases 1-12, be almost done with Phase 13, and be well into Phases 14-16
- MBR has spent \$55 million in OHF grants to-date.

Metro Big Rivers works with public partners and landowners committed to conservation to achieve the priorities of the LSOHC for Outdoor Heritage Funds in the Metro Urbanizing Area.

**Great River Greening is not participating in Phase 17 but remains an integral partner.*

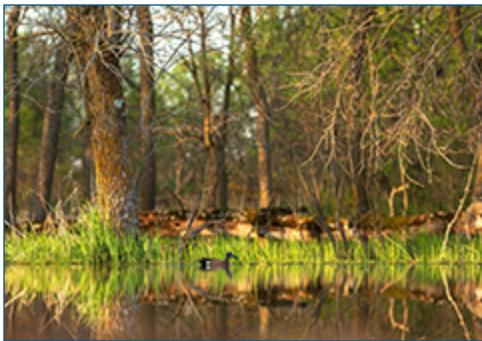


For more information:
Neal Feeken
Minnesota Valley Trust
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nfeeken@mnvalleytrust.org



Metro Big Rivers Selected Accomplishments

Friends of the Mississippi River restored and enhanced prairie and forest habitat at the new William H. Houlton Conservation Area through MBR Phases 5, 7, 8 and 12. The 335-acre site at the confluence of the Elk River and Mississippi River was acquired by the Trust for Public Land with MBR Phases 2 and 3. FMR and volunteers removed invasive woody and herbaceous plants from the floodplain and upland forest. The former agricultural fields and degraded grasslands were restored to diverse native prairie through seeding, mowing and prescribed burns. Through evaluation of restoration techniques and how well wildlife is returning, FMR found high success in the restoration efforts. A bird survey identified the endangered Henslow's sparrow and five other Species of Greatest Conservation Need: the bobolink, dickcissel, grasshopper sparrow, LeConte's sparrow, and sedge wren.



Minnesota Land Trust restored six wetlands across its Tamarack Bog (Wallace/Leone) conservation easement in Sherburne County under MBR 11. Wildlife immediately started to show up in the wetlands, including the blue winged teal. This was the first phase of the restoration, with the upland oak savanna/woodland currently being restored under MBR 14, which will result in a rich mix of high-quality habitats that will be a boon for wildlife. Additionally, the Tamarack Bog easement is about one mile from the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, creating an important corridor for movement from these treasured public lands.

Minnesota Valley Trust acquired 110 acres in Scott County for the Louisville and St. Lawrence Units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge with two OHF grants – MBR 12 & 13. These strategic acquisitions added priority acreage adjacent to other protected lands and created new opportunities for the public to engage in wildlife-based recreation, education and interpretation. MVT and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service completed a one-mile restoration on the only documented trout stream in Hennepin County – Ike's Creek. The restoration potential was identified nearly twenty years earlier and finally came to fruition courtesy of MBR 10, Conservation Partners Legacy Grants and other non-state funds.



Trust for Public Land recently acquired 84 acres in Scott County as an addition to the Ney WMA with MBR 14. The land is largely wooded, provides critical habitat for deer and turkey, and has a tall bluff overlooking the Minnesota River Valley providing stunning vistas. In two separate transactions, these 84 acres were a crucial inholding in the WMA, one that TPL previously expanded by 128 acres in 2013 using MBR 2. This permanently protects threatened habitat and connects state land and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Using MBR 14 and 15 funds, TPL acquired in fee 181 acres of diverse habitat to establish a new Scientific and Natural Area in Isanti County, now the Green Lake SNA. TPL continues to leading the multi-year restoration and enhancement effort at Keystone Woods WMA, which was acquired in two phases 2026 using seven OHF appropriations (four MBR

grants). R/E work progresses with woody invasive removal, and the prairie restoration is beginning now. Over the next 4-5 years, approximately 1,700 acres of prairie, forests, and wetlands will be restored or enhanced, ensuring a resilient habitat for wildlife and recreational users to enjoy.

HA07: Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 6



Northern Waters
LAND TRUST

\$7.33M
TOTAL REQUEST

\$6M
ACQUISITION REQUEST

\$600K
PROPOSED LEVERAGE

750 acres
PROPOSED ACREAGE



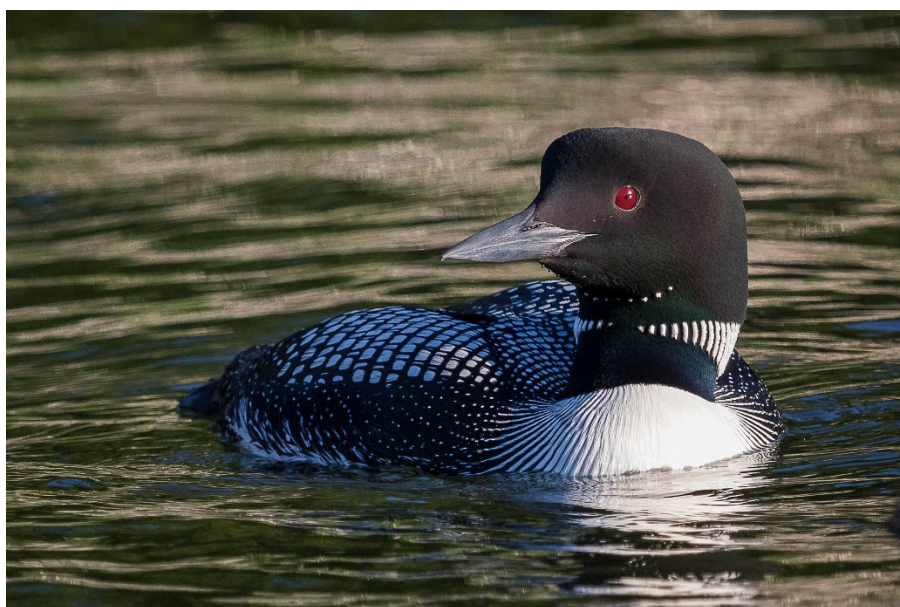
Lakes of Biological Significance – June 1, 2025

A list of high-quality lakes based on dedicated biological sampling to be used to focus protection efforts.

Criteria: Unique plant or animal presence was the primary measure of a lake's biological significance. Lakes were rated and grouped for each of the following communities: aquatic plants, fish, birds, and herpetofauna (amphibians and a turtle species). Lakes were assigned one of three biological significance classes (**Outstanding**, **High**, or **Moderate**), which are defined in the table below. Many Minnesota lakes have not been sampled for plants and/or animals, so this list of lakes will be periodically revised as additional biological data become available.

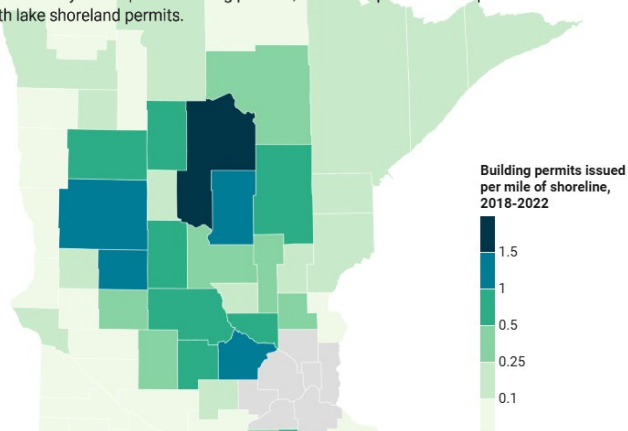
Outstanding

- Important wild rice lakes.
- Shallow lakes with high aquatic plant richness.
- Lakes with high aquatic plant diversity and rare plant species.
- Exceptional fishery for selected game fish or an outstanding nongame fish community.
- One or more of the following: endangered or threatened colonial waterbird nesting area, presence of several endangered, threatened, or special concern lake bird species, or six or more lake bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Loon nesting on MN's largest lakes.

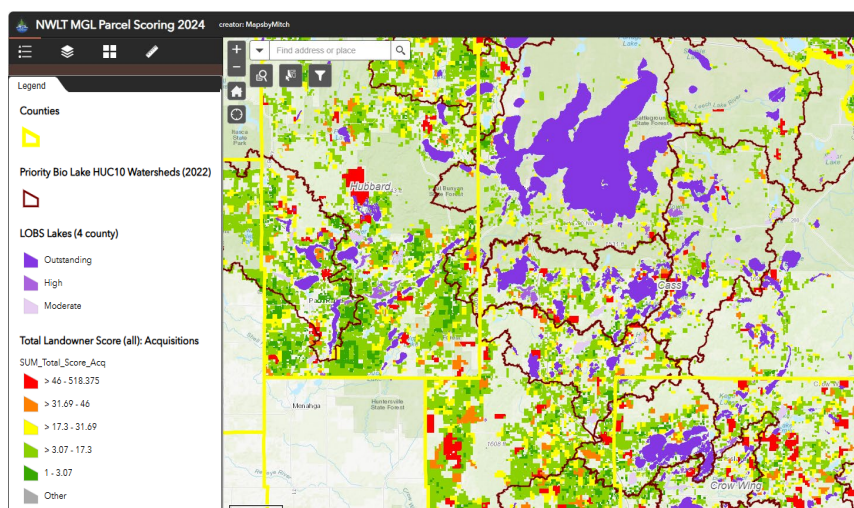


Accounting for miles of shoreline, Minnesota's lake country has highest rates of granting permits in shoreland

Both river and lake shorelines were estimated by county for this analysis. River shorelands are also subject to special building permits, and those permits are reported in combination with lake shoreland permits.



https://mnlakesandrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MN-Natural-Shoreline-Partnership-Report_2023_final.pdf



In scoring parcels for prioritization, we account for: parcel size, adjacency to protected land, shoreline or proximity to LOBS lake, sensitive shoreland ranking, hydrologic connectivity, land connectivity, rare features, terrestrial biodiversity significance, Risk of conversion to urban or agricultural land use.

Project Spotlight: Preece Point AMA Addition



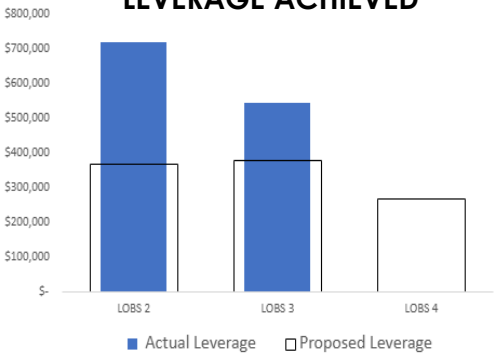
- 19.87 Acres
- 645 Shoreline Feet
- Lake Marquette, Beltrami County
- Brings AMA total acreage to 38 acres

Program Outcomes

Minnesota Land Trust and Northern Waters Land Trust are on track to meet or exceed proposed acreage, shoreline, and leverage goals, and have achieved the following outcomes so far:

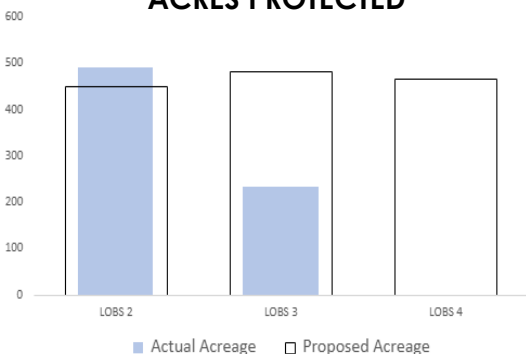
\$1.71M

LEVERAGE ACHIEVED



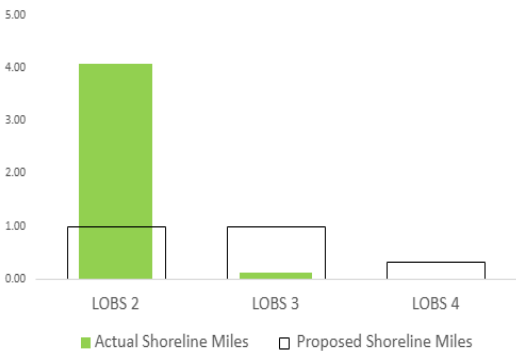
1,442

ACRES PROTECTED

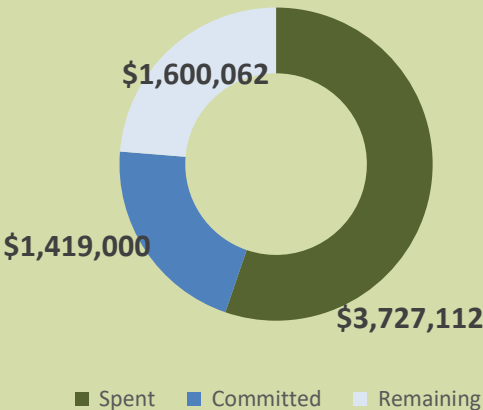


8.84 miles

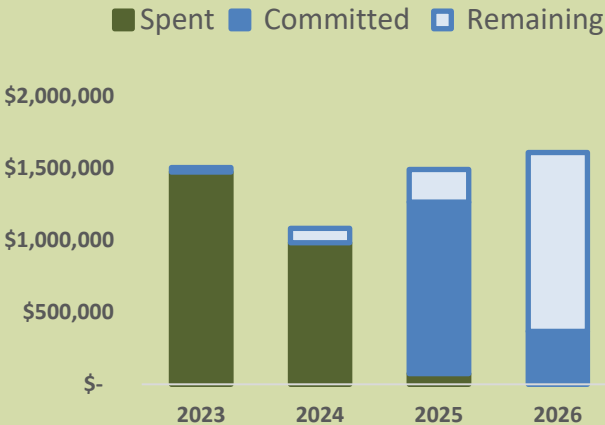
SHORELINE PROTECTED



Funds Remaining in Open Appropriations (ML23 - ML26)



We are currently working to protect (due diligence underway) an additional 50+ acres and 4,800 feet of shoreline. We anticipate that these projects, in addition to those “in the pipeline”, will fully expend our currently available funds, including those recently appropriated in July of 2026.



HA09: Southeast Minnesota Protection & Restoration



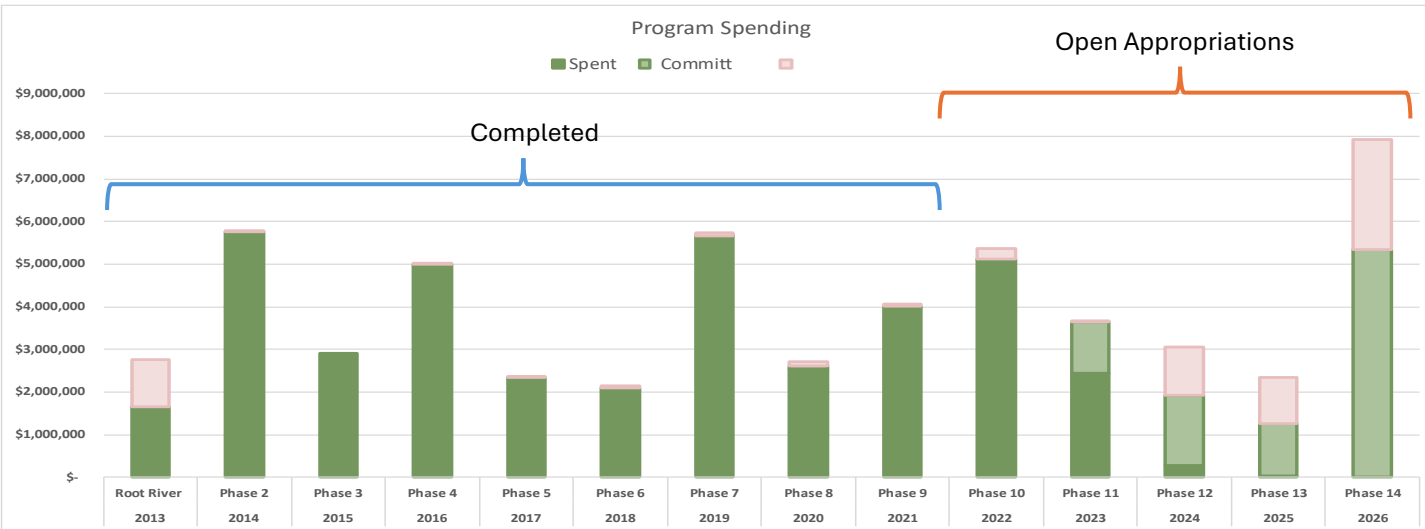
Choice WMA, a 1,664-acre WMA protected through this program

For over a decade, our partnership has effectively put OHF dollars on the ground in the biodiversity hotspot of Minnesota. Now, additional funding is needed to sustain this work. The upcoming Wacouta Bay acquisition will use nearly all remaining fee protection funds, creating an urgent need for new funding. Additionally, there is a pipeline of potential conservation easement projects that exceeds our available funding.

We’ve restored or protected 36.5 square miles of habitat, benefitting 112 different Species in Greatest Conservation Need. But in a sensitive landscape where 95% of habitat remains unprotected, our work is not done.

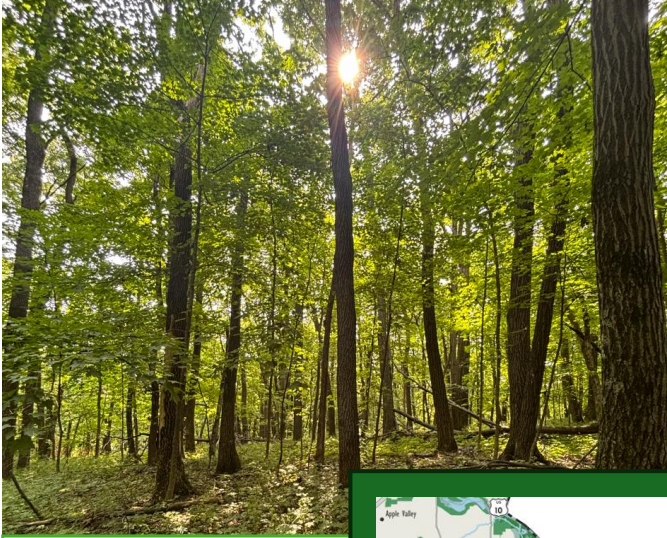
Program Results

Acres Protected:	11,201
Acres open to public	5,786
Acres Restored/Enhanced	12,178
SGCN Benefits	
Species	112
Occurrences	2,721
Dollars Leveraged	\$5,422,900
% of Goal	141%



The Southeast MN Protection and Restoration program has an established track record of getting dollars on the ground through high-impact projects. We expect to spend all existing fee protection funds by the end of 2026, and the opportunities for high-priority easement projects currently exceeds available funds. Additional funding through this proposal is needed to continue this work.

Project Highlights – Impact of OHF Funding



Fee Acquisition

ABOVE: A mature, diverse hardwood forest on a new addition to the RJ Dorer State Forest in Houston County.

BELOW: Coneflower, bergamot, and many other species blooming on a restored prairie at Moon Valley WMA.

Restoration



Easement

ABOVE: Potential conservation easement project in Winona County. The property is adjacent to three other MLT easements.

BELOW: Goats hard at work on steep bluff slopes at Whitewater WMA helping to reduce invasive species.

Enhancement



Thank you for your continued support!



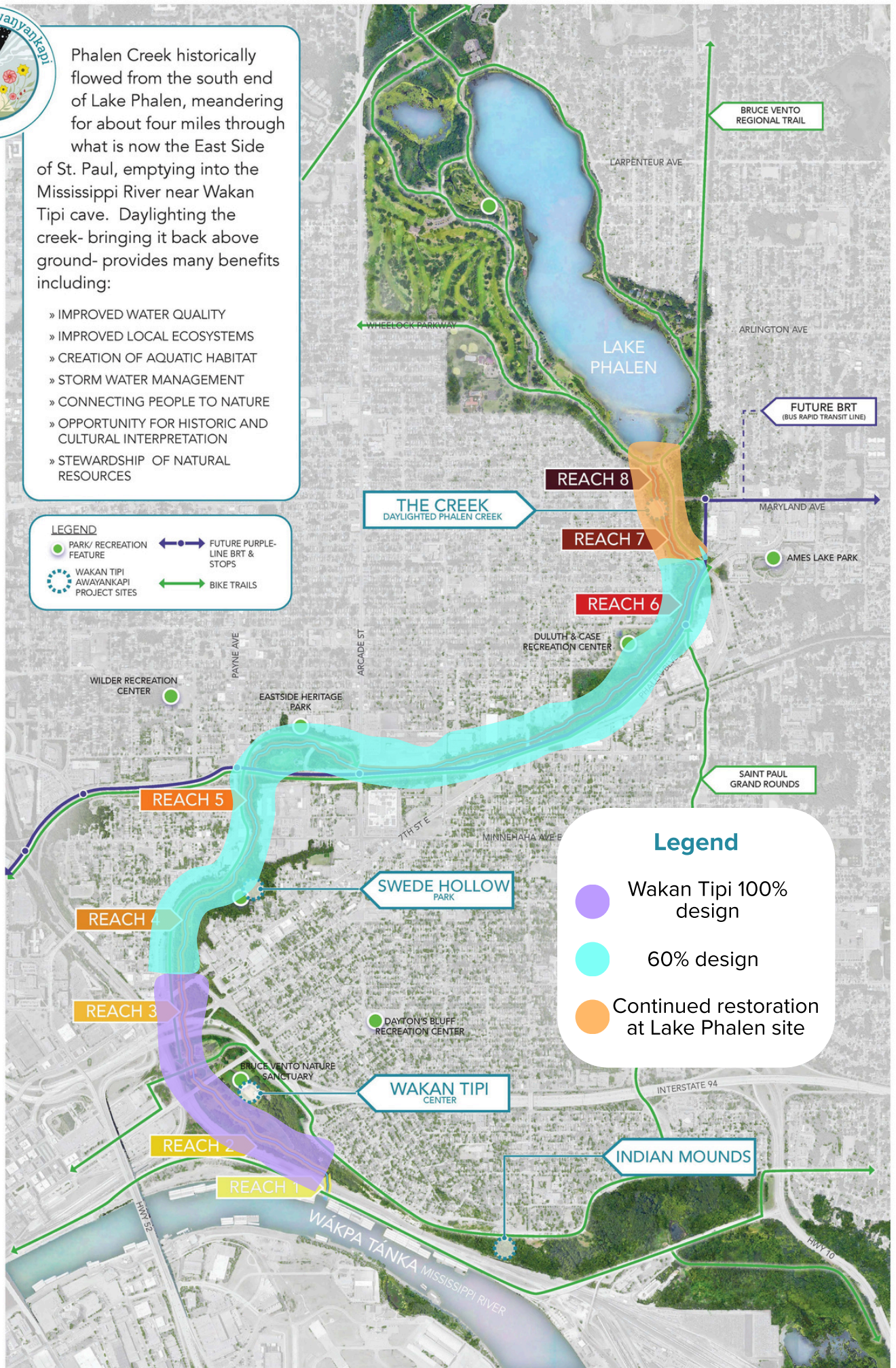
Phalen Creek historically flowed from the south end of Lake Phalen, meandering for about four miles through what is now the East Side of St. Paul, emptying into the Mississippi River near Wakan Tipi cave. Daylighting the creek- bringing it back above ground- provides many benefits including:

- » IMPROVED WATER QUALITY
- » IMPROVED LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS
- » CREATION OF AQUATIC HABITAT
- » STORM WATER MANAGEMENT
- » CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE
- » OPPORTUNITY FOR HISTORIC AND CULTURAL INTERPRETATION
- » STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LEGEND

- PARK/ RECREATION FEATURE
- FUTURE PURPLE-LINE BRT & STOPS
- WAKAN TITI AWANYANKAPI PROJECT SITES
- BIKE TRAILS

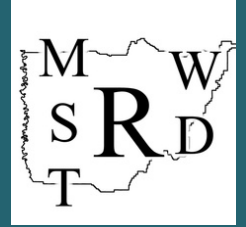
DAYLIGHTING THE CREEK PHALEN CREEK



Legend

- Wakan Tipi 100% design
- 60% design
- Continued restoration at Lake Phalen site

Swift Coulee Channel Restoration PHASE 2

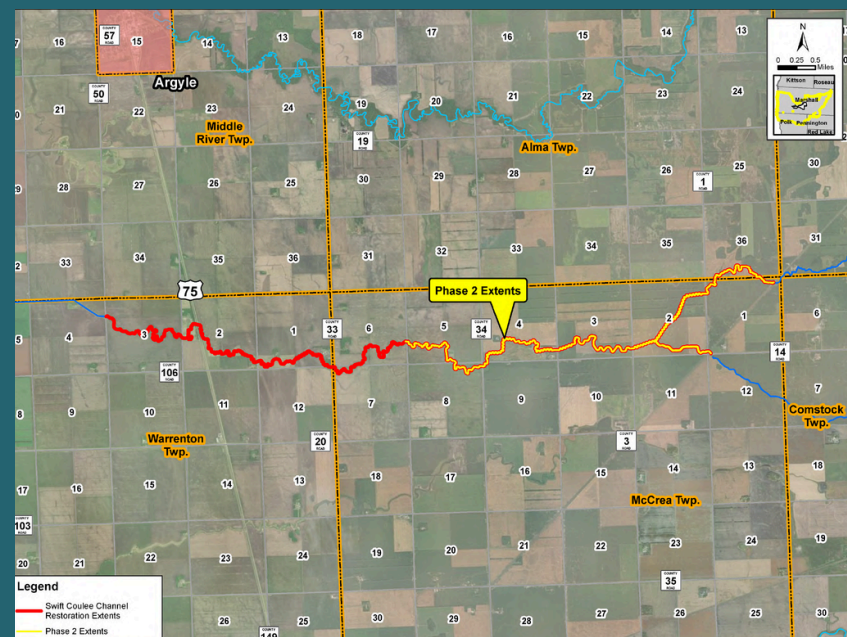


LSOHC members were invited to the groundbreaking of Phase 1 in May 2025. We are excited to report that Phase 1 is complete, and Phase 2 is on track for construction in 2027!

- Project design is 80% complete.
- Eleven of 17 landowners have signed up for Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) applications.
- Permits have been submitted to regulatory agencies, with anticipated issuance by February 2027.

The District has demonstrated its ability to deliver and move this project forward. With our doer mentality, we respectfully request your funding support to make construction of Phase 2 a reality in 2027.

Phase 1 Completed



Project Benefits

Habitat Restoration



- **More than 740 acres** in total (Phase 1: 248 acres, Phase 2: 492 acres)
- **Fish passage:** Opens 25 miles upstream



... **LeConte's Sparrow**¹ ...

Erosion Reduction



- **Sediment reduction:** 8,200 tons/year
- **Phosphorus reduction:** 7,600 lbs/year



... **Snowy Owl**¹ ...

Channel Restoration



- **42 sq miles** of Drainage Area
- **Restoring 16.7 miles** of stream meanders in total with both phases
- **Reducing** subwatershed peak volume and flows



... **Sandhill Crane**¹ ...

Swift Coulee will provide **safe, high-quality refueling, nesting, and wintering zones** for the approximately **279 bird species** that inhabit the Tallgrass Aspen Parklands

¹Bird Photos From ©HvHughes, 2026