



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Spring Road Conservation Project  
ML 2025 Request for Funding

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### General Information

**Date:** 05/29/2024

**Proposal Title:** Spring Road Conservation Project

**Funds Requested:** \$3,012,500

**Confirmed Leverage Funds:** \$2,787,500

**Is this proposal Scalable?:** Yes

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Terry Jeffery

**Title:** Administrator

**Organization:** Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District

**Address:** 18681 Lake Drive East

**City:** Chanhassen, MN 55317

**Email:** tjeffery@rpbcwd.org

**Office Number:** 9526076512

**Mobile Number:** 9526871107

**Fax Number:**

**Website:** www.rpbcwd.org

### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Hennepin.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Metro / Urban

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Fee
- Restore
- Enhance

**Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Forest
- Prairie
- Habitat
- Wetlands

**Narrative****Abstract**

This project will permanently protect 27 acres of dry prairie, wetland, woodland, and savanna in the bluff lands of the Minnesota River facing imminent risk of development via fee title acquisition of the property. The acquisition, restoration, and protection of this property is integral, as one of two remaining properties needed to provide a contiguous corridor from the Minnesota River to Lake Riley. The acquisition will also protect important habitat for a number of species of concern on the state or federal listings including Kitten-tail, Rhombic Evening Primrose, Gopher Snake, Lark Sparrow, et al.

**Design and Scope of Work**

The property, commonly referred to by the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District (RPBCWD) as the Spring Road properties or Noble Hills, is in Eden Prairie, MN in the Lower MN River Valley and in the Riley Creek Watershed. It is comprised of three distinct parcels that, in total, are 28.07 acres in size. There is a single-family home and three outbuildings on the property. Approximately 14 acres of the property has been used as a tree farm for ornamental evergreen trees. The remainder of the property is covered by mature hardwood forest or fallow land with native species present interspersed among the forage grasses such as smooth brome and panicum spp.

The adjoining land to the east and to the north shared similar topography and ecology but was developed to high density residential beginning in 2004. The properties to the south and to the west are maintained as passive recreation parkland/preserve and are owned and managed by the City of Eden Prairie. The Spring Road properties will provide the in-fill necessary to provide a contiguous corridor from the Minnesota River to Lake Riley, following the Riley Creek corridor.

The RPBCWD was first made aware of the development pressures facing this property in December of 2020 when Gonyea Homes applied for an application from the RPBCWD to develop 59 single-family detached homes. This development proposal would have disturbed 20.5 acres of the site and significantly altered the topography and ecology of the site. Gonyea Homes withdrew their application in the Spring of 2021 and Pulte Homes acquired development rights. Neighbors of the proposed development as well as advocates for the Fredrick-Miller Spring, located just off the southwest corner of the parcel, made their opposition known to the development at board meetings of the RPBCWD as well as at meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council for Eden Prairie, eventually filing a lawsuit under the MERA.

The RPBCWD Board of Managers began meeting in April of 2023 to discuss and negotiate acquisition of the property to provide permanent protection, restoration, scientific research, and public outreach and education initiatives.

The current RPBCWD Ten-Year Plan sets goals and action steps for the RPBCWD. The acquisition of this property aligns with five of the goals within the plan.

- 1) Protect, manage, and restore water quality of District lakes and creeks to maintain designated uses;

- 2) Preserve and enhance the quantity, as well as the function and value of District wetlands;
- 3) Preserve and enhance habitat important to fish, waterfowl, and other wildlife;
- 4) Protect and enhance the ecological function of District floodplains to minimize adverse impacts; and
- 5) Limit the impact of stormwater runoff on receiving waterbodies.

The Board of Managers for the RPBCWD passed a resolution in November of 2023, amending the Ten-Year Plan to include the acquisition and restoration of this property.

**Explain how the proposal addresses habitat protection, restoration, and/or enhancement for fish, game & wildlife, including threatened or endangered species conservation**

1. The MN DNR County Biological Survey (MBS) has identified Dry-prairie (sand-gravel subtype) on the property. This is an imperiled community that has seen the destruction of approximately 99% of the pre-settlement area.
2. MN DNR mapped a portion of the site as an MBS Site of High Biodiversity Significance and as a Regionally Significant Ecological Area.
3. The MN DNR Natural Heritage Database indicates that the threatened plant species, Kitten-tail is in the area. Kitten-tail was observed on the property in 2023 by ecologists hired by the developer. The Natural Heritage Database also lists Rhombic Evening Primrose, a special concern plant, in the area.
4. The MN DNR Natural Heritage Database indicates that the site has high potential for Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (federally endangered), Lark Sparrow (Minnesota Species of Special Concern), and Gopher Snake (Minnesota Species of Special Concern).
5. The site is tributary to Riley Creek and the Minnesota River, both of which are on the Minnesota impaired waters list. Development of the site will only exacerbate those impairments.
6. The property is located within the Lower Minnesota River Valley Important Bird Area (IBA), which provides essential habitat for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating bird species. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Birds of Conservation Concern observed at the adjacent Prairie Bluff Conservation Area include Cape May Warbler, Canada Warbler, Chimney Swift, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Field Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and others. It’s probable that the same species are utilizing the property. The property is located within the Lower Minnesota River Valley Conservation Focus Area identified in Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025. The Wildlife Action Network Score for the property is “Medium-High,” indicating higher scores in the five metrics related to Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).

The RPBCWD has already engaged Hennepin County Environmental Services to discuss partnering with the restoration of the property and retains Barr Engineering to provide additional ecological and engineering expertise. The RPBCWD has successfully restored 100's of acres of floodplain forest, wetlands, and buffer.

**What are the elements of this proposal that are critical from a timing perspective?**

There is currently a permit from both the City of Eden Prairie as well as the RPBCWD to develop the property into 50 detached unit, single-family housing. The RPBCWD was able to forestall the development for five (5) years through the negotiation of a seller financed contract for deed while seeking a permanent funding. In the absence of this agreement, or upon its expiration, the fee title owner of the land will likely seek the most profitable disposal of the land which would be to a private developer. Nearly 100 acres of imperiled native plant communities have been forever converted to attached unit housing to the north and east of the subject property. The scarcity of these ecosystems has become exceedingly rare in the Minnesota River Valley, especially within the seven-county metropolitan area, and, as with the sand-gravel dry prairie, throughout the state of Minnesota.

**Describe how the proposal expands habitat corridors or complexes and/or addresses habitat fragmentation:**

The acquisition of this property fills in one of the two remaining gaps to create a contiguous corridor from the Minnesota River to Lake Riley and protect the bluffs in the MN River Valley. This corridor has a myriad of different habitats ranging from maple-basswood forests to dry prairie, to savanna land, and numerous wetlands of various Cowardin classifications. The restoration of the property will address any invasive species or nuisance species and restore, depending upon ecological survey, to the pre 1865 communities to the extent practicable.

This site infills between two conservation areas to create 126 contiguous acres of preservation land and is separated from the Uprala Unit National Wildlife Refuge and the Minnesota River Floodplain only by Flying Cloud Drive. This corridor is identified in the MN DNR 2008 Regional Ecological Corridor Plan.

The property is located within an important migratory corridor for birds known as the Lower Minnesota River Valley Important Bird Area. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has identified the City of Minneapolis as one of the top ten most dangerous cities for migrating birds. Protecting the property from development and restoring native vegetation will expand the habitat complex in the area that provides a safe haven for birds as they migrate through the metropolitan areas during spring and fall migration.

**Which top 2 Conservation Plans referenced in MS97A.056, subd. 3a are most applicable to this project?**

- Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
- Minnesota Sustainability Framework

**Explain how this proposal will uniquely address habitat resilience to climate change and its anticipated effects on game, fish & wildlife species utilizing the protected or restored/enhanced habitat this proposal targets.**

Under the approved development plan, more than 400 trees are to be removed. This includes 19 white oak and white pine heritage trees with DBHs as large as 52 inches. A majority of this removal would occur in a 3.25 acre stand of trees. This area will be restored and, along with another 5 acres located southerly on the property, a total of 8.3 acres of forestland will be protected and enhanced. This acquisition will prevent the urbanization of 20 acres of natural land, meanwhile reducing the climate impacts of that development and increasing carbon sequestration and storage through management of forest land, grassland, and soil health.

**Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal?**

**Metro / Urban**

- Protect habitat corridors, with emphasis on the Minnesota, Mississippi, and St. Croix rivers (bluff to floodplain)

**Describe how this project/program will produce and demonstrate a significant and permanent conservation legacy and/or outcomes for fish, game, and wildlife, and if not permanent outcomes, why it is important to undertake at this time:**

As the area becomes fully developed, the bluff area of the Minnesota River has faced increasing development pressure. Since 2004, this immediate area of the MN River valley has seen approximately 100 acres of "Imperiled" or "Critically Imperiled" native plant communities permanently lost to development. This site is at imminent risk

for development. The RPBCWD plans to work with other organizations to develop opportunities to engage the public and educate them on the ecology, cultural significance, and history of the area via trail access, interpretive signage, and other initiatives yet to be identified. The property is located along several regional trails and adjacent to land already being used for passive recreation by the public. The RPBCWD would like to use the property as a living laboratory to study the impacts of plant and soil management on altered hydrology, continuing or longstanding relationship with the University of MN. This knowledge can then be used by the RPBCWD and others to inform green infrastructure practices throughout the metropolitan area to provide for resilience and mitigation. The RPBCWD is also considering relocating our district offices to the existing homestead, furthering public access to the site. It is the RPBCWD goal to protect this land in perpetuity.

## Outcomes

### **Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:**

- A network of natural land and riparian habitats will connect corridors for wildlife and species in greatest conservation need ~ *The 2008 MN DNR Regional Ecological Corridor plan includes this property. The property is located within the Lower Minnesota River Valley Conservation Focus Area identified in Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025. The Wildlife Action Network Score for the property is "Medium-High," indicating higher scores in the five metrics related to Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). DNR has mapped as a "Regionally Significant Ecological Area" and an MBS site of High Biodiversity Significance. The property is located within the Lower Minnesota River Valley Important Bird Area.*

### **What other dedicated funds may collaborate with or contribute to this proposal?**

- Clean Water Fund

### **Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.**

Earnest money paid to the current property owner was funded through the RPBCWD levy authority. The RPBCWD had received a short-term bond as result of a lawsuit, the financial institute withdrew the bond.

### **How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?**

As a special unit of government, the RPBCWD has levy authority and will use this funding source to continue ongoing maintenance of the restoration areas as well as scientific, educational, and public outreach programming.

**Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes**

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2024	RPBCWD Levy	Negotiate with owner	Provide Earnest Money	Enter into contract for deed
2025	LSOHC and RPBCWD Levy	Acquire fee title ownership of property	-	-
2025	RPBCWD and Natural Resources Opportunity Grant (Henn Cnty)	Develop restoration plan	Solicit bids/quotes	Implement restoration plan
2025	RPBCWD	Retain architect firm specializing in sustainable/resilient building design	Begin plan development	-
2025	RPBCWD, NOAA Planet Stewards Grant	Engage potential partners in educational and public outreach programming	Develop E&O program specific to site	-
2026	RPBCWD, Natural Resources Opportunity Grant, MNDNR Conservation Partners Legacy	Continue site restoration and maintenance	-	-
2026	RPBCWD, MNDNR Outdoor Recreation Grant, MNDNR Local Trail Connection Program	Layout nature trail connections to adjoining facilities.	develop and install signage and educational kiosks, etc	-
2026	RPBCWD, et al sources TBD	Develop architectural and civil plans for district facility	Solicit bids/quotes	Select contractor and begin construction
2027	RPBCWD, Natural Resources Opportunity Grant, MNDNR Conservation Partners Legacy	Continue site restoration and maintenance	-	-
2028	RPBCWD, Natural Resources Opportunity Grant, MNDNR Conservation Partners Legacy	Continue site restoration and maintenance	-	-
2029-2040+	RPBCWD	Ongoing site maintenance	-	-

**Provide an assessment of how your program may celebrate cultural diversity or reach diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households:**

The RPBCWD already has an education and outreach program that can be leveraged to reach BIPOC communities as well as the financially disadvantaged. RPBCWD intends for the property to be a welcoming space for the entire community. We would intentionally reach out through direct mail, flyers, and representation at other community events to invite underserved communities to the property to enjoy the outdoors and special events. RPBCWD is interested in collaborating with local Native American tribe, communities of color, and/or immigrant communities to share cultural knowledge or traditions regarding the land, native plants, or other topics through presentations as well as permanent interpretive on-site facilities. There has been discussion about building a cultural and

interpretive center onto the proposed RPBCWD facility if a partner can be identified such as the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

### Activity Details

#### Requirements

**Will county board or other local government approval be formally sought\*\* prior to acquisition, per 97A.056 subd 13(j)?**

Yes

**Is the land you plan to acquire (fee title) free of any other permanent protection?**

Yes

**Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?**

Yes

**Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15 or on lands to be acquired in this program?**

No

#### Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program, either by the proposer or the end owner of the property, outside of the initial restoration of the land?**

No

**Will insecticides or fungicides (including neonicotinoid and fungicide treated seed) be used within any activities of this proposal either in the process of restoration or use as food plots?**

No

**Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing?**

No

**Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion?**

No

**Who will eventually own the fee title land?**

- Other : Special Unit of Government - Watershed District

**Land acquired in fee will be designated as a:**

- Other

**Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

There is a driveway.

**Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

This will continue to be the site access point. The district will maintain as they would any other infrastructure?

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

The RPBCWD (and partners pending) would like to install nature/interpretive trails to allow for public access to the site as well as for educational purposes. The materials are TBD but will likely consist of mowed trails or, depending upon erodibility, crushed limestone or wood chip.

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

Maintenance will be the responsibility of the RPBCWD either through subcontractors or staff labor.

**Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this proposal's funding and availability?**

Yes

**Other OHF Appropriation Awards**

**Have you received OHF dollars through LSOHC in the past?**

No

**Timeline**

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date</b>
Update appraisal and assure compartment with DNR standards.	October 2024
Acquire fee title of property	July 2025
Develop restoration plan	Fall 2024/Winter 2025
Begin restoration work	Fall 2025



**Budget**

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Total Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	-	-	-	-
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$3,000,000	\$2,775,000	Long-term bond serviced by RPBCWD levy	\$5,775,000
Easement Acquisition	-	-	-	-
Easement Stewardship	-	-	-	-
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$12,500	\$12,500	RPBCWD Levy	\$25,000
Direct Support Services	-	-	-	-
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	-	-	-	-
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,012,500</b>	<b>\$2,787,500</b>	-	<b>\$5,800,000</b>

**Amount of Request:** \$3,012,500

**Amount of Leverage:** \$2,787,500

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 92.53%

**DSS + Personnel:** -

**As a % of the total request:** 0.0%

**Easement Stewardship:** -

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** -

Total Leverage (from above)	Amount Confirmed	% of Total Leverage	Amount Anticipated	% of Total Leverage
\$2,787,500	\$2,787,500	100.0%	-	0.0%

**Detail leverage sources and confirmation of funds:**

The RPBCWD has already provided \$500,000 in earnest money to hold the contract for deed. The RPBCWD intends to bond the remainder of the leverage amount. However, the RPBCWD currently has approximately \$4,500,000 in reserves.

**Does this proposal have the ability to be scalable?**

Yes

**If the project received 50% of the requested funding**

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

The RPBCWD would bond additional funds to offset the deficit and still acquire the entire property in fee title.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

There are \$0 requested for personnel or DSS.

### **If the project received 30% of the requested funding**

**Describe how the scaling would affect acres/activities and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

The RPBCWD would bond additional funds to offset the deficit and still acquire the entire property in fee title.

**Describe how personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted and if not proportionately reduced, why?**

There are \$0 requested for personnel or DSS.

### **Professional Services**

**What is included in the Professional Services line?**

- Appraisals
- Surveys
- Title Insurance and Legal Fees

### **Fee Acquisition**

**What is the anticipated number of fee title acquisition transactions?**

There are three unique PIDs in this acquisition so it is anticipated that there will be three fee title acquisition but all from the same owner.

### **Federal Funds**

**Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**

No

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	1	15	9	0	25
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>

### How many of these Prairie acres are Native Prairie? (Table 1b)

Type	Native Prairie (acres)
Restore	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	8
Protect in Easement	0
Enhance	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$120,500	\$1,807,500	\$1,084,500	-	\$3,012,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$120,500</b>	<b>\$1,807,500</b>	<b>\$1,084,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,012,500</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	25	0	0	0	0	25
Protect in Easement	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enhance	-	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$3,012,500	-	-	-	-	\$3,012,500
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,012,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,012,500</b>

**Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$120,500	\$120,500	\$120,500	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

**Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	\$120,500	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	-	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

**Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles**

Minnesota River (1,250 feet)

**Parcels**

**Sign-up Criteria?**

No

**Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**

There is no sign-up criteria. The property was selected because the opportunity arose through development pressure and citizen grass roots organizing.

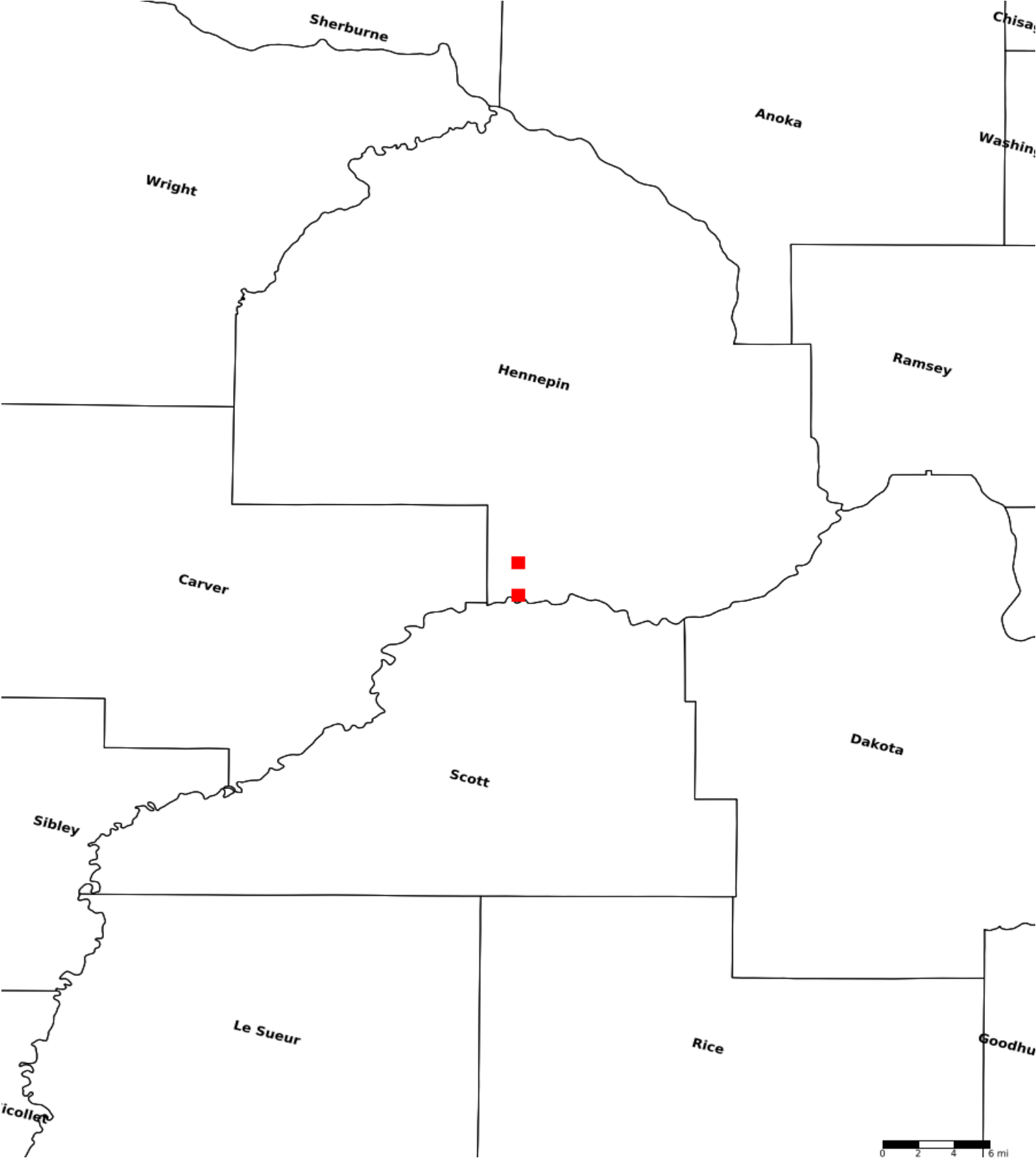
**Protect Parcels**

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
28-116-22-32-0005	Hennepin	11622532	14	\$2,994,444	No
28-116-22-32-0001	Hennepin	11622132	3	\$641,667	No

**Protect Parcels with Buildings**

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection	Buildings	Value of Buildings
28-116-22-32-0004	Hennepin	11622420	10	\$2,138,889	No	3	\$291,000

Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other



Debbie Goettel  
Commissioner- District 5

612.348.7885



Hennepin County Board of Commissioners  
A-2400 Government Center  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55487-0240

November 22, 2023

David Zeigler  
President  
Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District  
18681 Lake Dr E  
Chanhassen, MN 55317

Please accept this letter of support for the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District's effort to secure bridge financing to support their project to acquire the Spring Road Properties. This letter is intended to help you and any interested parties understand the county's broader intentions to support the project and interests in seeing it proceed.

In addition to Hennepin County's many other roles, it also serves as the county Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for the county. As the SWCD, Hennepin County has a unique role in protecting and enhancing the quality of natural habitats, soil, and water resources for current and future generations, partnering with other local jurisdictions, and assisting the county's residents in conserving resources.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy operates the habitat conservation program which protects high quality habitat areas with conservation easements, provides technical and financial support to the owners of permanently protected property to improve the quality of habitat, evaluates and monitors habitat quality and flora and fauna on protected properties, and engages the public. The habitat conservation program has evaluated the Spring Road Properties and determined that they are worthy of permanent habitat protection according to program criteria that include habitat quality, habitat context, the size of a potential project, as well as other factors. Hennepin County and our land protection partner, the Minnesota Land Trust, has expressed an interest in working with the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District to place a conservation easement over the Spring Road Properties. Hennepin County Environment and Energy has secured the approval of program funders (Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council) to pursue an easement project on publicly-owned property, and have initiated initial due diligence steps required to proceed with an easement. Although the conservation easement process takes an average of 12-24 months to complete, we have every reason to believe it will be successful if the Watershed District completes the purchase.

Conservation easements are a voluntary tool that compensates a property owner in exchange for future development rights of the property. Although the final compensation for the easement will not be decided until later in the process, we have communicated to the Watershed District that the likely



compensation is estimated at \$500,000. Conservation easements are flexible tools, and the terms of any such easement would be negotiated with the Watershed District to accommodate future plans for the property and to ensure the public benefit of habitat protection. Following placement of the conservation, Hennepin County would likely be excited to partner with the Watershed District on habitat improvement projects on the Spring Road Properties.

The proposed project would permanently protect habitat along the Minnesota River bluffs, and unique and important habitat for Hennepin County. The Spring Road Properties are adjacent to a much larger area of protected properties owned and managed by the City of Eden Prairie (e.g. Prairie Bluff Conservation Area) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC). This area includes the last remaining remnant native prairies in our county. Hennepin County has been actively working on habitat improvement projects in partnership with the city, USFWS, and MAC over the past five years. We are eager to work with the Watershed District to add to the protected property in this area, and preserve these special resources forever.

This important habitat corridor supports a variety of rare features and sensitive habitat types, including areas of biodiversity significance, native plant communities, and several documented rare species occurrences. This area is also a high-potential zone for the rusty-patched bumble bee, which is on the endangered species list. In addition, Riley Creek, an impaired water, and a floodplain wetland are located on the Spring Road Properties. Public ownership and permanent protection of this property will provide a tremendous good to the natural resources of Hennepin County, as well as our residents.

We are eager to continue work in this area and partner with the Watershed District as a co-holder of a conservation easement, and on their plans for future habitat improvement activities that will benefit wildlife, plants, native plant communities, and the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Goettel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Debbie Goettel

cc: Terry Jeffery, District Administrator  
Riley Purgatory Creek Watershed District



October 27, 2023

Terry Jeffery  
District Administrator  
Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District  
18681 Lake Drive E.  
Chanhassen, MN 55317

Greeting Mr. Jeffery,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed plan amendment to Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District (RPBCWD) watershed management plan.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) commends RPBCWD for their proposed amendment to the watershed management plan, which includes the acquisition of a 28-acre parcel of land in Eden Prairie. It is important to note that this property was officially recognized by the Minnesota DNR as a regionally significant ecological area and considered a site of biodiversity significance. We wish to acknowledge RPBCWD's efforts to align the conservation of this critical land with their watershed management plan goals and habitat-focused water quality strategies.

The Minnesota DNR supports the proposal to proceed with the minor amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Megan JC Moore'.

Megan Moore  
District Manager – Ecological and Water Resources

CC: Taylor Huinker, Area Hydrologist  
Wes Saunders-Pearce, Area Hydrologist

November 14, 2023

RPBCWD Board of Managers  
c/o Terry Jeffery, Administrator  
18681 Lake Drive East  
Chanhassen, MN 55317

RE: Intent to Modify 10-Year Plan for Spring Road Preservation Project

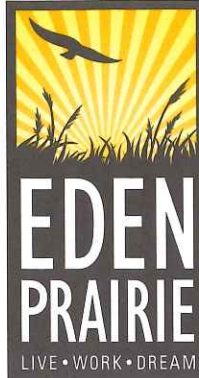
Managers,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed plan amendment. As evident by our establishment and management of the Prairie Bluff and Riley Creek Conservation Areas, protection of these lands is important to the City of Eden Prairie. The acquisition and restoration of this property will promote this goal. The City fully supports the acquisition of this property by the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed and looks forward to this property serving as an amenity for all in the area to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Ronald A. Case  
Mayor, City of Eden Prairie



OFC 952 949 8300  
FAX 952 949 8390  
TDD 952 949 8399

8080 Mitchell Rd  
Eden Prairie, MN  
55344-4485

[edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org)

## RE: Notice of Intent - Minor Plan Amendment for RPBCWD 10-Year Plan - Metropolitan Council Review File 21820-4.

Mulcahy, Joe <joe.mulcahy@metc.state.mn.us>

Fri 11/3/2023 9:52 AM

To: Terry Jeffery <tjeffery@rpbcd.org>; Louis Smith <Smith@smithpartners.com>; Amy Bakkum <abakkum@rpbcd.org>  
Cc: waterresourcesreviews <waterresourcesreviews@metc.state.mn.us>; ReviewsCoordinator <ReviewsCoordinator@metc.state.mn.us>

Hi Terry,

The Metropolitan Council has no comments on the proposed minor amendment to the District's Management Plan. Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on it. It is certainly an interesting project and it seems like a great opportunity for the District. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Thanks.

-jm



### Joe Mulcahy

Environmental Analyst | Water Resources Planning  
Metropolitan Council Environmental Services  
390 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55101-1805  
P. 651-602-1104 | C. 612-913-8864

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**From:** Terry Jeffery <tjeffery@rpbcd.org>

**Sent:** Monday, October 16, 2023 5:10 PM

**To:** Louis Smith <Smith@smithpartners.com>; Amy Bakkum <abakkum@rpbcd.org>

**Subject:** Notice of Intent - Minor Plan Amendment for RPBCWD 10-Year Plan

Good evening,

This email is intended to serve as notification that the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District is proposing an amendment to their existing 10-year plan. This plan amendment will follow the minor plan amendment process as specified in MN Rules 8410.0140, subp. 2. Please provide any comments you may have on this proposed amendment to Terry Jeffery, [tjeffery@rpbcd.org](mailto:tjeffery@rpbcd.org) or at 18681 Lake Drive East, Chanhassen, MN 55317 by the end of the business day, November 15, 2023. A public hearing will be held on November 16, 2023. If you need the information in a different format, please let me know so I can make arrangements for you.

Please find attached the proposed plan amendment, the signed board resolution authorizing the plan amendment process, and the public notice.

Kind regards,  
Terry



**Terry Jeffery** (he/him/his)

*District Administrator*

Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District

18681 Lake Drive E, Chanhassen, MN 55317

Ph 952-607-6512 ext 1 | Email [tjeffery@rpbcwd.org](mailto:tjeffery@rpbcwd.org)

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## FW: Notice of Intent - Minor Plan Amendment for RPBCWD 10-Year Plan

Christopher, Steve (BWSR) <steve.christopher@state.mn.us>

Thu 10/19/2023 3:04 PM

To: Berg, Jeffrey (MDA) <jeffrey.berg@state.mn.us>; Wettlaufer, Mark (MDH) <mark.wettlaufer@state.mn.us>; Moore, Megan (DNR) <megan.moore@state.mn.us>; Swenson, Jason (DOT) <Jason.Swenson@state.mn.us>; waterresourcesreviews@metc.state.mn.us <waterresourcesreviews@metc.state.mn.us>; Risberg, Jeff (MPCA) <jeff.risberg@state.mn.us>  
Cc: Wozney, Brad (BWSR) <brad.wozney@state.mn.us>; Westrick, Marcey (BWSR) <marcey.westrick@state.mn.us>; Terry Jeffery <tjeffery@rpbcwd.org>; Louis Smith <Smith@smithpartners.com>

 3 attachments (1 MB)

7j\_Res23-064\_PlanAmend\_Full\_2023Oct04.pdf; Resl 23-064\_SpringRd\_Plan and Improvement PH.pdf; Notice of Public Hearings 10-16-23.pdf;

State Agency Reviewers,

BWSR is in receipt of a proposed plan amendment to the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District Plan (Plan). The amendment includes the addition of a land acquisition in the City of Eden Prairie for land conservation practices. The total cost for the purchase is \$5.775M which will be financed over a 20 year period.

This project does align directly with five of the District's Plan goals as well as two habitat-focused water quality strategies. Additionally, the Plan includes options for fee title or conservation easement acquisition as a tool for implementation.

For the reasons identified above, we concur with the District's assessment that this can proceed as a minor amendment and is consistent with MN Rule 8410.0140, contingent that no county board files an objection to the amendment with the organization within the comment period ([8410.0140 Sub. 2. C.](#)).

Please submit comments to Terry Jeffery, [tjeffery@rpbcwd.org](mailto:tjeffery@rpbcwd.org) or at 18681 Lake Drive East, Chanhassen, MN 55317 by the end of the business day, November 15, 2023. A public hearing on the amendment will be held on November 16, 2023.

### Steve Christopher | Board Conservationist

*Pronouns: he/him*

Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

520 Lafayette Road North

St. Paul, MN 55155

651-249-7519 | [steve.christopher@state.mn.us](mailto:steve.christopher@state.mn.us)

[Web](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

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