Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Proposal Review Follow-Up: In Proposal Order

Contents

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection-Phase IX

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: DNR Accelerated Native Prairie Bank Protection-Phase IX
Funds Requested: $3,575,000
Proposal #: PA03

Manager's Name: Judy Elbert
Title: Statewide Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Unit Supervisor
Organization: MN-DNR
Email: judy.elbert@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-391-3168
Mobile Number:

Hello LSOHC Members,

I wanted to follow-up on yesterday's discussion and concerns regarding neonic seed use. Though only used in extremely limited, minimal-acre situations where it would be a large burden to the landowner to switch over equipment, we take the concerns of the committee members very seriously and wanted to follow up to reiterate that we are more than willing to require the use of non-neonic treated seed for these small, limited-duration situations. To help further alleviate concerns, we looked back as far as ML15 and have no record of even acquiring a Prairie Bank that needed restoration utilizing OHF.

Restoration and Protection acres associated with Native Prairie Bank OHF appropriations ML15 to date

ML year	Restoration (Acres)	Protect in Easement (Acres)
ML21	0	187
ML18	0	350
ML17	0	402
ML16	0	519
ML15	0	1342

Let me know if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Thanks again

Judy Elbert

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Unit Supervisor

Division of Ecological and Water Resources

MN DNR

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR WMA & SNA Acquisition, Phase XIV

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: DNR WMA & SNA Acquisition, Phase XIV
Funds Requested: $10,000,000
Proposal #: PA04

Manager's Name: Jeff Tillma
Title: Division of Fish and Wildlife Acquisition Coordinator
Organization: DNR
Email: jeff.tillma@state.mn.us
Office Number: 218-328-8834
Mobile Number:

1. What was the DNR's internal budget for land acquisition prior to OHF? Particularly in 2006 or 2007?

Summary of FY06 and FY07 WMA acquisition spending

During these two fiscal years DNR spent just over $20M on WMA land acquisitions. Below is a breakdown by funding source.

- $11.6M from bonding
- $2.4M from Small Game Surcharge
- $3.5M from RIM
- $1.5M LAWCON (aka LWCF)
- $0.5M Pheasant and Turkey Stamp
- $0.35M sales revenue
- $0.43M ENRTF, NAWCA, mitigation

We no longer receive money from bonding, LAWCON or the catch all last category. Other funding sources are similar today.

I also wanted to add follow up to council member Suss's question about nonmotorized trails on WMA's. I forgot mention we have roughly 303 hunter walking trails on WMA's. More information can be found on our website.

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/hunting/hwt/index.html

Jeff Tillma

Division of Fish and Wildlife Acquisition Coordinator

MN DNR

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP)

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP)
Funds Requested: $10,000,000
Proposal #: PA08

Manager's Name: Dusty Van Thuyne
Title: Easement Program Coordinator
Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources
Email: dusty.vanthuyne@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-539-2573
Mobile Number:

See attached memo:

BOARD OF WATER
AND SOIL RESOURCES

Memo

Date: 09/02/2026

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
From: Sharon Doucette, BWSR Easement Section Manager

RE: BWSR response to comments and update on Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) restoration payment rates

RIM Priority Habitat (HA08): Provide historic average prices of easements in different habitat types/categories.

Specifically for this program, easement payment rates average $3,600/acre for wetlands, $5,100/acre for prairie acres, and $4,000/acre for forested land, driven in large part by easement location and local markets. Because this is a statewide program, per-acre payment rates can vary dramatically. The range of easement payments in the program has been $100/acre to $10,000/acre.

RIM Buffers (PA12): What is the percentage of food plots currently on RIM easements?

Chair Hartwell requested details on our current guidance related to food plot allowable acreage per easement, specifically why this year there could be up to 10% in food plots. Our previous response was not that there was an allowable 1-3% of food plot acres per easement nor is our current response that 10% of easements have food plots on them. BWSR has guidance for location and size and requires BWSR approval for all food plots. The limits from current guidance are in the table below.

Easement Size	Maximum Total Food Plot Acres	Total Number of Food Plots Allowed
0-100 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 5 acres	3
100-200 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 10 acres	4
200+ acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 20 acres	5

Additionally, in answer to the LSOHC staff question, less than 1% of all RIM easement acres are in a food plot.

MN CREP (PA08): Explain CRP and RIM easement payment rates and provide specific examples with dollar amounts.

Under the CREP Agreement, a formal State-Federal partnership, USDA agrees to provide cost-share payments of up to 50% of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of approved conservation practices, make annual rental payments for the 14- to 15-year CRP contract term (which include an incentive payment equal to 60% of the base soil rental rate (SRR)), make a one-time Signup Incentive Payment (SIP), and make a one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) in an amount equal to 50% of the eligible reimbursable cost of practice installation. The state agrees to contribute not less than 30% of the overall annual program costs through direct payments and in-kind contributions or technical assistance. At least 10% of the overall project cost must be in the form of direct payments to participants. The state's contributions include one-time RIM perpetual easement payments and related processing fees; stewardship payments; monitoring; technical assistance; and conservation plan reimbursements. For acres enrolled or re-enrolled in CRP through MN CREP, the payment calculation is as shown in the table below for three easements:

County	Easement Acres	Total CREP Cropland Amount	Total Federal Payment		MN's Payment*
			Federal 15-Year CRP Contract Payment	Federal CRP SIP	
Clay	116.23	$706,445.94	$426,795.00 ($28,453/year)	$7,706.61	$271,944.33 ($2,339.70/acre)
Chippewa	60.76	$550,424.84	$296,025.00 ($19,735/year)	$6,413.00	$247,986.84 ($4,081.42/acre)
Rock	12.79	$156,255.43	$52,155.00 ($3,477/year)	$1,130.00	$102,970.43 ($8,050.86/acre)
*Total CREP Cropland Amount – Federal 15-Year CRP Contract – Federal CRP SIP = MN's Payment					

In the examples above, the location of the MN CREP easement directly impacts the MN CREP Cropland rate and the CRP SRR. The CRP SRR was $52.96 less per acre in Rock County compared to Chippewa County, but the MN CREP Cropland rate was $3,158 per acre higher based on property value data from the Minnesota Department of Revenue (DOR). This resulted in a higher cost per acre for the state. Clay County shows an example of where the federal contribution is 62% of the overall payment. As stated with all BWSR proposals, the location and size of the easement can have a direct impact on the cost. This is why an average cost per acre is provided for ecological sections in the output tables of proposals. The federal payment is impacted by location, easement size, SRRs, and annual changes to guidance in the CRP program – all of which are beyond state control. Additional details on the restoration easement payment structure are below. For comparison, the average payment for easements in the Wild Rice Shoreland program (a protection easement program) has been just over $2,200/acre over the last five years.

Initial Response on RIM Restoration Easement Payment Rates

BWSR completes a high volume of conservation easements. In 2025, RIM accepted 200 applications totaling 12,700 acres and recorded 135 easements totaling 9,300 acres. This is not an exceptionally high number for BWSR processing; 150-200 easements in process is typical.

To ensure this rate of conservation implementation is streamlined and standardized statewide, and like other state (DNR) and federal agencies (USFWS and the NRCS GARC), RIM uses a payment rate structure. Establishing a payment rate is outlined in Minnesota Statues §103F.515, subd. 6 and BWSR Board orders and are calculated as follows:

- Restoration-focused programs (converting low production agricultural land to native habitat) use a % of a township's average estimated market value used for tax purposes as generated by county assessors.
- Protection-focused programs (keeping quality habitat in place and protected) use a % of a parcel's estimated market value used for tax purposes as generated by the county assessor.

It is important to stress that all base data used in establishing RIM rates are the estimated market values used for current-year tax calculations provided by the DOR. **The values set by assessors <u>are not the current sale value</u> of the individual land on the open market**; they are created from property sales dating up to two years prior and other economic indicators. BWSR historically has used 90% of the township average estimated market values for tillable 2a agricultural land class to determine cropland payment rates.

Because market sales data from prior years are used, in an increasing land value market RIM rates pay lower percentages of an individual property's appraised value than they do of the township average estimated market values as calculated for tax purposes. Over the last 30 years, USDA data shows an annual average increase of 7% in agricultural land statewide but with the extreme variability of cropland across the state, this number is likely higher in agricultural areas and lower elsewhere. Based on DOR data, over the last five years agricultural land values increased an average of 8.4% annually in the parts of the state with high agricultural activity. Accounting for the increase in land value, BWSR's payment rate for restoration easements in the agricultural parts of the state would be 77% of the current year's average value.

RIM's restoration-focused programs require existing cropland to be converted to native cover. Restoration easements are necessary, especially in the agriculturally dominated parts of the state, to increase acres of habitat. Protection easements allow the state to save at-risk acres, but do not add habitat. Restoration easements in agriculturally dominated southern Minnesota eliminate the land's highest and best use for sale purposes (agricultural production) so a higher payment is warranted as compared to protecting existing land cover and uses.

Five recent open market sales of RIM restoration easement properties in five different counties in southern and western Minnesota were reviewed as examples. The data show that the sale prices ranged from less than 1% to 31% of the township's average estimated market value used for tax purposes, with an average of less than 20%. Assuming the two years of value increases described above, the sale price percentages would be even less compared to the fair market value. More sophisticated analysis is warranted, as sales can include portions of the parcel excluded from the easement for building sites or continued crop production. Nonetheless, comparing these easements to protection easements that do not add habitat acres and do not significantly change the existing land use, it is clear that the value of land under a restoration easement drops significantly more than easements for protection purposes.

RIM protection easements have a different payment rate calculation and typically the estimated market value of the land is lower.

Individual property appraisals are not feasible for BWSR's RIM easement program and for the conservation easement community in general. There are a limited number of appraisers that are qualified to appraise conservation easements. If BWSR were to seek appraisals on 200 easements per year, there would not be enough appraisers to complete the volume of work for us and for others who are required to use appraisers, negatively impacting the conservation community's work as a whole. BWSR will commit to a further analysis of our rate structure in the year ahead.

On a proportional basis, BWSR's requested funding is less than 20% of funding requested for potential public land acquisition and a portion of staffing for management of public lands. RIM is a state easement program, underpinned by state statute and federal government agreements, that allows for perpetual investments in private land restoration and conservation for the benefit of Minnesota. BWSR appreciates the Council's past and ongoing recognition of the program and its benefits to habitat and water quality on the 76% of land in Minnesota that is in private ownership.

While public land ownership is a key part of the conservation land mosaic in Minnesota, not all priority conservation land is up for sale. Additionally, not all of it is appropriate for public ownership, and, in some counties, not palatable to the communities that want to preserve their property tax base. Restoration, protection, and enhancement are important for maintaining Minnesota wetlands, prairies, forest, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. Utilizing tools such as the RIM easement program provide these opportunities while retaining private land ownership in the state. With conservation easements, private landowners are our partners in the state's conservation efforts.

We look forward to building on past successes in partnership with Council members and staff.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program Phase 2

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Minnesota River Watershed Habitat Conservation Program Phase 2
Funds Requested: $9,680,000
Proposal #: PA09

Manager's Name: Todd Rexine
Title: Conservation Director
Organization: Great River Greening
Email: trexine@greatrivergreening.org
Office Number: 651-272-3992
Mobile Number:

Response to Sen. Lang

Thanks for your questions regarding our parcel list as shown in the proposal. It appears there was some confusion in what we presented, so we wanted to provide some additional information in the hope that it might clarify things.

In the proposal, the Land Trust shows one parcel under "Protect in Fee" in the parcel list. This is a known project as recommended to the Land Trust by Minnesota DNR.

One parcel is shown under "Protect in Easement", although much of the Land Trust's budget is proposed for this body of work. On the surface, the budget and parcel list might seem at odds; however, this reflects a long-standing approach to conservation easement acquisition used by the Land Trust in all of its grants funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Our Practice

It is the Land Trust's practice not to present a parcel list for proposed conservation easements in our proposals. Rather, we wait for funds to be in hand before we release a formal RFP seeking landowners interested in protecting their lands through a conservation easement. This RFP is sent directly to targeted landowners and responses are evaluated relative to one another, with the highest-ranking pursued for conservation easements. Opening an RFP process when funds are on hand – similar to that used by BWSR – incentivizes landowners to act and reduces the amount of wait time between submission of a proposal and commencement of work.

We also use this approach to incentivize landowner donation of easement value by asking landowners if they'd consider a donation of easement value as part of the transaction. Though prioritization of projects is based largely on ecological merit and proximity to existing protected lands, donation of easement value can elevate priorities among closely-scored projects.

All that said, the Land Trust completed a round of landowner outreach for our existing grant programs in the Spring of 2026 after this grant proposal was submitted. Out of that, we have identified another five potential projects that appear to be good fits for this program.

Our Proposal

In addition to the fee project proposed in our Phase 2 proposal, the Land Trust is seeking $3,519,000 to protect 550 acres of high-quality habitat within the Minnesota River program area. We estimate that this will allow us to complete 5-8 projects depending on cost and amount of easement donation received by landowners.

All restoration funding in the proposal is proposed by Great River Greening and is earmarked for protected public lands (WMAs, USFWS refuges, county lands). Should the Land Trust identify restoration needs on its conservation easement lands, those funds will be pursued through a follow-on proposal to LSOHC.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase XIII

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: RIM Buffers for Wildlife and Water - Phase XIII
Funds Requested: $5,000,000
Proposal #: PA12

Manager's Name: Dusty Van Thuyne
Title: Easement Programs Coordinator
Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources
Email: dusty.vanthuyne@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-539-2573
Mobile Number:

See attached memo:

Memo

Date: 09/02/2026

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
From: Sharon Doucette, BWSR Easement Section Manager

RE: BWSR response to comments and update on Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) restoration payment rates

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We look forward to building on past successes in partnership with Council members and staff.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Restoring Minnesota's Prairie Pothole Ecosystem - Phase 1
ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up
09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Restoring Minnesota's Prairie Pothole Ecosystem - Phase 1
Funds Requested: $6,960,000
Proposal #: PRE02

Manager's Name: Wayne Ostlie
Title: Director of Land Protection
Organization: Minnesota Land Trust
Email: wostlie@mnland.org
Office Number: 651-917-6292
Mobile Number: 651-894-3870

In response to Council questions regarding the differences in per-acre restoration costs between PRE 01 and PRE 02.

> Although both PRE 01 and PRE 02 proposals involve similar types of restoration activities and are located within the same region, the difference in the proportion of wetland to grassland restoration—particularly PRE 02's focus on wetland restoration needs—is likely the most significant factor in the resulting overall cost-per-acre calculation variances. We note PRE 02 cost/acre is comparable to WRE 01, a prairie wetlands restoration program also similar to ours.
>
> For PRE 01, from what we understand projects are selected for implementation through a request-for-bids process <u>following</u> the award of OHF funds. This approach does not pre-determine the restoration activities and allows the awardee to select a mix of grassland and wetland projects that collectively meet the cost and outputs included in the proposal. Project selection weighted towards grassland restoration activities would drive the cost/acre ratio down.
>
> For PRE 02, projects are selected first, and the restoration work needed on each parcel is determined in advance of preparing the proposal budget. Because PRE 02 focuses on wetland habitat, nearly all of the selected projects include one or more wetland restoration activity. Project selection weighted towards wetland restoration activities would drive the cost/acre ratio up.
>
> PRE 02’s cost estimates for projects are developed from site specific evaluations and general design before the proposal is submitted. The biologist then prepares an individualized restoration project plan for each parcel and develops a cost estimate for each activity. The activity cost estimates are based on similar previous work in the same area. (The Land Trust competitively bids out all restoration projects according to state requirements; therefore, the Council can be assured that we are getting the highest quality contractors at the most competitive prices.) The activity estimates are summed for each project and incorporated into the overall proposal budget.
>
> We believe if costs were evaluated based on individual restoration activities, such as seeding, tree removal, dike construction, or other project activities, rather than the overall cost per acre of the proposal, we would expect the activity costs between the two proposals to be similar.

In response to Council questions regarding the match provided by USFWS for PRE 02.

We would like to clarify that the Migratory Bird Conservation Funds (MBCF) USFWS represents as match in PRE 02 is an integral part of the overall project and is necessary to accomplish the project's intended purpose of permenant wetland conservation. The valuation of the match is based on the actual cost of the USFWS interest acquired in the parcels included in the proposal. In short, the acquisition and restoration components are interconnected and should be viewed as complementary elements of the same project, rather than as separate or additive investments.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection
ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up
09/03/2026

Proposal Title: MN Forests of the Future Phase XI South East Blufflands to Northern Forests Protection
Funds Requested: $8,000,000
Proposal #: FA03

Manager's Name: Andy Kernan
Title: Forest Legacy Program Coordinator
Organization: MNDNR Division of Forestry
Email: andrew.kernan@state.mn.us
Office Number: 612-500-6315
Mobile Number:

This is the follow up for council member Senator Andrew Lang's question on public access on Minnesota Forests for the Future and Forest Legacy easements. For all easements, there is public access on 9 of 71 easements or 12% of easements. Thank you for the question and the opportunity for clarification on this matter. Please contact me if Senator Lang or any council member needs follow up or clarification to this or any other questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kernan

Forest Legacy Coordinator – Division of Forestry

MN DNR

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Statewide Forest Enhancement-Phase 7

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: DNR Statewide Forest Enhancement-Phase 7
Funds Requested: $4,451,000
Proposal #: FRE01

Manager's Name: Ted Dick
Title: Forest Habitat Supervisor
Organization: DNR
Email: ted.dick@state.mn.us
Office Number: 218-328-8869
Mobile Number: 218-395-3577

Below please find current balances for our Forest Habitat appropriations. Encumbered funds are dedicated to expenses and not available (i.e., consider them spent). So, the true balance of available funds as of today is $5.43M, not the $8M discussed earlier today. As mentioned, there are projects in place to spend most of the funding from ML 22-24 appropriations this fiscal year.

ML Year	Approp	Original Budget	Expended	Encumbered	Remaining Balance
ML 22	R296K38	$1,748,843	$1,328,004	$99,094	$321,746
ML 23	R296K41	$1,042,180	$819,777	$89,129	$133,274
ML 24	R296K90	$1,727,000	$453,961	$294,052	$978,986
ML 25	R296K92	$2,543,000	-	$413,959	$2,129,041
ML 26	R296L11	$1,944,000	-	$53,058	$1,890,942
Total		**$9,005,023**	**$2,601,742**	**$949,291**	**$5,453,990**

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Review Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities
Funds Requested: $2,968,000
Proposal #: FRE03

Manager's Name: Rebecca Tucker
Title: Twin Cities Metro Program Manager
Organization: Great River Greening
Email: rtucker@greatrivergreening.org
Office Number: 651-272-3982
Mobile Number: 651-272-3982

Chair Hartwell and members,

Following up on our discussion of FRE03, Metro Forests for MN Wildlife and Communities, regarding moving projects to CPL. At the time of the proposal submission, we developed this as a program verses one off projects and was submitted ahead of any knowledge that all CPL was being diverted to Metro areas.

We've been in conversations with our partners and identified around $500,000 in projects we'll be submitting to CPL. Moving projects to CPL cuts the restoration timeline from five years to three, and some of our partners need the full five years to establish the investment before they can maintain it long-term. As a nonprofit, moving to CPL also means we lose the ability to apply for DSS funding, which is a real loss for us and limits how much CPL work we can take on.

On the ultrasonic and acoustic wildlife monitoring question, we're glad to pivot if council doesn't feel it fits the intended use of these funds, and would redirect those resources to active restoration instead.

Todd Rexine

Conservation Director

Great River Greening

We are responding to the requested additional follow up for the proposal, FRE03 - Metro Forests for Minnesota Wildlife and Communities. The questions and answers are as follows –

(2) Please review proposal to ensure that work on WMA acreage is accounted for; specifically Table 1a.2 where it asks how the 264 acres will be allocated between types of protected lands.

> The acreage on Table 1a.2 was submitted incorrectly. To reflect the Bayport WMA acreage, the table cells should read "50" in the "DNR Lands - RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF" cell and "214" in the "Non-DNR Lands - RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF" cell, for the total acreage of "264" as already listed in the "RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF" cell - see following for illustration –

Restoration/Enhancement Acres Breakdown of Existing Protected Lands (Table 1a.2)

	RESTORE: Lands acquired with OHF	RESTORE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands acquired with OHF	ENHANCE: Lands NOT acquired with OHF
DNR Lands (WMA, State Forests, etc.)	-	**50** ~~0~~	-	-
Non-DNR Lands (city, state, federal, etc.)	-	**214** ~~264~~	-	-
Easements	-	-	-	-
Total	**-**	**264**	**-**	**-**

Becca Tucker

Program Manager, Twin Cities Metro

Great River Greening

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Forest Recovery Project

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Minnesota Forest Recovery Project
Funds Requested: $9,864,900
Proposal #: FRE04

Manager's Name: Chris Dunham
Title: Associate Director of Resilience Forestry
Organization: The Nature Conservancy
Email: cdunham@tnc.org
Office Number: 218-727-6119
Mobile Number: 218-341-9319

Ownership	**Acres of completed parcels Forest Recovery (phases 1 and 2)**	**Percent**	**Anticipated percent in ML2027 proposal***
County	7010	41	30-40
State	4790	28	30-40
Federal	5445	31	20-30
Total	17,245	100	100

The strong partnership between TNC and agency land managers behind the MN Forest Recovery Project allows us to work seamlessly across the patchwork of public ownership in the northern forest matching funds and workforce to the most pressing habitat needs. Coordination across boundaries allows timely implementation of fuels treatments to prevent wildfires, reforestation after fires or insect outbreaks, and the ability to work along natural versus administrative boundaries augmenting and accelerating agency capacity in a way that greatly increases efficiency, durability, and cost effectiveness of habitat enhancement.

*the parcel list in the proposal is an estimate and while it is representative of enhancement needs across ownerships, the parcel list will be updated before each season of work to optimize opportunities, leveraged funding, and priorities partners

Thanks,

Chris Dunham

Assoc. Director of Resilience Forestry

The Nature Conservancy

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Shallow Lakes and Wetland Enhancements Phase 19

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Review Follow-Up

09/04/2026

Proposal Title: DNR Shallow Lakes and Wetland Enhancements Phase 19
Funds Requested: $23,483,000
Proposal #: WRE02

Manager's Name: Ricky Lien
Title: Wetland Habitat Team Supervisor
Organization: DNR
Email: ricky.lien@state.mn.us
Office Number: 515-292-5227
Mobile Number: 651-297-4961

See attached memo:

Memo

Date: 09/03/2026
To: Chair David Hartwell, Executive Director Kristina Smitten, Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council
From: Dave Trauba, Wildlife Section Manager, MN Department of Natural Resources

David Trauba Digitally signed by David Trauba Date: 2026.09.03 16:09:26 -05'00'

RE: DNR's proposed restoration and enhancement work for shallow lakes and wetlands.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide some clarification and answer the councils' questions about DNR's proposed restoration and enhancement work for shallow lakes and wetlands.

The DNR maintains 6 FTE funded Wetland Habitat Team staff utilizing Game and Fish Funds historically focused on shallow lake projects. With support from the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC), the DNR added 10 positions (new capacity) to create our Wetland Management Program and to expand our nationally recognized Shallow Lake Program. The DNR accomplishes habitat enhancement through four main categories of work that are supported by Outdoor Heritage Funds (OHF). The table below shows the approximate percentage of staff time working across these four categories for the past five years.

*Table 1:*Percentage of staff time spent in various categories of wetland and shallow lake work over the last five years.

Category of work	Percentage of staff time
DNR implementation of OHF funded projects	80%
DNR assessment work to develop future OHF project proposals, DNR and partner-led	10%
DNR technical assistance on OHF funded projects by NGO's or local governments	9%
DNR technical assistance to partners on non-OHF funded projects or DNR work on projects not listed in our accomplishment plan (i.e. leverage)	<1%

Key Points

- The DNR has 23 active projects and approximately $12M in remaining project implementation funds from pervious appropriations (note: the remaining funds aren't designated for staff). Funding for staff to implement and complete these projects is needed. Project completion may extend through June of 2031 depending on weather and construction schedules.
- To avoid layoffs the DNR is currently supporting 8 of the 10 (2 are vacant) positions with one time game and fish fund dollars in FY27 to keep progress moving on OHF funded projects. The vacant positions will not be filled until sufficient funding is available to support all 10 positions.
- The ten OHF-supported positions are the workforce that completes the restoration and enhancement work in the four categories described above. Reduced staffing means fewer assessments, fewer designs, fewer management actions, and fewer sites advanced to construction, and less technical assistance for partner projects.

- **Partners are directly affected as well.** Many OHF partner projects depend on DNR technical, engineering, and operational support. Reduced DNR staffing reduces partner output as well.

- **The program has shovel-ready work waiting on capacity.** Our proposal has seven shovel-ready projects covering more than 330 acres, plus additional high-priority projects in the early stages of project development.

Scalability of our Request

- At $2.7M we would fund 8 shallow lakes positions and focus entirely on OHF projects that are already in the process and various stages of implementation from previous proposals and continue to develop new projects prospects.

- At $6.3M we would fund 10 shallow lakes positions and complete existing OHF projects, develop 1 new project, and build all 7 shovel ready projects within 3 years.

- At $10M we would fund 10 shallow lakes positions and complete existing OHF projects, develop new projects, build all 7 shovel ready projects, and implement some of the 11 other projects already surveyed for restoration and enhancement work.

Going forward our request is targeted at maintaining staff capacity to support all four categories of work in similar proportions. We will implement a precise cost coding mechanism to report accurate annual breakdowns by category. We understand the council has concerns about 100% funding for positions and we are willing to redirect enough funding to cover 10% of each position from other funding sources.

In summary, restoration and enhancement outputs for shallow lakes and wetlands for OHF funded and other partner projects is directly proportional to staff capacity and project implementation funds.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Statewide control and reduction of invasive Phragmites Phase I

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: DNR Statewide control and reduction of invasive Phragmites Phase I
Funds Requested: $1,422,500
Proposal #: WRE03

Manager's Name: Michael Verhoeven
Title: Aquatic Invasive Species Management Consultant
Organization: Department of Natural Resources
Email: michael.verhoeven@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-259-5974
Mobile Number:

The following question remained following our presentation to LSOHC:

(1) Please clarify if OHF will be allowed to be used on road ROW, and if so where? i.e.; Could a project along I-494 qualify?

Answer: No, we do not propose to use OHF funds on any road ROWs. The broader project does include control on these types of sites, but that work is funded by other means (GLRI federal funds) or is managed by another partner (MNDOT).

We appreciate the opportunity to present and we look forward to seeing the recommended allocations next week!

Mike Verhoeven, PhD

Aquatic Invasive Species Management Consultant | Ecological and Water Resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Metro Big Rivers Phase 17

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Metro Big Rivers Phase 17
Funds Requested: $20,569,000
Proposal #: HA06

Manager's Name: Neal Feeken
Title: Executive Director
Organization: MN Valley Trust (Metro Big Rivers)
Email: nfeeken@mnvalleytrust.org
Office Number: 952-207-0247
Mobile Number: 952-207-0247

LSOHC Council and Staff,

To the question of the distribution of remaining funds in open appropriations (ML21 – ML26) for the Metro Big Rivers Program, we have calculated the following:

	Award Amount	*Spent*	*Committed*	*Remaining*
Protect (CE and Fee)	**$36,741,000**	**$22,752,000**	**$3,193,000**	**$10,796,000**
Restore/Enhance	**$12,809,000**	**$5,809,000**	**$1,851,000**	**$5,184,000**
Total	**$49,550,000**	**$28,561,000**	**$5,044,000**	**$15,980,000**

Of the total remaining funds, $3,993,000 (Protect) and $2,783,000 (R/E) - totaling $6,776,000, were awarded through the most recent ML 2026 appropriation.

The remaining funds are representative of our historical cash flow/spend-down patterns from previous phases of the Program. With nearly half of our remaining funds being awarded just last month we believe we are on track with our spending. We are confident that new and additional funds awarded to Metro Big Rivers will continue to be implemented in a strategic and timely fashion.

Thank you for offering us the chance to provide you with this clarification. Please let me know if there are any additional questions. --Neal

Neal Feeken

Executive Director

MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance - Phase 6
Funds Requested: $7,330,000
Proposal #: HA07

Manager's Name: Annie Knight
Title: Executive Director
Organization: Northern Waters Land Trust
Email: AnnieK@nwlt-mn.org
Office Number: 218-547-4510
Mobile Number:

Thank you for the question regarding the inclusion of outreach expenses under the Contracts line of our proposal: HA07 – Protecting Minnesota's Lakes of Outstanding Biological Significance, Phase 6.

Our intent is to use this line for contracted services that directly support acquisition-related outreach, documentation, and project communication, consistent with the allowable Outreach Expenses guidance.

Specifically, we anticipate using contracted GIS/mapping services to support acquisition activities, including the creation of maps and other mapping products as needed for acquisition. The Outreach Expenses guidance specifically identifies GIS contractors for map creation and map services as an allowable expense. We anticipate total costs for GIS contract(s) will not exceed $10,000.

We may also seek to contract with photographer(s)/videographer(s) on a limited, project-specific basis to document completed acquisitions and land protection efforts. This could include aerial photography or other imagery used for project records and documentation, as well as development of project profiles that communicate the outcomes of completed projects. We understand that contracts with photographers and videographers, including video/drone production, are identified in the guidance as potentially allowable with prior approval, and we would seek approval before incurring these expenses. We anticipate total costs for visual communications contract(s) will not exceed $10,000.

Importantly, our intent is not to use these funds for general organizational marketing, fundraising, or advocacy. Any contracted outreach services would be directly connected to the funded program and acquisition activities, with an emphasis on landowner outreach, acquisition documentation, and communicating the conservation outcomes of funded projects.

We included these expenses under the Contracts line because they represent contracted professional services rather than internal staff outreach costs. We are happy to seek prior approval for any expenses that fall within the "may be allowable with prior approval" category to ensure they remain consistent with LSOHC requirements.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

RIM Priority Habitat

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: RIM Priority Habitat
Funds Requested: $5,000,000
Proposal #: HA08

Manager's Name: Kevin Roth
Title: Easement Programs Coordinator
Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources
Email: kevin.roth@state.mn.us
Office Number:
Mobile Number: 651-539-2521

See attached memo

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES

Memo

Date: 09/02/2026

To: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
From: Sharon Doucette, BWSR Easement Section Manager

RE: BWSR response to comments and update on Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) restoration payment rates

RIM Priority Habitat (HA08): Provide historic average prices of easements in different habitat types/categories.

Specifically for this program, easement payment rates average $3,600/acre for wetlands, $5,100/acre for prairie acres, and $4,000/acre for forested land, driven in large part by easement location and local markets. Because this is a statewide program, per-acre payment rates can vary dramatically. The range of easement payments in the program has been $100/acre to $10,000/acre.

RIM Buffers (PA12): What is the percentage of food plots currently on RIM easements?

Chair Hartwell requested details on our current guidance related to food plot allowable acreage per easement, specifically why this year there could be up to 10% in food plots. Our previous response was not that there was an allowable 1-3% of food plot acres per easement nor is our current response that 10% of easements have food plots on them. BWSR has guidance for location and size and requires BWSR approval for all food plots. The limits from current guidance are in the table below.

Easement Size	Maximum Total Food Plot Acres	Total Number of Food Plots Allowed
0-100 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 5 acres	3
100-200 acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 10 acres	4
200+ acres	10% of total easement area, not to exceed 20 acres	5

Additionally, in answer to the LSOHC staff question, less than 1% of all RIM easement acres are in a food plot.

MN CREP (PA08): Explain CRP and RIM easement payment rates and provide specific examples with dollar amounts.

Under the CREP Agreement, a formal State-Federal partnership, USDA agrees to provide cost-share payments of up to 50% of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of approved conservation practices, make annual rental payments for the 14- to 15-year CRP contract term (which include an incentive payment equal to 60% of the base soil rental rate (SRR)), make a one-time Signup Incentive Payment (SIP), and make a one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) in an amount equal to 50% of the eligible reimbursable cost of practice installation. The state agrees to contribute not less than 30% of the overall annual program costs through direct payments and in-kind contributions or technical assistance. At least 10% of the overall project cost must be in the form of direct payments to participants. The state's contributions include one-time RIM perpetual easement payments and related processing fees; stewardship payments; monitoring; technical assistance; and conservation plan reimbursements. For acres enrolled or re-enrolled in CRP through MN CREP, the payment calculation is as shown in the table below for three easements:

County	Easement Acres	Total CREP Cropland Amount	Total Federal Payment		MN's Payment*
			Federal 15-Year CRP Contract Payment	Federal CRP SIP	
Clay	116.23	$706,445.94	$426,795.00 ($28,453/year)	$7,706.61	$271,944.33 ($2,339.70/acre)
Chippewa	60.76	$550,424.84	$296,025.00 ($19,735/year)	$6,413.00	$247,986.84 ($4,081.42/acre)
Rock	12.79	$156,255.43	$52,155.00 ($3,477/year)	$1,130.00	$102,970.43 ($8,050.86/acre)
*Total CREP Cropland Amount – Federal 15-Year CRP Contract – Federal CRP SIP = MN's Payment					

In the examples above, the location of the MN CREP easement directly impacts the MN CREP Cropland rate and the CRP SRR. The CRP SRR was $52.96 less per acre in Rock County compared to Chippewa County, but the MN CREP Cropland rate was $3,158 per acre higher based on property value data from the Minnesota Department of Revenue (DOR). This resulted in a higher cost per acre for the state. Clay County shows an example of where the federal contribution is 62% of the overall payment. As stated with all BWSR proposals, the location and size of the easement can have a direct impact on the cost. This is why an average cost per acre is provided for ecological sections in the output tables of proposals. The federal payment is impacted by location, easement size, SRRs, and annual changes to guidance in the CRP program – all of which are beyond state control. Additional details on the restoration easement payment structure are below. For comparison, the average payment for easements in the Wild Rice Shoreland program (a protection easement program) has been just over $2,200/acre over the last five years.

Initial Response on RIM Restoration Easement Payment Rates

BWSR completes a high volume of conservation easements. In 2025, RIM accepted 200 applications totaling 12,700 acres and recorded 135 easements totaling 9,300 acres. This is not an exceptionally high number for BWSR processing; 150-200 easements in process is typical.

To ensure this rate of conservation implementation is streamlined and standardized statewide, and like other state (DNR) and federal agencies (USFWS and the NRCS GARC), RIM uses a payment rate structure. Establishing a payment rate is outlined in Minnesota Statues §103F.515, subd. 6 and BWSR Board orders and are calculated as follows:

- Restoration-focused programs (converting low production agricultural land to native habitat) use a % of a township's average estimated market value used for tax purposes as generated by county assessors.
- Protection-focused programs (keeping quality habitat in place and protected) use a % of a parcel's estimated market value used for tax purposes as generated by the county assessor.

It is important to stress that all base data used in establishing RIM rates are the estimated market values used for current-year tax calculations provided by the DOR. **The values set by assessors <u>are not the current sale value</u> of the individual land on the open market**; they are created from property sales dating up to two years prior and other economic indicators. BWSR historically has used 90% of the township average estimated market values for tillable 2a agricultural land class to determine cropland payment rates.

Because market sales data from prior years are used, in an increasing land value market RIM rates pay lower percentages of an individual property's appraised value than they do of the township average estimated market values as calculated for tax purposes. Over the last 30 years, USDA data shows an annual average increase of 7% in agricultural land statewide but with the extreme variability of cropland across the state, this number is likely higher in agricultural areas and lower elsewhere. Based on DOR data, over the last five years agricultural land values increased an average of 8.4% annually in the parts of the state with high agricultural activity. Accounting for the increase in land value, BWSR's payment rate for restoration easements in the agricultural parts of the state would be 77% of the current year's average value.

RIM's restoration-focused programs require existing cropland to be converted to native cover. Restoration easements are necessary, especially in the agriculturally dominated parts of the state, to increase acres of habitat. Protection easements allow the state to save at-risk acres, but do not add habitat. Restoration easements in agriculturally dominated southern Minnesota eliminate the land's highest and best use for sale purposes (agricultural production) so a higher payment is warranted as compared to protecting existing land cover and uses.

Five recent open market sales of RIM restoration easement properties in five different counties in southern and western Minnesota were reviewed as examples. The data show that the sale prices ranged from less than 1% to 31% of the township's average estimated market value used for tax purposes, with an average of less than 20%. Assuming the two years of value increases described above, the sale price percentages would be even less compared to the fair market value. More sophisticated analysis is warranted, as sales can include portions of the parcel excluded from the easement for building sites or continued crop production. Nonetheless, comparing these easements to protection easements that do not add habitat acres and do not significantly change the existing land use, it is clear that the value of land under a restoration easement drops significantly more than easements for protection purposes.

RIM protection easements have a different payment rate calculation and typically the estimated market value of the land is lower.

Individual property appraisals are not feasible for BWSR's RIM easement program and for the conservation easement community in general. There are a limited number of appraisers that are qualified to appraise conservation easements. If BWSR were to seek appraisals on 200 easements per year, there would not be enough appraisers to complete the volume of work for us and for others who are required to use appraisers, negatively impacting the conservation community's work as a whole.
BWSR will commit to a further analysis of our rate structure in the year ahead.

On a proportional basis, BWSR's requested funding is less than 20% of funding requested for potential public land acquisition and a portion of staffing for management of public lands. RIM is a state easement program, underpinned by state statute and federal government agreements, that allows for perpetual investments in private land restoration and conservation for the benefit of Minnesota. BWSR appreciates the Council's past and ongoing recognition of the program and its benefits to habitat and water quality on the 76% of land in Minnesota that is in private ownership.

While public land ownership is a key part of the conservation land mosaic in Minnesota, not all priority conservation land is up for sale. Additionally, not all of it is appropriate for public ownership, and, in some counties, not palatable to the communities that want to preserve their property tax base.
Restoration, protection, and enhancement are important for maintaining Minnesota wetlands, prairies, forest, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. Utilizing tools such as the RIM easement program provide these opportunities while retaining private land ownership in the state. With conservation easements, private landowners are our partners in the state's conservation efforts.

We look forward to building on past successes in partnership with Council members and staff.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Beaver Creek Habitat Restoration
ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up
09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Beaver Creek Habitat Restoration
Funds Requested: $1,777,000
Proposal #: HRE02

Manager's Name: Jennifer Biederman, PhD
Title: Habitat Program Director
Organization: Minnesota Trout Unlimited
Email: jennifer.biederman@mntu.org
Office Number: 507-313-3428
Mobile Number: 507-313-3428

Beaver Creek Habitat Restoration - HRE 02

Scalability answer amended

The overall project to restore two separate reaches of Beaver Creek is scalable, but separating implementation is not advisable, since installing both projects during the same summer is needed for the most usable research results and best habitat outcomes in the future. Using the same contractor and heavy equipment operators on both sites also reduces costs and removes variables. DNR is using non-OHF funds for its research.

If we received 50% of requested funding, we could implement the less expensive of the two projects. The acreage amount would be proportionately reduced. Personnel and DSS expenses would be adjusted downward, but not strictly proportionally. More personnel and DSS would be needed because much of those costs are tied to survey, design and permitting work. We would design and permit both projects.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Daylighting Phalen Creek - Phase 2
Funds Requested: $6,781,400
Proposal #: HRE03

Manager's Name: Gabby Menomin
Title: Director of Land and Environment
Organization: Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi
Email: gmenomin@wakantipi.org
Office Number: (651) 370-2106
Mobile Number:

1. Clarify the restoration dollars requested for the yellow map area (Reaches 7-8)

Our total restoration costs for Reaches 7-8 is $396,000, over a 5-year period (an average of $79,000 per year). This includes selective herbicide applications, mowing, hand weeding, spot cutting, prescribed burning, and other best management practices appropriate to the season and site conditions plus annual vegetation management and monitoring by an outside contractor. The 5-year period ensures habitat establishment, after which, City of St. Paul will assume maintenance costs.

(a) What has the previous $3.3 million OHF allocation been spent on in these reaches?

All prior $3.3 OHF funds are restricted to reaches 7-8. Spending and budget outlined below.

Waḳaŋ Ṭípi Awaŋyaŋkapi – Daylighting Project Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Source of Funds 2022			
LSOHF 2022 Grant Category	**Budget / Allocated**	**Spent (As of Request 8)**	**Remaining**
Contracts			
Design & Engineering	848,442	738,559	109,883
Construction	1,989,358		1,989,358
Sub Total Contract (1)	2,837,800	738,559	2,099,241
Personnel	171,200	60,559	110,601
Professional Services (2)	300,000	202,976	97,024
Other Equipment/Tools	1,000		1,000
Supplies/Materials	1,000	790	210
Total	**3,311,000**	**1,002,924**	**2,308,076**
Notes			
(1) LSOHC category budget is for Contracts (the design and construction totals are internal allocations)			
(2) Allocated to project management and legal services			

(b) What have LCCMR funds been spent on in these reaches?

These funds have been spent on Reach 2, which is focused on WTA staff salary and contractor for prairie and woodland restoration. This includes invasive species management, plantings, seeding, herbicide treatments, and establishment mowings. Additionally, there has been volunteer management to support restoration activities.

(c) Are there any other funding sources being used on Reaches 7&8 (or have previously been used)?

Yes, we have additional funding from individuals, corporate and private foundations which has been used for the design and planning of recreational amenities as well as landscape architecture and design. It will also be used for the installation of these features. Additionally, these funding sources have supported our community engagement work.

2. Please provide the design costs requested for the purple map area (reaches 1-3)

- Civil Design Costs: $1,463,000 plus 10% contingency, total of $1,609,300.
- Landscaping Design: $190,000 plus 10% contingency, total of $209,000.

3. Please provide a viable estimate for construction of the purple map area (Reaches 1-3) so we can better understand the total scope of the project.

We must complete the design work for Reaches 1-3 in order to provide an accurate construction estimate. Regarding the total cost of the project, it is difficult to estimate the total project cost without doing design work. There are many factors that will influence the costs, including whether environmental remediation is needed, soil conditions, creek path, easements, integration with other projects along the creek path (e.g. Bronze Line, Bruce Vento Regional Trail, and Hamm's Brewery development), and what type of improvements are developed alongside the creek.

After consulting with our water engineering firm and project managers, our best estimate for total project cost is $25M (not inclusive of Reaches 7-8), which is based on our engineer's estimate looking at the 2017 feasibility study. This is contingent upon the level of collaboration and coordination we get with the watershed districts, DNR, and other stakeholders; and any additional unforeseen design challenges. Our engineer's explanation for the higher cost of Reaches 7-8 is due to the significant levels of water engineering and infrastructure required to maintain lake levels and ensure proper creek flow at the start of the creek channel. The costs for the remaining Reaches are not a 1:1 comparison to Reaches 7-8, as the complexity decreases as the creek channel flows towards the river.

4. Explain the habitat value for Reaches 4-6

- Reach 4: This includes the area of Swede Hollow Regional Park (a 25-acre wooded ravine). This area already has established woodlands and a creek system. Our project, as stated in the 2023 Swede Hollow Creek Enhancement Feasible Study written by the Capitol Region Watershed District, would bring improved creek channel habitats and greater flow to the area.
- Reaches 5-6: Our project will add quality greenspace into an area of St. Paul that is severely lacking in greenspace and wildlife habitat. While these areas may be challenging, they are important to the overall habitat connectivity of Lake Phalen and downstream reaches to the Mississippi.

5. Please provide an updated budget referencing all sources and uses, including the recent 3M related grant award.

- $20,000 was received in additional habitat restoration funding for Reaches 7-8 from the 3M PFAS Settlement fund, hence there is a reduction in the Lessard-Sams request of $20,000. All other 3M PFAS Settlement funds are restricted to specific aspects of completing reaches 7-8 and are not available for reaches 1-6 design or for the remaining costs of reaches 7-8 habitat establishment. An updated budget is shown below:

- We have been approved for $1.9M from the 3M PFAS Settlement Grant fund, subject to a final grant agreement. These funds will be used to cover the additional construction costs that LSOHC funds cannot be used for, such as recreational features that were requested during community engagement session (e.g. trails, bridge, signage). Additionally, they will be used for project management during the construction process.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Knife River Habitat Rehabilitation Project-PH VIII

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Knife River Habitat Rehabilitation Project-PH VIII
Funds Requested: $2,661,000
Proposal #: HRE09

Manager's Name: Blake Francis (RWF); Kevin J. Bovee (LSSA)
Title: Fiscal Manager (RWF); Project Manager (LSSA)
Organization: Lake Superior Steelhead Association (LSSA) w/Rajala Woods Foundation (RWF)
Email: blakefrancis@gmail (RWF); outriderduluth@msn.com (LSSA)
Office Number: 218/391-2487 (RWF); 218/269-7427 (LSSA)
Mobile Number:

1. Is PH VIII Funding Scalable:

Response to question from Rajala Woods Foundation

Kevin,

As Fiscal Manager for this funding, it is RWF's preference that we receive full funding for the remaining aspects of this work to reduce administrative burdens and costs for this important ecological restoration work.

Thanks,

Kurt

Response from Lake Superior Steelhead Association

As Project Manager, I agree with RWF’s assertion that a single funding cycle would reduce administrative burdens and cost. We would not have to put a second funding cycle out for RFP and incur all the costs involved with that effort but also, state required Prevailing Wage costs would also increase over time, adding more costs to the project which in turn would decrease the amount available for actual in-stream work. Materials costs will also increase over time.

Over the period of time that I have been involved with funding requests through LSOHC (15+ years now) the committee frequently asserts that some projects’ administrative costs are high. By scaling this funding request, that increase in administrative costs would become reality, not to mention several other costs increasing.

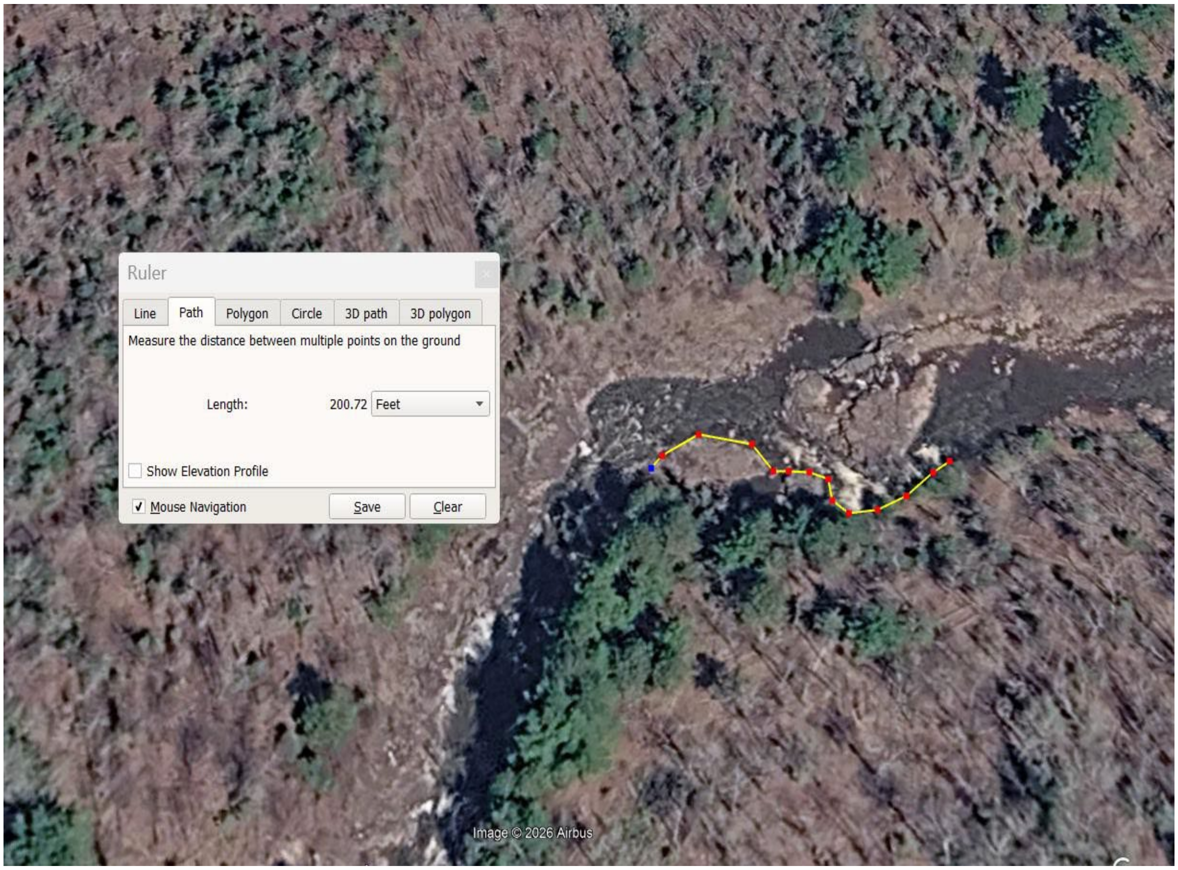
2. Which reaches have been funded in the past?

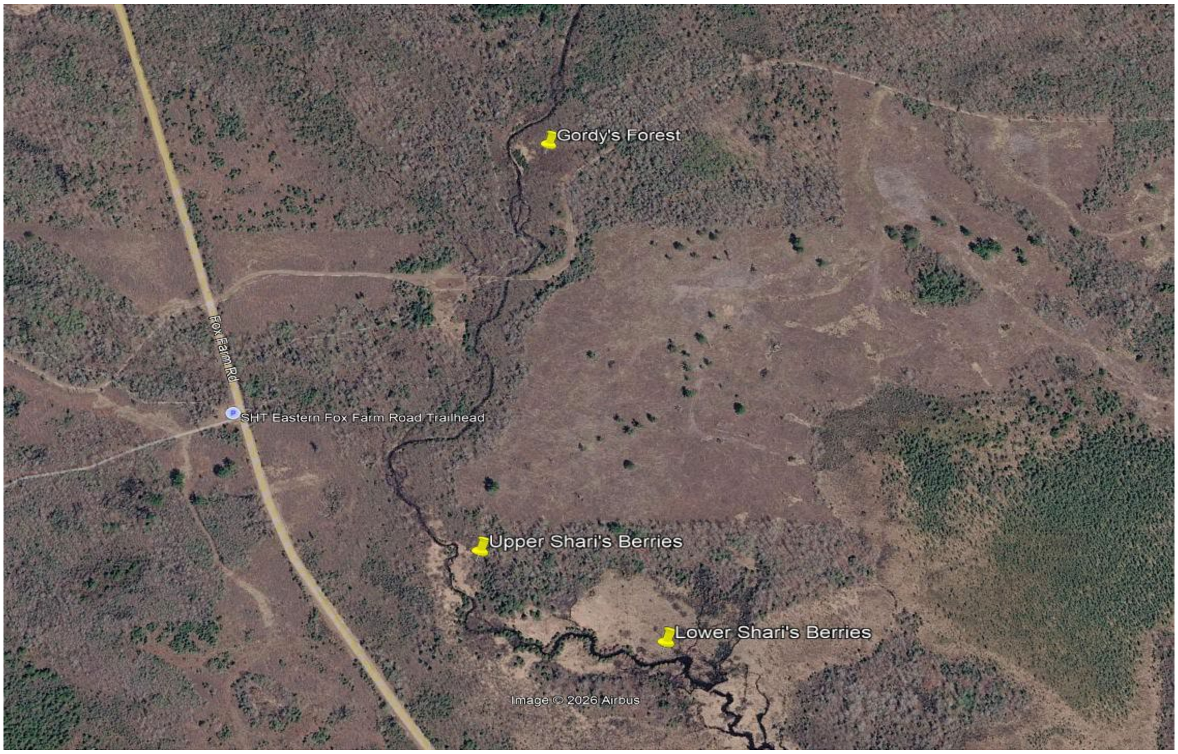
Watershed: West Branch Tributary of Knife River and Main Knife River

Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant 1

Project Locations: West Branch Tributary and Main Knife River Second Falls

Total Length: West Branch 1,843 Linear Feet and Second Falls 200 Linear Feet



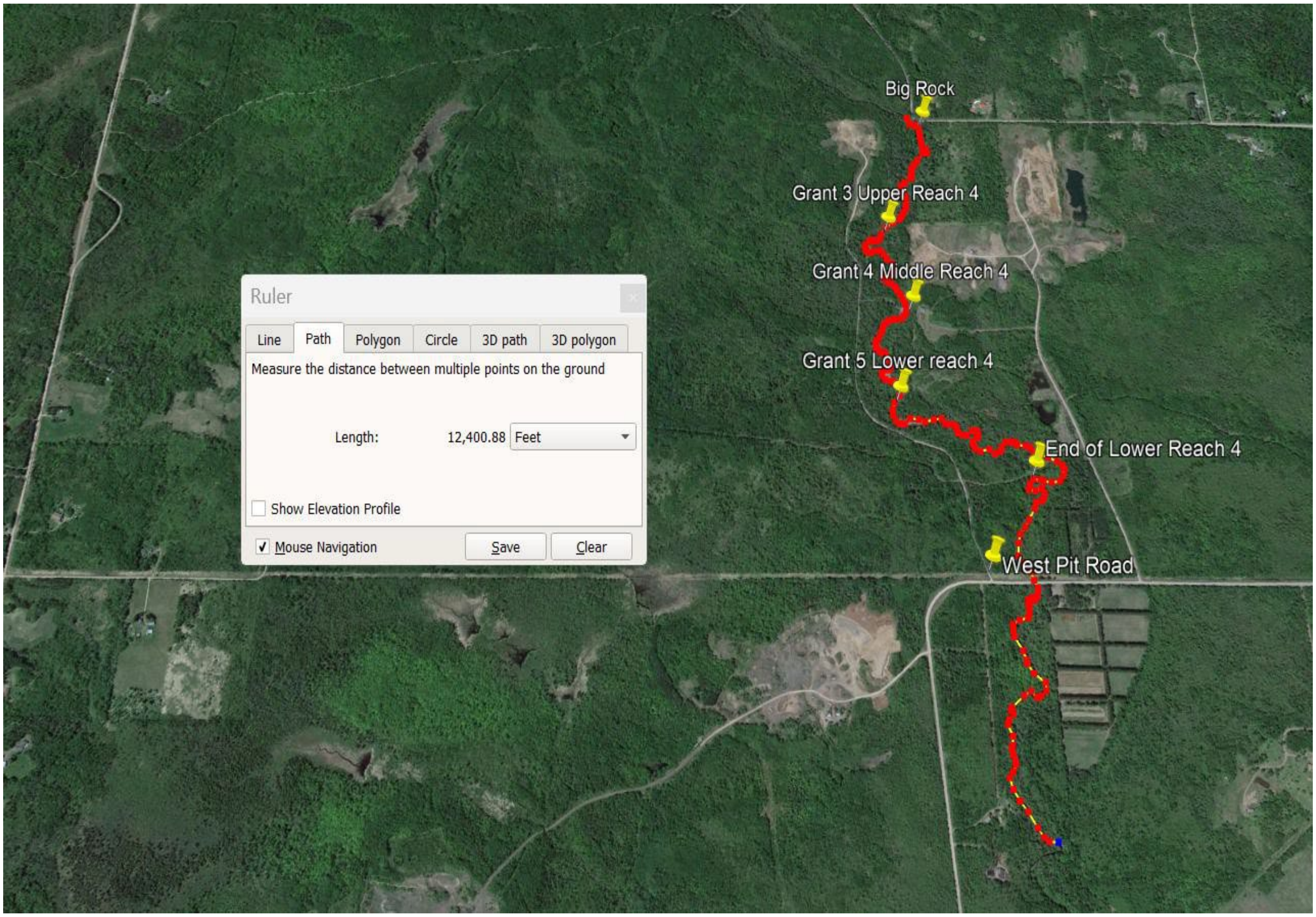


Watershed: Main Knife River Big Rock to the Nursery

Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grants 3, 4 and 5

Project Locations: Reach Upper 4, Reach Middle 4 and Reach Lower 4

Total Length: 12,400 linear feet



Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant 2

Project Locations: Main Knife River Reach 9 and Reach 12

Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant 6

Project Locations: Main Knife River Reach Upper 13, Reach Lower 13 and Reach 14

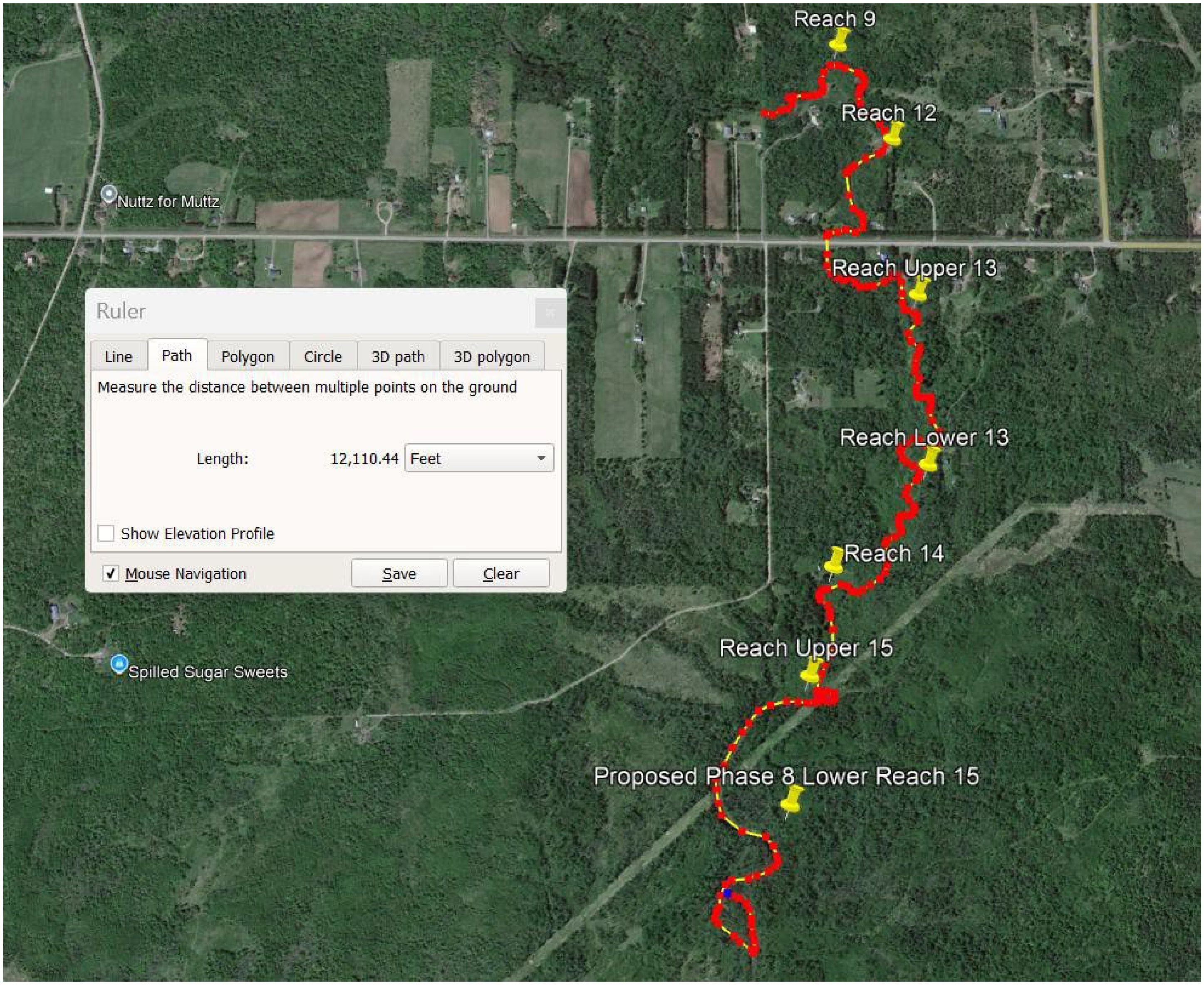
Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Grant 7

Project Locations: Main Knife River Reach Upper 15

Grant Phase: Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) Proposed Grants 8

Project Locations: Main Knife River Reach Lower 15

Total Length: 12,110 linear feet



18,250 Linear Feet of Total Stream Channel Reshaped, Realigned and Connected to the Floodplain

36,500 Linear Feet of Total Streambanks Graded

53,106 Linear Feet of Total Streambanks Stabilized

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Tamarac River Enhancement Project - Phase 1

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/02/2026

Proposal Title: Tamarac River Enhancement Project - Phase 1
Funds Requested: $7,876,000
Proposal #: HRE16

Manager's Name: Lon Aune
Title: County Engineer
Organization: Marshall County
Email: lon.aune@marshallcountymn.gov
Office Number: (218) 745-4381
Mobile Number: (218) 201-1422

Question: (1) Is funding committed to acquire the easements necessary to implement the project?

Initial discussion with BWSR and the landowners on the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program has taken place. More detailed discussion is needed with both BWSR and the landowners to determine how each parcel fits the program and further engagement of landowners to then sign up. If the project receives LSOHC funding, these would be some of the next steps to move the project forward. If for some reason the RIM program or other perpetual vegetated easement programs through the state are not viable options, the drainage authority (represented by the Marshall County Board) will secure the necessary perpetual vegetated easements when they secure the construction and future maintenance easements using their local taxing authority. This option would put additional local cost burden on the County above the construction and future maintenance easements, but they are willing to do so if state perpetual easements are not available.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28
ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up
09/03/2026

Proposal Title: Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program ML27/FY28
Funds Requested: $15,000,000
Proposal #: CPL

Manager's Name: David Stein
Title: CPL Coordinator
Organization: DNR
Email: david.stein@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-259-5375
Mobile Number: 612-203-3823

To examine the overall trends of CPL funding going to Metro vs. Statewide rounds over the last 5 years, we removed any grants that were canceled or never encumbered. For the purposes of this analysis, ECP and New Applicant rounds were considered “Statewide” as they come out of the same funding pool.

The total amount of CPL funding awarded varied over the years from $7.6 million to $13.9 million, with an average of $9.8 million awarded over the five years. Of that $9.8 million, an average of 27% went to Metro projects and 73% to Statewide. See below for appropriation amounts, the actual amounts awarded by grant type and year, followed by pie charts showing the percent awarded to each grant type over time.

Table 1. Allocations by grant type and year. Statewide allocations include the larger traditional/statewide grants as well as Expedited Conservation Project (ECP) and New Applicant grants.

ML	Statewide Allocation	Statewide Percentage	Metro Allocation	Metro Percentage
2021	$ 7,575,000.00	75.94	$ 2,400,000.00	24.06
2022	$ 6,500,000.00	72.22	$ 2,500,000.00	27.78
2023	$ 6,550,000.00	72.38	$ 2,500,000.00	27.62
2024	$ 10,400,000.00	72.22	$ 4,000,000.00	27.78
2025	$ 8,120,000.00	73.02	$ 3,000,000.00	26.98
Average	$ 7,829,000.00	73.16	$ 2,880,000.00	26.84

Table 2. Grant amounts awarded by grant type and year. Please note that grants awarded in one year may use funds from previous years appropriations.

ML	Statewide	Metro	Total
2021	$ 6,921,357.00	$ 3,756,110.00	$ 10,677,467.00
2022	$ 6,116,047.00	$ 1,558,753.00	$ 7,674,800.00
2023	$ 6,364,151.00	$ 2,509,112.00	$ 8,873,263.00
2024	$ 10,001,581.00	$ 3,919,943.00	$ 13,921,524.00
2025	$ 7,253,321.00	$ 2,355,343.00	$ 9,608,664.00
Average	$ 7,097,807.17	$ 2,670,143.33	$ 9,767,950.50

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

DNR Core Functions in Partner-led OHF Acquisitions

ML 2027 Request for Funding Proposal Hearing Follow-Up

09/03/2026

Proposal Title: DNR Core Functions in Partner-led OHF Acquisitions
Funds Requested: $124,500
Proposal #: O3

Manager's Name: Jennifer Olson
Title: Initial Development Coordinator
Organization: DNR
Email: jennifer.a.olson@state.mn.us
Office Number: 651-259-5245
Mobile Number:

This letter provides follow-up information from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council August 25, 2026, proposal hearing regarding the DNR Core Functions in Partner-led OHF Acquisitions appropriations.

LSOHC Question: Does the core functions/IDP formula work out well in estimating costs? Are there leftover funds from partner budgets?

Based on what we know so far, there are indications the cost estimates for DNR Land Acquisition Costs (LAC) and DNR Initial Development Plan (IDP) were too low in the ML23, ML24, and ML25 appropriations. Because of this, we have allocated RIM Interest funds to help complete approaches and parking lots for some parcels across those three appropriations. We do not anticipate partner budgets will have leftover funds.

Summary of DNR Core Functions appropriations:

- **ML23:**
  - First year of DNR Core Functions in Partner-led OHF Acquisitions appropriation.
  - Three years in, **75% of funds are already spent**, spending was expected to last six years.
  - DNR LAC formula was **$10,000 per $500,000** in fee-title acquisitions with PILT.
  - No IDP formula; partner budgets included their own IDP estimates.
- **ML24 & ML25:**
  - DNR LAC formula increased for inflation to **$12,000 per $500,000** in fee-title acquisitions with PILT.
  - No IDP formula; partner budgets included their own IDP estimates.
- **ML26:**
  - First year with a formal DNR IDP formula: **$21,000 per 120 acres** of fee-title acquisition with PILT.
  - Funding became available in July 2026, and we are only two months into implementation.
  - A full review of the IDP formula and actual supply/contractor costs will occur winter 2026-27.
- **ML27:**
  - DNR LAC formula updated for inflation to **$15,000 per $500,000**.

Current Assessment:

Given past spending patterns and the need for supplemental RIM Interest funds, we do not expect any leftover funds for ML23-ML25. At this time, it appears that DNR Core Functions funding levels for these years will not fully meet needs. The DNR will cover costs not met with Core Functions from other budgets.

Summary of Spending (as of June 30, 2026):

Appropriation	Total OHF Funds Appropriated	OHF Funds Spent as of 6/30/26	% Spent	Supplemental Funds
ML23 DNR Core Functions DNR LAC formula	$668,000	$502,400	75%	RIM Interest for some approach/parking lots (4 parcels)
ML24 DNR Core Functions DNR LAC formula (updated)	$892,000	$413,900	46%	RIM Interest for IDP approach/parking lots (1 parcel)
ML25 DNR Core Functions DNR LAC formula	$740,000	$138,700	19%	RIM Interest for IDP approach/parking lots (2 parcels)
ML26 DNR Core Functions DNR LAC formula DNR IDP Formula (new)	$1,377,000	$0	0%	None

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this response.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Olson

Initial Development Plan Coordinator

DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife