



September 30, 2026

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Amendment Request: ML 2022, Ch. 77, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 5(a): Dakota County Habitat Protection/Restoration Phase VIII

Dear Council Members & Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and discuss the proposed amendment to Dakota County's ML 2022 appropriation at the September 30, 2026, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) meeting. Dakota County acknowledges that the requested changes to the accomplishment plan require further examination and determination by the Council. To assist in this process, Dakota County respectfully submits the following memo which provides additional details and rationale for the amendment request.

Dakota County's ML 2022 appropriation has faced several challenges, some attributable to County actions, with the resulting costs borne by the County. The most notable challenges arose from the easement acquisition component of the accomplishment plan, which ultimately led to an underachievement in the number of protected acres delivered using ML 2022 funds. With the acquisition deadline now passed and with a significant amount of unspent funds still left on the appropriation, Dakota County seeks to turn a shortcoming in acquisition into an overperformance of restoration and enhancement outcomes.

The proposed changes to the budget and parcel list in this amendment will allow for an additional 705 acres to be restored/enhanced, representing an 86% increase compared to the County's current accomplishment plan outcomes. The restoration activities being proposed through this amendment are:

- **Critical** in their demonstrated need and in their impact to all recognized resource types.
- **Timely** in their window of opportunity and ability to be completed before the end of the grant term.
- **Comprehensive** in solidifying Dakota County's capacity and overall workplan, negating the need for future amendments.

In addition to these core tenets guiding this request, Dakota County offers the following as further justification for amendment approval:

- The majority of planned restoration work has already been solicited and contracted, thus making these added projects, "shovel-ready" upon approval.
- Planned restoration tasks (such as prescribed burns, tree removal, etc.) for each parcel are scheduled to occur between Fall 2026 and Spring 2027, a timeline that fits within the grant term.
- If this amendment is approved, approximately \$2 Million of this appropriation will still be returned as a result of acquisitions that did not come to fruition.

Dakota County Parks



- A previous amendment dated February 1, 2024, raised the Contracts budget to \$3,476,900, the highest it has been throughout the life of the grant.
- Dakota County is on track to meet or exceed its anticipated leverage, proportional to the expected total of spent grant funds.

In summary, this amendment represents an expanded opportunity for LSOHC and Dakota County to work collaboratively and mobilize available resources to make an even greater impact on the landscape. The changes captured in this amendment remain in alignment with the core activities identified in the County's original accomplishment plan and have all been vetted as critical, timely and comprehensive. Of note, this amendment includes the addition of previously funded parcels, such as Lebanon Hills Regional Park, that are in need of additional restoration now to protect and build upon previous investments. Dakota County is confident that the amended workplan can be accomplished by the June 30, 2027, deadline.

We appreciate your consideration and direction on this matter. Please contact Alex Scurto, Senior Project Manager, with any additional questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex J. Scurto".

Alex Scurto
Senior Project Manager, Parks Department
P: 952-891-7827
alex.scurto@co.dakota.mn.us

CC: Tom Lewanski, Natural Resource Manager, Dakota County Parks

Dakota County Parks