DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Date: October 26, 2026
To: Kristina Smitten, Executive Director, Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
From: Dean Paron, Fisheries Habitat Program Manager
Subject: Appropriation Extension Request – ML22, Chapter 77, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 5(n)

The Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement team recently prepared the semi-annual progress report for our ML2022 appropriation. As indicated in the updated budget, $549,835 remains unspent in the Contracts category and $858,887 remains unspent in Professional Services. Contracts are generally used to fund large construction projects delivered by partner entities, while Professional Services supports DNR-contracted work with consultants and construction companies for design, surveying, construction oversight, and implementation.

For the ML2022 appropriation, the majority of these funds were originally designated for a contract with the Roseau River Watershed District to complete a major stream restoration within the Wildlife Management Area. After three years of collaborative planning, design, and permitting, the Watershed District encountered unforeseen legal challenges and ultimately was unable to move forward with the project. As a result, DNR released these funds and began reallocating them to new projects aligned with the Accomplishment Plan.

We are requesting a one-year extension to ensure this appropriation can be fully expended and that Accomplishment Plan objectives are met. This request includes: (1) a description of the circumstances that necessitate an extension, (2) a well-defined plan for project completion, and (3) confirmation that the extension does not include any increases to Personnel or Direct Support Services (DSS).

Circumstances Requiring an Extension

Roseau River Channel Restoration:
Restoring 14 miles of the Roseau River was a high-priority component of the Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Phase V proposal, with an estimated budget of $2,300,000. Project design and permitting progressed from 2022 through 2025, consistent with a project of this scale. As design neared completion, the Watershed District became the subject of a lawsuit filed by local landowners. On July 7, 2025, DNR was informed that the project could no longer proceed within the appropriation timeline.

Following that determination, DNR began reallocating funds to alternative habitat restoration projects, as outlined below:

• October 2025 – DNR identified the Bucks Mill Dam and Culvert project and the Skandia Channel Restoration as recipients of released funds.
• January 2026 – The Cannon River Fish Passage Project (a three-part fish passage effort including the Sakatah Dam) was identified to receive the remaining funds. The project was 60 percent designed, and the team had previously worked with the landowner to secure construction access at the Sakatah Dam site.
• February 2026 – During final design phases, the landowner's son threatened legal action and introduced new requirements for construction access on private land. The project team resumed discussions with the landowner and family.
• September 2026 – Based on ongoing discussions, the Cannon River project will not be able to be constructed within the ML2022 timeframe.
• September 2026 – DNR identified the Crissy Lake Dam project to receive the remainder of the unallocated funding.

Plan for Project Completion

Since July 2025, DNR has identified several new projects that will utilize the released funding:

1. **Bucks Mill Dam Modification** – Construction is complete.
2. **Calhoun Dam and Calhoun Bypass Dams** – The Calhoun Dam is complete. The Calhoun Bypass Dam is substantially constructed and on track for completion in spring 2027.
3. **Skandia Channel Restoration** – Design is complete, and the project is currently out for bid. While the project is likely to be completed by June 30, 2027, construction in flowing water is inherently weather dependent.
4. **Crissy Dam Modification and Channel Restoration** – This large-scale project is approximately 60 percent designed. Construction will begin as soon as feasible and will depend heavily on flows and site conditions.

An extension to June 30, 2028, ensures all work can be completed without compromising the quality, safety, or ecological outcomes of the Skandia Channel Restoration and the Crissy Lake Dam Modification and Channel Restoration.

Personnel and DSS Evaluation

DNR does not request any increases to Personnel or Direct Support Services (DSS) as part of this extension amendment.

Closing Thoughts

DNR prioritizes projects based on ecological merit and only enters into contracts with partners when we are confident the work can be completed. In this case, two separate projects were delayed due to unforeseen legal issues that could not have been anticipated. Extending the appropriation end date

is essential to ensure successful completion of the newly selected projects and to achieve the intended habitat outcomes.

The Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Program has partnered with the LSOHC since 2012, and this is the first instance in which unforeseen circumstances have required an extension. We regret the delay but appreciate the Council's consideration. Submitting this request now ensures ample time for discussion and clarification.

Please let me know if additional information would be helpful.