

2005 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2008

TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors – Phase II

PROJECT MANAGER: Wayne Sames

ORGANIZATION: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

ADDRESS: OMBS, Box 10, 500 Lafayette Road

WEB SITE ADDRESS: wayne.sames@dnr.state.mn.us

FUND: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: ML 2005, 1st Spec. Sess., Chap. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 11, Subd. 5b

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$3,530,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

The key objectives and results of this program are to accelerate agency programs and cooperative agreements with partners organizations for the purposes of planning, improving, and protecting important natural areas in the metropolitan region and portions of surrounding counties through grants, contracted services, conservation easements, and fee acquisition.

The primary results of the program were:

- Restoration of 2,026 acres of habitat
- Protection of approximately 2.4 miles of shoreline
- Fee and easement acquisition of 2,973 acres

See individual partner work programs for detailed information on individual projects.

Project Results, Use and Dissemination

The Metro Corridors partnership distributed information about the program and projects through the widely broadcasted e-mails to people on the Regional Greenways Collaborative (RGC) database, through the RGC quarterly meetings, and jointly held county meetings. As projects were completed, the partners publicized accomplishments through press releases and organization newsletters and websites.

LCMR Final Work Program Report

OVERALL FINAL REPORT

Date of Report: December, 2008
Date of Work program Approval: June 14, 2005
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2008

I. PROJECT TITLE: Metro Conservation Corridors – Phase II – Overall Summary

Project Manager: Wayne Sames
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Location: Within mapped Focus Areas and within the counties of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Isanti, LeSueur, Nicollet, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, and Washington. See Figure 1.

Total Biennial LCMR Project Budget:	LCMR Appropriation:	\$3,530,000
	Minus Amount Spent:	\$3,529,655
	Equal Balance:	\$345

Legal Citation: ML 2005, 1st Spec. Sess., Chap. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 11, Subd.5b.

Appropriation Language: Metropolitan Area Wildlife Corridors – Phase II. \$1,765,000 the first year and \$1,765,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the second biennium for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with the Trust for Public Land, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Friends of the Mississippi River, Great River Greening, Minnesota Land Trust, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc., Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Friends of the Minnesota Valley for the purposes of planning, improving, and protecting important natural areas in the metropolitan region, as defined by Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2 and portions of the surrounding counties, through grants, contracted services, conservation easements, and fee acquisition. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Expenditures are limited to the identified project areas as defined in the work program. This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of residential structures, unless expressly approved in the work program.

Any land acquired in fee title by the commissioner of natural resources with money from this appropriation must be designated: (1) as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07; or (2) as provided in Minnesota Statutes, sections 89.018, subdivision 2, paragraph (a); 97A.101; 97A.125; 97C.001; and 97C.011. The commissioner may similarly designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2008, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

Overall Project Outcome and Results

The key objectives and results of this program are to accelerate agency programs and cooperative agreements with partner organizations for the purposes of planning, improving, and protecting important natural areas in the metropolitan region and portions of surrounding counties through grants, contracted services, conservation easements, and fee acquisition.

The primary results of the program were:

- Restoration of 2,026 acres of habitat
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See Outline of Project Results below for detailed information on individual projects.

Project Results, Use and Dissemination

The Metro Corridors partnership distributed information about the program and projects through the widely broadcast e-mails to people on the Regional Greenways Collaborative (RGC) database, through the RGC quarterly meetings, and jointly held county meetings. As projects were completed, the partners publicized accomplishments through press releases and organization newsletters and websites.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

RESULT 1: COORDINATE METRO CONSERVATION CORRIDORS & METRO GREENWAYS PROGRAMS

Final Report Summary: Work of the 12 partners to conserve wildlife habitat threatened by development was coordinated to increase cooperation and effectiveness. Potential project areas were identified and mapped through cooperation between the Metro Corridors and local partners. Stakeholders in participating counties were provided with information and technical assistance regarding conservation in the Metro Corridors focus area. Communications, training,

and outreach were be coordinated between the partners and with other greater Metro conservation collaborative groups. Overall program management and specific site project management was provided by the Metro Greenways program component.

Summary Budget Information for Result 1:	LCMR Budget	\$160,000*
	Spent	\$ 160,000
	Balance	\$ 0

RESULT 2: RESTORE & ENHANCE SIGNIFICANT HABITAT

Final Report Summary: Seven partner organizations restored and/or enhance 2,026 acres of significant upland and/or wetland habitat.

Part 2.1 Wetland Restoration & Enhancement (Ducks Unlimited):

DU enhanced 400-acre Mud Lake on the Carlos Avery WMA in Chisago County. DU provided bio-engineering services to DNR Wildlife Management Area field staff to survey, design and construct a new outlet water control structure and fish barrier. Mud Lake is a 400-acre shallow lake with maximum depths only four or five feet, and a history of growing wild rice and providing quality habitat for waterfowl. Prior to the project, water quality and wildlife habitat value of Mud Lake was poor do to the presence of carp and other invasive fish and stable water levels. The new outlet water control structure designed and installed by DU will allow the Minnesota DNR Wildlife field staff to independently manage Mud Lake water levels, while also limiting fish access into the basin from the downstream Sunrise River to the east. The new outlet structure is also being used by the DNR to temporarily draw-down Mud Lake to winterkill carp and rejuvenate aquatic plants such as wild rice, which will improve both water quality and wildlife habitat value of Mud Lake.

Pat 2.2 Grassland Enhancement and Restoration Initiative (Pheasants Forever)

Twenty-seven projects totaling 386.1 acres were completed as a result of the Grassland Enhancement & Restoration Initiative. In addition, a MN Wanner ATV pump sprayer was purchased. This equipment improves the safety of personnel and volunteers and improves the ability to conduct prescription buns on wet or rugged terrain. Restoration of grasslands within the Metro Area Wildlife Corridors Project is important to the conservation of soil, water, wildlife, and quality of life (open space) in the metropolitan area. Working hand in hand with landowners interested in restoring and managing grasslands is vital to future of conservation efforts in Minnesota. Many local partners in addition to the landowners were involved, including the local USDFA office staff and several SWCDs. The support provided to assist landowners in restoring their land into grassland habitats was important to the success of the program.

Part 2.3 Restore and Enhance Significant Habitat (Friends of the Mississippi River)

Friends of the Mississippi River restored or enhanced over 226 37-acres of significant habitat. Techniques that were employed to restore and enhance these

areas included: soil preparation (spraying, burning, disking, dragging), seed drilling, mowing, prescribed burning, spot spraying, installation of naïve plants, and removal of invasive species. The activities were focused on the following natural areas:

- Hastings River Flats Park
- Sand Coulee Prairie (City owned property and SNA property)
- Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area (SNA property)
- Rosemount Wildlife Preserve (City owned property)
- Karpen Site (Private, permanently protected site, easement pending)
- Spring lake Park Reserve
- Empire Wastewater Treatment plant

These sites are all located within a Metro Conservation Corridor. The majority of them are also located within locally developed greenway corridors. As such these sites contribute to both local and state efforts to develop landscape connectivity and improve wildlife habitat. Four of the sites (Sand Coulee, Pine Bend Bluffs, Rosemount Wildlife Preserve, and Karpen) also have associated protection efforts going as well.

Part 2.4 Lower Minnesota River Watershed Restoration & Enhancement Project (Friends of the Minnesota Valley)

Friends of the Minnesota Valley successfully restored 100 acres of significant biological communities and wildlife habitat, including calcareous fens, throughout the Expanded Minnesota River Focus Area within the mapped corridors. The project's main focus included invasive species control and the restoration and enhancement of significant plant communities and wildlife habitats. Friends of the Minnesota Valley worked with local, state, and federal agencies, non-profit organizations and private landowners. Restoration and enhancement activities included the restoration of 5 wetlands totaling 18 acres, 3 acres of which were calcareous fen. In addition, 4 acres of prairie was restored along with 75 acres of forest restoration. Wetlands were restored by constructing shallow earthen dams, blocking drainage tile lines, and installing water control structures. Prairie was restored utilizing native grass and forb species. Forest restoration consisted mainly of exotic species removal, predominantly buckthorn removal.

Part 2.5 Restore and Enhance Significant Habitat (Great River Greening)

Great River Greening's 13 projects in the Metro Corridors priority focus area included restoration of Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS)-quality dry prairies, wetlands, oak woodland, large floodplain and hardwood forests, and shoreline. Criteria for projects included ecological significance and partner commitment. In total Great River Greening restored .24 miles of shoreline and 135 acres of high quality natural areas at 13 different sites. At least 1005 volunteers contributed to these restorations. These projects enhanced habitat for at least 11 populations of state-listed species. Greenings restoration projects were:

- Mississippi River shoreline restoration and native planting, Brooklyn Center
- Floodplain forest gap restoration and planting, Crosby Reg. Par, St. Paul

- Floodplain forest and streambank restoration, Cargill Salt, Savage on the Credit and Minnesota Rivers
- Oak savanna restoration, Indian Mounds Regional Park, St. Paul
- Prescribed burn at Pioneer Park, Blaine
- Hill prairie restoration, Hidden Valley Park, Savage
- Mississippi River shoreline revetment and restoration, Coon Rapids
- Prescribed wetland burns, Big Marine Lake, Scandia
- Prescribed burn, prairie remnant, St. Croix Valley recreation trail, Lake St. Croix Beach
- Riparian forest restoration, Meeker Dam/Desnoyer Seep, St. Paul
- Vegetated retention pond with native species, Arcola Mills Historic Foundation, Stillwater
- Oak savanna and prairie reconstruction at Pilot Knob Phase I, Mendota Heights
- “Big Woods” invasives removal and oak planting, Independence

Part 2.6 Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Grants (DNR Metro Greenways)

During this program period, eligible applicants nominated 33 projects and requested over \$9 million dollars to restore or acquire regionally important habitats. An advisory committee rated the project proposals and made funding recommendations that were approved by the DNR Commissioner. Funding was awarded to thirteen projects to restore 376 acres to native plant communities on mostly public land. Many of these projects involved converting cropland to native vegetation, while others worked to remove non-native invasive species such as buckthorn.

Part 2.7 SNA Restoration and Enhancement (DNR Scientific and Natural Area Program)

Ecological restoration and site enhancement were completed on 403 acres at 16 Scientific and Natural Areas in order to prevent the loss of important species, plant communities and features from accidental or willful human disturbance and natural catastrophe. Specifically, woodland restoration (including exotics control and deer exclosure), prairie restoration (including seed harvest, seeding, fire breaks, prescribed burning, and exotics control), and site development (fencing, signs, parking lot gates, trail clearing, and site cleanup) were done at one or more of the following SNAs:

- Black Dog Preserve
- Boot Lake
- Cannon River Turtle preserve
- Falls Creek
- Grey Cloud Dunes
- Hastings Sand Coulee
- Lost Valley Prairie
- Mississippi River Islands
- Pine Bend Bluffs

- River Terrace Prairie
- Savage Fen
- St. Croix Savanna
- Seminary Fen
- Spring Creek Prairie
- Wolsfeld Woods
- Wood Rill

Summary Budget Information for Result 2:	LCMR Budget	\$700,651
	Spent	\$700,336
	Balance	\$315

RESULT 3: ACQUIRE SIGNIFICANT HABITAT

Final Report Summary: Seven partner organizations protected 2,973 acres of regionally significant habitat. This was accomplished through acquisition of conservation easements or fee title by the funded Metro Corridors partners or through grants or funding support to local units of government and/or non-profits who are qualified to own and manage the land.

Part 3.1 Critical Lands Protection Program (The Trust for Public Land)

In its Critical Lands Protection Program, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) secured fee title on a total of 893 acres worth \$2,284,000 and conveyed them to public agencies for permanent protection. Individual successes include the following:

- 174 acres of land in the Twin Lakes habitat complex, including a half mile of shoreline on Horseshoe and Horseleg Lakes, which was conveyed to Isanti County for protection as an Isanti County regional park (Horseshoe Lake)
 - 670 acres of land, including three miles of lakeshore and 450 acres of wetlands, in Chisago County. TPL conveyed the land to the Minnesota department of Natural Resources (DNR) for management and protection as a joint Wildlife and Aquatic management Area (East Rush Lake AMA/WMA)
- 49 acres of land in the St. Croix Valley (Chisago County), which was conveyed to the DNR for management and protection as the Franconia Bluffs Scientific and Natural Area

Part 3.2 Protecting Significant Habitat by Acquiring Conservation Easements (Minnesota Land Trust)

During the second phase of the Metro Corridors project, the Minnesota Land Trust continued to work with landowners throughout the greater metropolitan region to permanently protect lands that are key components of Minnesota's remaining natural areas in the region. Contact was initiated with approximately 30 landowners and 10 perpetual conservation easements were completed. Collectively, these conservation easements protect 526 acres of land and more than 3,910 feet of shoreline. Two easements were purchased, one at a bargain price. The remaining 8 easements were donated. An additional seven easements protecting 298 acres of land in

conservation-oriented residential developments also were completed. These conservation easements (not counting the conservation developments) have a known value that exceeds \$1,690,000, with a known donated value of more than \$1,361,000. The cost to the State of Minnesota under this grant to complete these projects was just over \$800 per acre (other State funds came from the Metro Greenways program to purchase one of the easements).

Additionally, the Minnesota Land Trust prepared baseline property reports for each easement, detailing the condition of the property for future monitoring and enforcement. To fund this required perpetual obligation, the Minnesota Land Trust dedicated funds to its segregated Stewardship and Enforcement Fund.

Part 3.3 Fee Acquisition for Significant Habitat in the Minnesota River Valley (The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.)

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. completed fee title acquisition of approximately 174 acres of significant habitat in the Minnesota River Valley within the County of Sibley. The tract consists of 15 acres of oak savanna, 16 acres of high quality wet prairie, 97 acres of floodplain forest and 46 acres of cropland. The oak savanna is located in the floodplain of the Minnesota River, which is very rare. The oak trees in the floodplain will provide an important seed source for future oak plantings in higher sections of the floodplain. The wet prairie is very high quality with numerous species of plants. This property will provide an important parcel of connecting forest and prairie habitat in the Minnesota River bottoms. It will benefit many species of wildlife including wood ducks, mallards, bald eagles and grassland nesting birds as well as numerous resident game species such as turkeys and deer.. The tract also contains numerous oxbow wetlands. The land will be donated to the U S Fish and Wildlife Service for management by the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Part 3.4 Grants to Acquire Significant Habitat (DNR Metro Greenways)

During this program period, eligible applicants nominated 33 projects and requested over \$9 million dollars to restore or acquire regionally important habitats. An advisory committee rated the project proposals and made funding recommendations that were approved by the DNR Commissioner. In addition to the restoration projects described earlier, grants were awarded for six acquisition projects that protected a total of 1,125 acres. Three conservation easements were acquired – two provide a buffer for Wild River State Park and the third buffers the Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area. Elk River purchased a high quality oak forest to add land to a city park and greenway corridor. Finally, a parcel with high quality mixed hardwoods, wetland and lakeshore was purchased in conjunction with the establishment of East Rush Lake Wildlife Management Area established in Chisago County. Metro Greenways funded approximately one-third of the total cost of the acquisition projects, which totaled over \$3.8 million dollars.

Part 3.5 DNR Fish and Wildlife Acquisition & Development (DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife)

This project resulted in fee title acquisition of two additional parcels on the Vermillion River in Dakota County, a parcel on Rush Lake in Washington County, and a parcel on Brown's Creek in Washington County. Totals for the four acquisitions equal 135.2 acres, including 1.42 total miles of shoreline. One of the parcels on the Vermillion River was also paid for with Phase III acquisition dollars, resulting in both acres and miles being divided proportionately between the two phases. Also as part of this project, \$25,000 was used for site clean-up, access, parking areas, and gates on parcels acquired during Phase I.

Part 3.6 Acquisition of Significant Habitat (DNR Scientific and Natural Area Program)

Two sites of high biodiversity significance in Dakota County were acquired in part through this funding as designated Scientific and Natural Areas. First, in cooperation with the Trust for Public Land and the Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Program, an addition to the Pine Bend Bluffs SNA totaling 31.73 acres was acquired. It protects a quarter mile of Mississippi River shoreline and bluffs including a grove of old growth white pine. Second, in cooperation with Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Program and Friends of the Mississippi River, the new Hastings Sand Coulee SNA was created through acquisition of 76.66 acres. It is part of the largest sand gravel prairie remaining in the county and contains 13 rare species of animals and plants.

Part 3.7 Forest Legacy Conservation Easement Acquisition (DNR Division of Forestry)

This appropriation contributed towards the same project as the 2003 Metro Corridors Forest Legacy project. In total, a 42.5-acre conservation easement acquired through this project protects the 55 acre environmentally and historically significant Arcola Mills site (May Township, Washington County). Acquisition of the conservation easement assures that none of the site's significant natural resources will be lost to development and provided funds to the Arcola Mills Historic Foundation to enhance resource interpretation and conservation at the site.

Summary Budget Information for Result 3:	LCMR Budget	\$2,669,349
	Spent	\$2,669,319
	Balance	\$30

TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET:

All Results: Personnel: \$ 281,539
All Results: Equipment: \$ 12,300
All Results: Development: \$ 541,756

All Results: Acquisition:	\$2,588,419
All Results: Other:	\$ 59,636 — this is comprised of:
	• land stewardship: \$115,000
	• printing: \$3,000
	• mapping & event supplies: \$6,900
	• travel: \$3,900
All Results: Contracts:	\$ 46,005
Balance:	\$ 345

TOTAL LCMR PROJECT BUDGET: \$3,530,000

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: See the individual partner work programs.

V. OTHER FUNDS & PARTNERS:

A. Project Partners: (See Table 1)

B. Other Funds being Spent during the Project Period: (See individual partner work programs.)

C. Required Match (if applicable): NA

D. Past Spending: LCMR project appropriations only - **2003:** Metro Wildlife Corridors: \$4.85M; **2001:** Great River Greening: \$910K, Metro Greenways: \$2.73M, DNR SNA: \$264K, DNR Fisheries: \$2M; **1999:** Big Rivers Partnership (incl GRG): \$800K

E. Time: 3 years, until June 30, 2008.

VI. DISSEMINATION: Metro Corridors will periodically distribute information about the program through the widely broadcasted emails to people on the Regional Greenways Collaborative (RGC) database, through the RGC quarterly meetings, and jointly held county meetings. As projects are completed, the partners involved will publicize accomplishments through press releases and organization newsletters and websites.

VII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS: Periodic work program progress reports will be submitted not later than February 15th and August 15th each year, starting with February 15th, 2006. A final work program report will be submitted by December, 2008.

VIII. RESEARCH PROJECTS: NA

2005 McCC Projects	Partners	Budget								
		Revised Allocation (\$)	Spent (\$)	Balance (\$)	Personnel	Contracts	Acq.	Dev./Rest	Equip	Other*
1.1. Develop/coordinate MeC program	DNR - Central Reg Operations	\$ 160,000	\$ 160,000	\$ -	\$160,000					
2.1. Wetland Restoration & Enhancement	Ducks Unlimited (DU)	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ -				\$200,000		
2.2. Grassland Enhance. & Resto. Initiative	Pheasants Forever (PF)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$1,995	\$46,005			\$2,000	
2.3. Restore & enh. sign. wtrshd habitat	Friends of the Mississippi (FMR)	\$ 90,000	\$ 89,685	\$ 315	\$18,025			\$71,224		\$436
2.4. Lower Mn R. Wtrshd Resto/Enhance.	Friend of the Minnesota Valley (FMV)	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$5,000			\$35,000		
2.5. Restore/ enhance significant habitat	Great River Greening (GRG)	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$33,500			\$47,500	\$10,300	\$8,700
2.6. Habitat resto./enhancement grants.	DNR - Metro Greenways (MG)	\$ 170,651	\$ 170,651	\$ -				\$170,651		
2.7. SNA restoration & enhancement	DNR - Div.of Eco.Services (DNR-Eco)	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -	\$32,619			\$17,381		
3.1. Critical Land Protection Program	The Trust for Public Land (TPL)	\$ 620,000	\$ 620,000	\$ -			\$620,000			
3.2. Protect sign. habitat by acquire CE's	Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)	\$ 230,000	\$ 229,970	\$ 30	\$30,400		\$149,070			\$50,500
3.3. Fee acquisition for Mn Valley NWR	MN Valley NWR Trust, Inc. (MVT)	\$ 230,000	\$ 230,000	\$ -			\$230,000			
3.4. Grants & acquisition of fee & CE's	DNR - Metro Greenways (MG)	\$ 1,029,349	\$ 1,029,349	\$ -			\$1,029,349			
3.5. DNR Fish & Wildlife - Acquisition	DNR - Div.of Fish. & Wildlife (DNR-F&W)	\$ 290,000	\$ 290,000	\$ -			\$290,000			
3.6. SNA Acquisition	Eco.Services (DNR-Eco)	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ -			\$250,000			
3.7. Forest Legacy CE Acquisition	DNR - Division of Forestry (DNR-For)	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -			\$20,000			
TOTAL		\$ 3,530,000	\$ 3,529,655	\$ 345	\$281,539	\$46,005	\$2,588,419	\$541,756	\$12,300	\$59,636

* See Individual Work Programs for specific details.