

Project Name | 5-420-B: Wetland Restoration/Bank Feasibility Study

Date | 12-10-2019

To / Contact info | CLFLWD Board of Managers

Cc / Contact info | Mike Kinney, District Administrator

From / Contact info | Jason Naber; Chris Long

Regarding | Wetland Bank Feasibility Study 2019 Progress Update

BACKGROUND

The CLFLWD 2012-2021 Watershed Management Plan identified the need for a Wetland Restoration/Bank Feasibility Study to develop wetland bank credits within the CLFLWD through a District-owned mitigation bank (5420-B). During the April 2019 regular meeting, the Board approved a [scope of work](#) for EOR to complete a Wetland Bank Feasibility Study. This work plan outlined the initial steps needed to screen for sites with high potential for wetland banking, and is part of a multi-year implementation plan aimed at restoring wetlands in the District.

The [2014 Partially Drained Wetland Assessment](#) completed by the Chisago SWCD and Washington Conservation District identified and prioritized partially drained wetlands within the District according to potential for water quality improvement and cost. The cost of developing a wetland bank includes additional permitting, easement acquisition, and long-term monitoring. Acres of restorable, cultivated upland are extremely valuable to the credit potential of a bank as they are credited at higher percentages than existing wetlands. Additionally, a willing landowner is an absolute requirement to bank establishment and will be critical to site feasibility. The Wetland Bank Feasibility Study evaluated previously identified wetlands in the 2014 assessment and other wetlands feasible for banking based on available GIS data.

SERVICES COMPLETED

This memo summarizes the 2019 progress towards completing the Wetland Bank Feasibility Study:

1. [Assessment of Existing Data \(completed\)](#)

EOR evaluated the following datasets to develop an initial list of feasible bank sites; the Minnesota Restorable Wetlands Inventory (RWI), National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), Drained Wetlands Inventory, NRCS soils, and land ownership. NWI and soils data were assessed for partially drained wetlands adjacent to cultivated upland areas with hydric soils, indicating potential for restoration to wetlands. NRCS tools were used to identify local drainage routes and catchment areas to estimate wetland size and restoration strategy. Results from a concurrent District study were also considered: the Agricultural and Rural BMP Incentives/Cost-Share (3-004-C) project which located impoundments for potential water quality benefits. All sites were further screened with landowner parcel data and the most recent guidance on wetland bank accreditation to rank sites by land ownership complexity and credit potential.

EOR identified 20 potential wetland bank sites, 15 of which are in the Bone Lake watershed. The District as a whole has limited availability of farmed wetlands of adequate size, and many of the degraded wetlands cover multiple properties which greatly complicates a

wetland banking project.

2. Preliminary Screening of Identified Sites (completed)

EOR met with Mike Kinney to discuss the sites identified in Task 1. The sites were preliminarily evaluated according to design and implementation cost. Concept designs were advanced for the top 5 sites and assessed for preliminary cost and benefits, including potential acres of restored wetland.

3. Landowner Coordination (in progress)

EOR met with District staff to discuss the sites identified in Task 2 and coordinated with staff on landowner contact. Summary sheets were developed for each site and include pertinent information to facilitate landowner outreach. Since outreach began, several of the top sites were removed due to a lack of landowner interest and lower ranked sites are being advanced. CLFLWD staff is continuing to lead landowner outreach.

Next steps: EOR will further refine concept designs, costs, and benefits for a suitable project on sites with landowner interest.

4. Feasibility Analysis (in progress)

EOR advanced a preliminary feasibility analysis on the top priority sites. This effort included feasibility-level design, evaluation of potential for credit generation, and a preliminary cost-benefit analysis for each site. These results were prepared and presented to District Staff.

Next steps: This feasibility-level analysis can be refined at such time landowner interest is secured for any of the priority sites. EOR will compile feasibility results into a report and meet with District staff to discuss report results.

5. Board Presentation

EOR will present the 2019 progress towards completing the Wetland Bank Feasibility Study at the December 19 Regular Board meeting.