

MEMORANDUM
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

To: Board of Managers
From: Mike Kinney
Subject: Greenway Corridors

Date: October 20, 2021

Background/Discussion

Emmons & Olivier Resources (EOR) will give a presentation on the District's Greenway Corridors initiative during this workshop. Information for each topic previously provided to the Board is linked below.

Previous Board Packet Materials Pertaining to Greenway Corridors

- [March 16, 2021 Board Packet](#) | [Direct Link to Presentation](#)

Also included for review and discussion are documents outlining the FY22 budget allocation for Greenways, linkage to the 2022-2031 Watershed Management Plan, and proposed planning and funding sequencing. Lastly, a document outlining components of successful Outdoor Heritage Fund grant proposals, along with examples of successful proposals (that are watershed-based or lead) is provided.

Attached:

Greenways Budget, WMP, Planning & Funding Sequencing Memo
Outdoor Heritage Fund Proposal Component Checklist

MEMORANDUM

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

To: Board of Managers **Date:** October 21, 2021
From: Mike Kinney
Subject: Greenway FY22 Budget Allocation, Linkage to Watershed Management Plan, and Proposed Planning and Funding Sequencing

Background/Discussion

Provided below is information related to the Greenway FY22 budget allocation and WMP linkage. Also included is a proposed sequencing for planning and funding.

Budget

2022 budget contains \$50,000 for 5-120-B Greenway Corridor Visioning & Assessment (budget comment: EOR assistance - outlook is to expand greenway corridor vision. Implementation will occur in multiple categories once visioning/assessment complete)

WMP

Section 4.6.1.1

5120B. Greenway Corridor Visioning & Assessment

A diversity of water resources (floodplains, wetlands, and drainageways) are concentrated along an existing corridor that runs through the District. This corridor begins in the Washington Judicial Ditch 6 (WJD-6) system (south of Forest Lake, East Basin), flows through Forest Lake proper, and then continues along the Sunrise River to Comfort Lake. This corridor is also adjacent to the Hardwood Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in the south the two corridors could be integrated/connected as one continuous corridor. The city of Forest Lake is projected to be one of the fastest growing areas in Washington County over the next 20 years with a projected population growth of 33-45% from 2015 to 2040. While some subdivision and development have already occurred within this corridor, a significant portion of the land is still in large, undeveloped parcels, presenting an opportunity to define and protect this corridor before development occurs. The first step for establishing a holistic, long-term vision for a greenway corridor in the District is a visioning exercise conducted at a high level to identify the character of greenway options and determine support for concept(s). Outcomes from the greenway visioning exercise include development of the size and location of a greenway, potential benefits and public uses of the corridor, identification of partners and outside funding sources, and a road map for land acquisition and strategies to acquire land at reasonable costs. Establishment of a greenway corridor will take years, if not decades, to reach the full vision, but with the benefit of building an ecological asset within the District for generations to come. Implementation of the greenway corridor will primarily occur through District programs, including Interagency Communication (3006) and Land Acquisition & Management (3012). Project implementation under other issue areas will also support establishment of a greenway corridor, for example, Wetland Banking Implementation (5420B).

Section 8.1.1

Greenway Corridors & Parks

The District will work with LGUs to implement projects as part of a widespread greenway corridor. Improvement and protection of key greenway corridors will provide water quality benefits, protect groundwater recharge areas, preserve key wildlife habitat, and where appropriate, provide public recreation and education opportunities through natural parks. The District will begin the effort with the [Greenway Corridor Visioning & Assessment \(5120B\)](#). Implementation of the assessment's findings will

occur through various methods including programs such as (Interagency Communication (3006)) and (Land Acquisition & Management (3012)). Project implementation under other issue areas will dovetail with the greenway corridor effort, for example, Wetland Banking Implementation (5420B). One major focus area for greenway corridor and natural park spaces is the Forest Lake-Sunrise River-Comfort Lake corridor which spans large portions of the Forest Lake and Comfort Lake management districts. The District will coordinate closely with the Cities of Forest Lake and Wyoming on this effort.

Proposed Greenway Planning & Funding Sequencing

2021

1. **Q4 2021:** H&H model update completion
2. **Q4 2021:** OHF grant application analysis
3. **Q4 2021:** Prepare a list of objectives for the meeting with the land acquisition work group
 - a. Consensus on Greenway goal(s)
 - b. Consensus on the priority areas (WJD-6 and Sunrise River) and therefore the priority municipalities (Forest Lake and Wyoming).
 - c. Consensus on planning approach
4. **Q4 2021:** Check-in with land acquisition work group. Present draft products (prelim concepts, priority areas WMP map) and receive initial feedback
5. **Q4 2021:** Finalize the scope of work from EOR and get it approved by the Board

2022

6. **Q1 2022:** Begin working on the greenway master plan and associated items within EOR scope of work – frame up master plan based on what we know now:
 - a. Priority areas from WMP (figure 2-5)
 - b. Overlaid GIS layers (NWI, 100-yr floodplain, GW vulnerability, PWI watercourses and altered watercourses)
 - c. Preliminary concepts for Sunrise and WJD-6 by EOR
 - d. Known capital improvement project locations, past/present/future (Bixby, Tax Forfeit, Shallow Pond, CR50 IESF, Tranquility Pond)
 - e. Overlay parcel layer and start to think about which parcels would be flagged as high priority. Propose an associated checklist of high priority parcels:
 - i. Falls within a WMP priority area, meaning it is tied to water resource projection
 - ii. Isn't currently developed, or has minimal development (further down the road, I'd think we'll want to tease this out further and identify what is the difference between each parcel – e.g., being publicly-owned and kind of being a green check mark to begin with, being privately owned and undeveloped so it's a high priority to do something about, privately owned SFH which might entail some sort of easement/buffer?)
 - f. Present specific concepts with identified priority parcels to LGUs
8. **Q1 2022:** Master plan refinement, incorporation of vulnerability assessment and natural resource inventories
9. **Q2 2022:** Begin drafting OHF grant application
10. **Q2 2022:** Re-engagement with LGUs Iterative process with the cities to further drill down into what areas of focus and what greenway components we are proposing for each area (some areas overlap CIPs, some are large undeveloped privately owned tracts of land, some are unused publicly-owned parcels that are good for now or could be improved)
11. **Q2-Q3 2022:** Iterative process of checking in with cities/counties, getting feedback, refining the master plan, then returning to the cities/counties with a revised proposal until we reach alignment.
12. **Q2-Q3 2022:** Formalizing OHF grant proposal (meet with LSOHC staff to review OHF proposal concept and receive feedback)

13. **Q4 2022:** Draft of master plan out for public comment and hold a public hearing to solicit public input. Send out in our listserv distribution, to CAC, to lake associations, newspaper posting etc.

2023

14. **Q1 2023:** Final refinements and review of OHF grant proposal. Finalize master plan (w/ understanding that it can be amended and treated as dynamic document)
15. **Q2 2023:** Deadline for OHF grant proposal (due May 2023)
16. **Q3 2023-Q2 2024:** Begin individual landowner outreach efforts to develop project and parcel acquisition pool

2024

17. **Q3 2024:** OHF grant awarded (July 2024)

MEMORANDUM

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

To: Board of Managers

Date: October 22, 2021

From: Mike Kinney

Subject: Outdoor Heritage Fund Successful Proposal Components

Background/Discussion

Outlined below are essential components of successful Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) proposals. Previous examples of successful watershed-based or lead proposals that have been funded by the OHF are also provided.

- **Programmatic**
 - Prioritized
 - Prioritization informed by goal(s), by targets, by potential sources of leverage, by level of urgency, etc.
 - Targeted
 - Phases, or scalable. Phasing is an acceptable approach to LSOHC; if utilizing this approach tie into the strategic nature of planned phasing and why it is structured as such (based upon priorities, costs, opportunities, etc.)
- **Clearly defined goal(s)**
 - With strong linkage to priorities and targets
 - Definition of success (successful outcomes of program not project-based but define net outcome and impact on landscape/watershed level)
- **Collaborative**
 - Working in partnership
 - Clearly defined roles & responsibilities
- **Alignment with other local and state (planning & implementation) efforts**
 - Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan
 - State Wildlife Action Plan (and Wildlife Action Network)
 - Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program & Natural Resource System Framework
 - LSC 1W1P
 - Other planning efforts such as SNA Strategic Plan, Duck Recovery Plan, or TNC Resilient Landscapes
- **Locally led and driven**
- **Local support (particularly LGUs and elected officials)**
- **Leverage other (funding) sources**
 - Matching funds help to elevate proposal in LSOHC's eyes, indicate support, ability to amplify OHF impacts, and "skin-in-the-game."

Greenway planning should inform which funding sources to pursue, but funding should not determine Greenway goals, priorities, and targets. More specifically, tailor proposal to the intent of associated funding source and emphasize strategies/priorities/targets identified in the Greenways Master Plan(s) that accentuate/align with purpose of funding source.

The OHF has defined funding parameters, namely that it is intended to support projects that, “restore, protect, and enhance Minnesota's wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. . .” Projects where primary focus is water quality/quantity improvements tend to be pushed to other sources, like the Clean Water Fund, or Federal 319 grants. The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and staff are very cognizant of this; consideration of these defined funding parameters centered on habitat protection or restoration is crucial in the structure of any proposal strategy. Emphasize aquatic habitat protection and restoration, emphasize habitat corridor preservation and creation, and multiple benefits of greenway corridors, but do not start with emphasizing water storage/flood attenuation & pollutant reductions.

[Shell Rock River Habitat Restoration Program](#)

On Phase 10. Focus of program is:

- Create wetlands to improve waterfowl breeding and migratory success
- Remove rough fish species and restore desirable fish, waterfowl and wildlife populations aiming at critical species of concern
- Increase fish habitat, spawning areas and waterfowl nesting areas
- Restore streambanks and increase wildlife habitat and its natural prairie
- Increase and improve the use of restored public natural resources
- Enhance native aquatic rooted vegetation and protect the watershed from invasive species

Locally-led and supported. Leverage. Program-based, not project based. Prioritized and targeted.

[Sauk River Watershed Habitat and Protection Program](#)

On Phase 4. Program focus is protection, restoration and enhancement of critical habitat within the Sauk River Watershed, using conservation easements and fee land acquisition. Properties selected are strategically targeted using an innovative site prioritization model that maximizes conservation benefit and financial leverage. The prioritization framework uses SGCN and quality habitat as major weighting factors for both protection and restoration/enhancement project selection.

Locally led and supported (Sauk River Watershed District is program lead, 4 different SWCDs are partners named on proposal). Prioritized (easement acquisition is based upon competitive ranking process that emphasizes habitat size, habitat quality, and landscape context). Robust partnership with mix of local, state, and federal government, and conservation nonprofits, each with distinct role and responsibilities.

[Resilient Habitat for Heritage Brook Trout](#)

On Phase 1. Program focus on areas with significant viable populations of heritage (genetic remnant) brook trout in watershed with high density of springs/seeps. Uses both protection and restoration tools to

conserve springsheds and maintain resiliency of select watersheds to ensure function going forward as climate changes.

Prioritized. Large partnership with distinct roles/responsibilities. One detriment is lack of local leadership, but in implementation of program SWCDs are utilized for landowner outreach, coordination, and partnership.

[Heron Lake Area Conservation Partnership](#)

On Phase 1. Program focus is protection and restoration of high-value wetland and prairie lands identified as critical habitat for many SGCN. Tracts are prioritized and landowner outreach targeted to maximize wildlife habitat conservation benefit and financial investment. Focus areas within the Heron Lake Watershed are those areas with numerous restorable wetlands adjacent to existing public and protected lands identified by utilization of the USFWS Restorable Wetlands Duck Production model along with public and protected lands layers and areas identified within the MN Prairie Plan, MN Long Range Duck Recovery Plan, Long Range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in MN, and the MN County Biological Survey.

Locally led and supported (Heron Lake Watershed District is program lead). Prioritized (easement acquisition is based upon competitive ranking process that emphasizes habitat size, habitat quality, and landscape context). Robust partnership with mix of local, state, and federal government, and conservation nonprofits, each with distinct role and responsibilities.