

M.L. 2015 Projects

MN Laws 2015, Chapter 76, Section 2 (beginning July 1, 2015)

For the FY 2016 and FY 2017 biennium (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2017), approximately \$46.3 million is available each year (total = \$92,674,000) for funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. In response to the 2015 Request for Proposal (RFP) 152 proposals requesting a total of approximately \$126.3 million were received. Through a competitive, multi-step process, 76 of these proposals, requesting a total of \$74.9 million, were chosen to present to the LCCMR and 65 of those proposals were selected to receive a recommendation for funding to the 2015 MN Legislature. The Legislature adopted 63 of these project recommendations and replaced two of them with two new project appropriations on 05/18/15. The project appropriations adopted by the Legislature were signed into law by the Governor on 05/22/15.

LINKS TO:

- [Print-ready PDF list](#) of the M.L. 2015 projects adopted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.
- [Summary](#) of appropriations and expected outcomes
- Additional information on LCCMR's [M.L. 2015 proposal and funding process](#)

NOTE: For all projects, [contact us](#) to obtain the most up-to-date work programs for current projects (project updates are required twice each year) or the final reports of completed projects.

When available, we have provided links to web sites related to the project. The sites linked to this page are not created, maintained, or endorsed by the LCCMR office or the Minnesota Legislature.

MN Laws 2015, Chapter 76, Section 2

Subd. 03 Foundational Natural Resource Data and Information

Assessing Ecological Impact of St. Anthony Falls Lock Closure

Subd. 03p \$125,000 TF

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Appropriation Language

\$125,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership to study the impact of altered river flow due to closure of the Upper Lock on the Mississippi River at St. Anthony Falls on the physical and biological characteristics of the river between the Coon Rapids Dam and Lock and Dam No. 1 in order to inform future river restoration efforts.

OVERALL PROJECT OUTCOME AND RESULTS

On June 10, 2015, the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam was closed to navigation. This closure, and the resulting changes to navigation and dredging, is expected to alter the sediment dynamics of the Mississippi River between Coon Rapids Dam and Ford Dam. This project was undertaken to develop a baseline condition of the Mississippi River using physical, chemical, and biological indicators that can be tracked over time as the river's ecosystem responds to adjustments in management. Lessons learned from this project are expected to help develop a better understanding of the relationships between river management, hydrology, sediment dynamics and river ecology that can be applied to other river management scenarios.

The project team collected bathymetry, water chemistry, sediment, invertebrate, and mussel data to establish the physical, chemical, and biological condition of the river at the time of lock closure. They also sourced existing data from state and local agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), into a common database. The project team then critically evaluated the available physical, chemical, and biological data to identify key indicators of changes in river health.

No single indicator can provide a complete measurement of changes in the river. We suggest that monitoring within each category of data (physical, chemical, and biological) would allow for the most complete assessment of future river changes. In the physical category, bathymetry data would be an effective indicator to assess the impacts of stopping dredging on river habitat. In the chemical category, water quality data are relatively simple to monitor and are part of ongoing programs. In the biological category, mussels are publicly relatable and also integrate physical (habitat) and chemical (total suspended solids) parameters in their responses to the riverine environment.

A final report summarizing the findings entitled *Assessing the Ecological Impact of Lock Closure* will be submitted to the LCCMR.

PROJECT RESULTS USE AND DISSEMINATION

Dozens, if not hundreds, of people and organizations are committed to the future of the Minneapolis riverfront. The results of a scientific study conducted at the time of the lock closure, a historic event by nearly any measure, is important for many of the planning and program efforts going forward. Accordingly, the study team took a multifaceted approach to dissemination of project results; these efforts will continue beyond the end of the actual grant period itself.

In-person presentations

Project staff took part in two events dedicated to disseminating the results of the study. Lead scientist Jane Mazack presented preliminary findings at the "Sip of Science" program at the Aster Cafe in Minneapolis. Mazack and DNR scientist Mike Davis were part of a Riverfront Vitality Forum, presented by the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership at the Mill City Museum.

Both presentations began from a foundational understanding that treated the lock closure as the latest in a long series of river manipulations that have taken place on the Minneapolis stretch of the river. The presentations then detailed the study's methodology, key components of what was being sought, and the preliminary results.

Digital/social media

The dissemination of project results through digital social media has been awaiting final development of project results. Project team members from the River Life program manage a blog "River Talk", as well as a digital map, the River Atlas and Twitter and Facebook feeds. We expect the map of project results to be posted to the River Atlas once the Atlas staff member returns from summer leave.

Social media feeds through Twitter and Facebook will likewise be activated through at least December 2016.

The report, as well as significant supplemental material and links to project data, will be posted on the River Life web site as well as the sites of the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership and the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.

River Life publishes a quarterly digital publication, Open Rivers: Rethinking the Mississippi River Planning is under way to have Issue 4, published in October 2016, focusing on the results and studies of the project.

Project completed: 6/30/2017

FINAL REPORT (PDF)

Subd. 09 Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Wildlife Management Area Acquisition

Subd. 09h \$400,000 TF

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Appropriation Language

\$400,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for Phase VIII of the Metro Conservation Corridors partnership to acquire in fee at least 82 acres along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River in Dakota County within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards. This appropriation may not be used to purchase habitable residential structures, unless

expressly approved in the work plan. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2018, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

OVERALL PROJECT OUTCOME AND RESULTS

The DNR, in partnership with Dakota County, acquired 169.59 acres of high quality habitat along the lower reaches of the Vermillion River on April 27, 2016. The acquisition consists of several disjoint parcels that are inholdings within the Gores Pool Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and the Vermillion River Complex. This was a high-priority acquisition for the Department of Natural Resources as the area is classified as an Outstanding Regionally Significant Ecological Area for documented colonial waterbird nesting and red shouldered hawks. The property includes more than one mile of river shoreline, high value wetlands and floodplain forest (red oak- sugar maple- basswood forest; silver maple floodplain forest) important for waterfowl, beaver and mink, whitetail deer and numerous other species including non-game species of special concern. Bald eagles and common snapping turtles are present; lake sturgeon and blue sucker occur in Mississippi River Pool 3 nearby. The acquisition reduced the WMA boundary by approximately one mile and resolves potential for boundary dispute.

PROJECT RESULTS USE AND DISSEMINATION

This parcel will soon be designated as part of the statewide WMA system (anticipated in August, 2016). This process involves publishing a designation order in the State Registrar, and a news release announcing this and other recently acquired WMA lands. The news release will mention the use of Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund for the acquisition.

Project dcompleted: 6/30/2017

[FINAL REPORT](#) (PDF)