

Project Summary - April, 2008

At its December 18, 2007 meeting, the Washington County Board of Commissioners directed staff to begin discussions with property owners about obtaining land and conservation easements on ten properties as part of the new Land and Water Legacy Program. These projects would be funded by the sale of up to \$20 million of tax exempt bonds approved by the voters in November 2006. The county received 28 applications from landowners who were interested in selling fee title to their land or in entering into a contract to preserve their land in its natural state. Over the last several months staff and the Washington County Parks and Open Space Commission evaluated the proposals and prepared a recommendation for the County Board's consideration. The evaluation included technical evaluations of all sites, comments submitted by local units of government and other organizations, and site visits.

Commissioners directed staff to seek valuations and begin negotiations on nine priority projects that best exemplify the purposes of the referendum and county board priorities. The County Board also authorized providing funds to the cities of Oakdale and Hugo under the Local Match Program to complete two projects. The sites recommended by the Parks and Open Space Commission are located throughout the county in areas where residents will have easy access to enjoy them; two projects would provide a regional recreational trail opportunity, two projects would provide local trail opportunities, and one is within a county park. All projects would be visible from the St. Croix River or from major county roadways. Most of the projects would have important water quality features including trout streams, lands immediately adjacent to and along major tributaries feeding into the St. Croix River, and lands in areas with high risk for groundwater contamination. A major factor the Parks and Open Spaces Commission considered in evaluating the projects was whether the parcel connected with other already protected lands. All 11 projects are located immediately adjacent to or very near other land that is protected as public land or by a permanent conservation easement.

Project Summary – April 2008

The County Board approved 8 projects through the Competitive Program. These were chosen from 26 applications after a careful review and ranking of each proposal that included a technical evaluation of all sites, consideration of comments submitted by local units of government and other organizations, and site visits.

- One project would serve as a segment of a state recreational trail, two projects would create a new regional recreational trail, and two projects would provide a local trail opportunity.
- Three projects are within county parks.
- Three projects have frontage along the St. Croix River.
- Most of the projects would have important water quality features including trout streams, lands immediately adjacent to and along major tributaries feeding into the St. Croix River, and lands in areas with high risk for groundwater contamination.
- All projects except one are visible from the St. Croix River or from a county roadway.
- All projects are located immediately adjacent to or very near other land that is protected as public land or by a permanent conservation easement.

Competitive Program

The County Board approved 8 projects through the Competitive Program. These were chosen from 26 applications after a careful review and ranking of each proposal that included a technical evaluation of all sites, consideration of comments submitted by local units of government and other organizations, and site visits.

Highest Priority

Project 16 - Bill McDonald: conservation easement on 113 acres in Stillwater Township; ¼ mile of shoreline on Silver Lake, the headwaters of Silver Creek, priority water body of the watershed district and a major tributary to the St. Croix River

Project 20 - Lars Steltzner: conservation easement on 12 acres in Afton; adjacent to Valley Creek, a major tributary to the St. Croix River; protects a high-quality fen on adjacent land already protected as part of the Belwin Nature Center

Project 23 - Tim Behrends: conservation easement on 95 acres in Denmark Township and fee acquisition of a corridor that would serve as a segment of the St. Croix River Valley Regional Trail; 1,400 feet of St. Croix River frontage with wooded ravines and bluff tops; adjacent to the St. Croix Trail National Scenic Byway

Project 24 - John Leadholm: fee acquisition of 90 acres in Denmark Township; one-half mile of St. Croix River frontage with wooded ravines and bluff tops; provides a segment of the St. Croix River Valley Regional Trail; adjacent to the St. Croix Trail National Scenic Byway

Project 25 - David Rowe: conservation easement on 83 acres in Denmark Township; 1300 feet of St. Croix River frontage with wooded ravines and bluff tops; high-quality old-growth forest; portion of site is with St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park

Secondary Priority

Project 9 - Tom Armstrong: conservation easement on 60 acres in Lake Elmo; along Farney Creek a tributary to Eagle Point Lake in Lake Elmo Regional Park; adjacent to other already protected lands

Project 18 - John Daley: conservation easement on 50 acres in Afton; 3,000 feet along the South Branch and 1,150 feet along the West Fork of Valley Creek, a tributary to the St. Croix River; woodlands, wetlands and meadows

Project 26 - Pat Lilligren: conservation easement on 32 acres in Denmark Township; one-half mile along Trout Brook, a tributary to the St. Croix River; identified by the DNR as an ecological area of regional significance

Local Match Program

The County Board has approved providing funds to two cities and one non-profit organization to complete three projects under the Local Match Program.

Project # 11 - Priory Site: fee acquisition of 10 acres in Oakdale; links two already protected wetland areas along Highway 5 near the intersection with Century Avenue; city trail will traverse the site

Project # 5 - Ben Linden Site: fee acquisition of 26 acres in Hugo; headwaters of Judicial Ditch 2 that flows north through Rice Lake and the Rice Lake Wildlife Management Area, a popular duck-hunting spot

Project #29 - MN Zephyr Trail Corridor: conservation easement over a portion of a 6-mile corridor from Stillwater to Grant; partnership with the DNR and Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota to acquire the corridor to become the Brown's Creek Segment of the Willard Munger State Trail

Past Projects - Purchase of Development Rights

The county completed the following seven projects and protected 203 acres through the county's Purchase of Development Rights Program, the predecessor to the Land and Water Legacy Program.

Hackman Site: conservation easement over 60 acres in May Township owned by Wilder Foundation, completes a four-mile ecological corridor stretching from the St. Croix River west to the Warner Nature Center

Arcola Mills: conservation easement over 47 acres in May Township owned by the Arcola Mills Foundation, ½ mile of frontage on the St. Croix River

Baird Estates: conservation easement over 40 acres in May Township, part of 100 acres of permanently-protected open space in a 190-acre subdivision, contains trail right-of-way for extension of Gateway Trail

Kaye Property: conservation easement over 10 acres in Stillwater Township at the headwaters of Silver Creek

Episcopal Diocese Site: conservation easement over 4 acres in Oakdale, serves as a neighborhood park

Doerr Site: conservation easement over 30 acres in eastern Woodbury, headwaters of Valley Creek, part of 200-acre greenway owned by the City of Woodbury

Ratzlaff Site: conservation easement over 12 acres in southern Woodbury, owned by South Washington Watershed District, part of a 52-acre corridor of storm water infiltration basins offering opportunities for upland habitat restoration and extension of the city trail system

Land and Water Legacy Program 2007 Funding Recommendations And Past Projects

Applications

- Competitive Program - Highest Priority
- Competitive Program - Secondary Priority
- Local Match Program
- Opportunity Purchase
- ★ Past Projects - Purchase of Development Rights Program

Trails

- Gateway Trail
- Separated Trail

Parks

- City
- County
- State
- Nature Center
- Scientific and Natural Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Wildlife Refuge

