



**Title:** Ordering of the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project and Authorization to Release a Request for Proposals for Design and Engineering Services

**Resolution number:** 24-015

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**Reviewed by:** Name/Title: Michael Hayman, Project Planning Director; Chuck Holtman, Smith Partners

**Recommended action:** The Board of Managers formally orders the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project and authorizes the release of a request for proposals (RFP) for design and engineering services.

**Schedule:** March 2024 – Release RFP for design and engineering services  
May 2024 – Award contract for design and engineering services  
Summer/Fall 2024 – Project design  
Fall/Winter 2024 – Bid solicitation and construction contracting

**Budget considerations:** Fund name and code: East Auburn Wetland Restoration (3160)  
Fund budget : \$550,000  
Expenditures to date: \$0  
Requested amount of funding: Not applicable

**Past Board action:**

Res # 21-052	Authorization to Execute Contract for Assessment for the East Auburn Wetland Monitoring and Feasibility Support
Res # 22-063	Authorization to release a Request for Proposals for the East Auburn Wetlands feasibility study.
Res # 22-085	Authorization to Award Contract for East Auburn Wetlands Feasibility Study

**Summary:**

The 2017 Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Watershed Management Plan (WMP) identifies that impairments in East Auburn Lake are driven primarily by external wetland phosphorus export making its way into the lake. The WMP also identifies the wetland systems between Wassermann Lake and East Auburn Lake as a potential restoration opportunity to address nutrient export to East Auburn Lake.

Beginning in 2019, MCWD staff analyzed historical water quality data to determine the extent to which the wetland system between Wassermann Lake and East Auburn Lake exports phosphorus. That analysis revealed that the phosphorus was higher at the outlet of the wetland complex rather than the inlet, exporting an approximate 135 pounds of phosphorus per year to East Auburn Lake. In 2021, MCWD staff commenced a refined water quality sampling, hydrology, and vegetation analysis, in cooperation with Stantec, in the wetland system to identify if there is a specific area within the wetlands responsible for the majority of the phosphorus export. This analysis indicated that a relatively small portion of the wetland complex, the Cell 1 Wetland, is the primary driver of phosphorus export.

In September 2022, the board authorized the release of Request for Proposals (RFP) for feasibility to identify opportunities to address phosphorus export from the wetland. The feasibility study was contracted in 2023 with Moore Engineering and its subconsultants, Wetland Solutions, Inc., and Dr. Nathan Johnson from the University of Minnesota, with the primary objective of evaluating and recommending alternative strategies to manage phosphorus export from the wetland to East Auburn Lake. The study was completed in October 2023 and assessed seven alternative approaches to nutrient reduction and provided a final restoration project recommendation. The final report (attachment A) identified hydrologic restoration of the wetland through the installation of an outlet control structure as an opportunity to reduce nutrient export to East Auburn Lake by 50% while restoring the wetland to a more natural hydrologic condition. When compared to other approaches to nutrient reduction in wetland systems, hydrologic restoration is viewed as a cost-effective option with both lower regulatory obstacles, and total design and construction costs. The project estimate in the 2024 budget is \$550,000, to be funded by means of the District ad valorem tax levy. The feasibility study estimates a total design and construction cost of approximately \$300,000, signifying a project alternative with an opportunity to be delivered under the initial project budget.

At its January 25, 2024 meeting, the Board received an update from staff on the outcomes of the feasibility study and staff's recent coordination to initiate project design with the City of Victoria (City), which owns the land on which the project will occur. The Board was informed that the City supports the District's project goals and wishes to facilitate project development and implementation, and potentially integrate trail improvements with the proposed outlet control structure.

As such, on February 26, 2024, the Victoria City Council approved a resolution of support for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project (attachment B). Through the resolution, the City authorizes the District to access city land within the project area and to perform surveys and investigations for the purpose of project design. While the resolution does not serve as a legal contract for providing rights to access the land, the City Council authorizes city staff to work with MCWD to develop such project agreements, easements or other documents to allow the District to construct and maintain the project on city land, and to bring such documents forward for consideration by the Council.

Staff also shared the estimated project timeline and project budget with the Board at its January 25, 2024 meeting. Staff anticipates releasing the RFP for design and engineering services following the March 14, 2024 board meeting, with an anticipated contract award in May 2024. The project would then enter the project design phase through the summer and fall of 2024 to prepare for bidding and construction commencing early winter 2024. Construction of the project is expected to be complete in 2025.

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes §103B.251, MCWD staff have provided for notice of public hearing on March 14, 2024. The hearing will afford an opportunity for the public to address the Board

on the ordering of the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project. Absent comment that warrants further consideration, MCWD staff recommends that the Board formally order the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project and advance the project into the design phase through release of an RFP for design and engineering services (attachment C).

**Supporting documents (list attachments):**

- East Auburn Wetland Restoration Feasibility Study
- Resolution of Support from the City of Victoria for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project
- Request for Proposals for Engineering for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration



## RESOLUTION

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- WHEREAS the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) has developed a plan for the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed (SMCHB) that identifies implementation strategies to achieve MCWD's goals of protecting and improving water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity, and thriving communities through land use and water integration;
- WHEREAS the MCWD Watershed Management Plan (WMP) identifies the wetlands between Wassermann Lake and East Auburn Lake as the location of a capital investment to reduce watershed nutrient loading to improve water clarity and create a more abundant and diverse aquatic vegetation community in East Auburn Lake;
- WHEREAS in 2021 and 2022, MCWD staff conducted a refined water quality sampling, hydrology, and vegetation analysis in the wetland system between Wassermann Lake and East Auburn Lake to identify specific areas within the wetland responsible for the majority of the phosphorus export;
- WHEREAS the analysis indicated that the wetland cell (cell 1) at the outlet of Wasserman Lake is the primary driver of phosphorus export to East Auburn Lake, indicating total phosphorus concentration in groundwater is much greater than that in the stream channel and that the phosphorus in groundwater and wetland soil is mobilizing and exporting to downstream East Auburn Lake;
- WHEREAS on December 15, 2022, the MCWD Board of Managers approved a contract with Moore Engineering to conduct a feasibility study for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration;
- WHEREAS in October 2023, Moore Engineering delivered its final report to MCWD, assessing seven alternative approaches to nutrient reduction in the Cell 1 wetland, and identified hydrologic restoration of the wetland through the installation of an outlet control structure as the most feasible and cost effective opportunity to reduce nutrient export to East Auburn Lake;
- WHEREAS on January 25, 2024, the Board of Managers reviewed the feasibility report and directed staff to continue partnership discussions with the City of Victoria to effectively advance the project;
- WHEREAS Victoria supports MCWD's project goals and wishes to facilitate project development and implementation, and potentially to integrate city trail improvements with the proposed outlet control structure;
- WHEREAS on February 26, 2024, the Victoria City Council adopted a resolution of support that expressed Victoria's support for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration project; authorized the MCWD to access city land within the project area to perform surveys and investigations for the purpose of project design; and authorized city staff to work with MCWD staff to develop project agreements, easements or other documents necessary for the District to construct and maintain the project on city land, and bring such documents forward for consideration by the Council;

WHEREAS in accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 103B.251, subdivision 3, the MCWD held a duly noticed public hearing on ordering of the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project on March 14, 2024, at which time all interested parties had an opportunity to address the Board on the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project;

WHEREAS the Board of Managers finds that the Project will be conducive to public health and promote the general welfare, and is in compliance with Minnesota Statutes §§103B.205 to 103B.255 and the WMP adopted pursuant to §103B.231;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § 103B.251 and the WMP, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers orders the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the MCWD Board of Managers authorizes the District Administrator, on advice of counsel, to release the Request for Proposals for Engineering Design Services.

Resolution Number 24-015 was moved by Manager Olson, seconded by Manager Trifles. Motion to adopt the resolution 5 ayes, 0 nays, 0 abstentions. Date: March 14, 2024.

Eugene J. Malmitt Date: 3-14-2024  
Secretary