



**Title:** Authorizing East Auburn Wetland Restoration Design Contract

**Resolution number:** 24-032

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**Reviewed by:** Name/Title: Kailey Cermak, Planner-Project Manager; Sophia Green, Planner-Project Manager

**Recommended action:** The Board of Managers authorizes contract execution for design of the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project in the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay subwatershed.

**Schedule:** May 2024: Project kickoff  
Summer 2024: 30-60-90% design  
Fall 2024: Bid solicitation and construction contracting  
January 2025: Initiate construction

**Budget considerations:** Fund name and code: East Auburn Wetland Restoration (3160)  
Fund budget: \$550,000  
Expenditures to date: \$0  
Requested amount of funding: disclosed under separate cover

**Past Board action:**

Res # 24-015	Ordering of the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project and Authorization to Release a Request for Proposals for Design and Engineering Services
Res # 22-085	Authorization to Award Contract for East Auburn Wetlands Feasibility Study
Res # 22-063	Authorization to release a Request for Proposals for the East Auburn Wetlands feasibility study
Res # 21-052	Authorization to Execute Contract for Assessment for the East Auburn Wetland Monitoring and Feasibility Support

**Background:**

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 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.

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. 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.

On March 14, 2024, the Board of Managers formally ordered the project and advanced the project into the design phase by authorizing the release of a request for proposals (RFP) for design and engineering services.

## **RFP Process**

### Scope

On March 15, 2024, MCWD distributed the RFP to its running list of more than 40 local and national design and engineering firms and posted to the MCWD website. The RFP noted a design budget of \$68,000 with a scope of work that includes (1) 30% design, (2) 60-90% design, and (3) final plans, specifications, and bid support. Proposers were also asked to provide a cost-estimate for construction oversight (task four), which will be funded separately and negotiated once final plans have been developed. The deadline for submittal was Wednesday, April 10, 2024. MCWD received proposals from three firms: Field to Flyway Engineering, ISG, and Moore Engineering.

### Proposal Evaluation

In the RFP, firms were advised that MCWD would select a consultant based on proposed methodology, experience, and cost. The Board may consider these factors as it chooses and select a consultant for the work on the basis of its judgment.

A team of four MCWD staff evaluated the written proposals. The team evaluated the firms based on the following:

- Project understanding
- Methods and approach
- Project team and experience
- Cost

Following each submission's initial review and scoring, two firms were selected for interviews – ISG and Moore Engineering. Interviews were conducted by Project Planning staff and were structured such that the selected firms would present their proposal, followed by an in-depth question-and-answer session conducted by MCWD staff.

### Recommendation

Staff is recommending that Moore Engineering (Moore) be selected as the consultant and awarded the contract for services detailed in the Moore proposal, which is provided under separate cover to the Board of Managers. Moore's proposal impressed with its thoroughness and clarity, demonstrating a strong understanding of the project's objectives, decision points, and challenges, particularly differentiating itself during the interview portion of the RFP process. Moore detailed a comprehensive approach to geotechnical evaluation and designing a weir structure in consideration of the water quality benefits to downstream East Auburn Lake. In addition, Moore demonstrated a deep understanding of the permitting complexities and needs of this project and how it will work in coordination with MCWD to support this aspect of the project. Lastly, Moore brings a strong team to the project, many of whom have contributed to the modeling and design efforts during the project's feasibility stage.

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 13.591, subdivision 3(b), the submitted proposals will not be part of the public record until the contract has been executed. A copy of all submitted proposals will have been distributed to the Board of Managers, via email, for review prior to the May 9, 2024, meeting.

### Next Steps

Following authorization to award the contract, staff will work with Moore's project manager to finalize the scope of work and contract. Staff do not anticipate the scope requiring any substantive changes. The final contract will not exceed the amount set forth in the proposal. The design team is expected to initiate work by mid-May 2024.



## 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, with the potential to integrate city trail improvements with construction of 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 on March 14, 2024, the Board of Managers formally ordered the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project and advanced the project into the design phase by authorizing the release of a request for proposals (RFP) for design and engineering services;

WHEREAS in response to the RFP, MCWD received written proposals from Field to Flyway Engineering, ISG, and Moore Engineering. MCWD staff evaluated written proposals based on project understanding, methods and approach, project team and experience, and cost;

WHEREAS on the basis of its evaluation of written proposals and consultant interviews, staff recommends the selection of Moore Engineering, based on its strong project understanding, detailed and comprehensive approach, and its experienced team;

WHEREAS the Board of Managers finds that the evaluation has been thorough and properly structured, and that the work proposed by Moore Engineering is demonstrated to be competitive and within budget;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers authorizes the District Administrator, on advice of legal counsel, to execute a contract with Moore Engineering for design and engineering services for the East Auburn Wetland Restoration Project, in accordance with the developed scope of work as the Administrator may refine it, and in an amount not to exceed the amount set forth in the proposal, and authorizes the Administrator to execute contract amendments in his discretion up to an additional 10 percent, in aggregate, of the contract amount.

Resolution Number 24-032 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_. Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date: May 9, 2024.

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Secretary Date: \_\_\_\_\_