

Wetland banking program offers benefits to infrastructure, landowners, habitat



More than 300 acres of wetlands will be restored to generate wetland mitigation for the Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program (LGRWRP) as a result of a request for proposals that closed April 17.

Landowners will have another opportunity to apply later this summer.

Under Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), wetlands that are filled or drained must be replaced through a process called wetland mitigation. Overseen by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), the LGRWRP develops wetland mitigation

by restoring previously drained or filled wetlands and adjacent uplands. It provides this wetland mitigation to local road authorities — such as counties, cities and townships — to offset impacts to wetlands that occur while repairing, restoring or replacing public roads.

The program relies on landowners throughout Minnesota who are interested in restoring wetlands to their original condition.

Three options are available to landowners.

Landowners can enroll land in a conservation easement and receive a per-acre payment. Under this option, BWSR funds and oversees all wetland

restoration work and receives all credits generated by the project.

The second option: Landowners can pay for restoration costs themselves, and then sell any credits generated by the project to BWSR or on the private market. The third option is a partnership where a contract determines how restoration tasks and the associated credits generated are split between the landowner and BWSR.

More than 8,000 acres have been restored since the



A Scott County restoration completed in 2019 provided mitigation via the Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program. The work restored 45 acres of wetlands and 35 acres of upland habitat.

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“ There’s an opportunity for landowners to get a great return on investment for these projects. Oftentimes, the payment rate is higher than the land value itself. ”

— Dennis Rodacker, BWSR wetland mitigation supervisor

program began in 1996. Before the LGRWRP was established, local road authorities were responsible for their own wetland mitigation.

“The LGRWRP takes that burden off local road authorities, providing high-quality wetland replacement much more efficiently,” said Dennis Rodacker, BWSR wetland mitigation supervisor.

The LGRWRP offers the highest payment rate for conservation easements in the state, with rates ranging from 20% to 50% more than Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement rates.

“There’s an opportunity for landowners to get a great return on investment for these projects,” Rodacker



A Scott County wetland restoration was seeded with native vegetation in 2020 after construction wrapped up in 2019. The restoration provides wetland mitigation through the state's Local Government Road Wetland Replacement Program.

said. “Oftentimes, the payment rate is higher than the land value itself.”

The program received \$12 million in capital

investment funds in 2023.

Despite the attractive payment rate and robust funding from the state Legislature, Rodacker said

the program has faced challenges with low sign-up rates in recent years.

“We want to make sure landowners know that this is an option, and that BWSR is here to help guide them through the process,” Rodacker said.

“Raising awareness about the program is important because there are multiple benefits. Landowners benefit by taking marginal land out of production and receiving a premium payment rate in return. Local road authorities benefit from a streamlined process for completing projects without causing negative impacts to wetlands. And our natural resources benefit when we maintain this no-net-loss policy for our wetlands,” he said.