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FINAL REPORT

2001 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2004

TITLE: Red River Mediation Agreement (part 2c of CH-01 "Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors")

PROJECT MANAGER: Jon Schneider

ORGANIZATION: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

ADDRESS: 311 East Lake Geneva Road, Alexandria, MN 56308

WEB ADDRESS: www.ducks.org, www.prairie.ducks.org, www.mnducks.org

FUND:

LEGAL CITATION: Minnesota Laws 2001, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Sec. 14, Subd. 4 (e).



APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$265,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Ducks Unlimited provided technical assistance to six Red River Watershed District Mediation Agreement Project Teams (PT) and private landowners within the Aspen Parklands, Border Prairie, and Upper Minnesota River Project Areas (#1, 3, & 6). This included a DU biologist engineer who attended remote monthly Project Team meetings from Thief River Falls to Wheaton, DU and consultant engineering services, and contract technicians who promoted the USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). These efforts resulted in 744 acres of wetlands being restored in 231 basins that provide both wildlife habitat and flood control benefits, along with an engineering design report for a 60-acre wetland restoration to help solve a local flooding problem. Digital restorable wetland inventories for Stevens and Big Stone Counties were also developed to help Project Teams find large drained wetlands with both flood control and wildlife habitat features. Although no large-scale projects were completed during this project, the smaller wetland basins restored will provide some flood storage and were approved by Red River Watershed Districts. In addition, significant technical assistance was provided on several large-scale flood control projects that were not yet constructed due to land control and cost. Major barriers to constructing large projects with significant habitat and flood control features were (1) lack of Watershed District control of land, and (2) Watershed District focus water storage projects on existing wetlands which significantly limited wetland habitat potential of many projects. While DU technical assistance was welcomed by Watershed Districts during PT meetings, it became clear that large projects with both significant wetland and flood control features could not be constructed without long-term land acquisition or use of District eminent domain authority. Therefore, DU focused on providing technical assistance to landowners and restoring smaller basins on state, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, or The Nature Conservancy (TNC) land.

Project Results, Use, and Dissemination

The recommendations for integration of wetland wildlife habitat features into Red River Watershed District flood control projects were used by six District Project Teams comprised of multiple agencies and organizations, and these recommendations were formally disseminated to District Boards and Team members at the 2002 Red River Mediation Agreement Conference in Crookston, MN. The engineering report for the Neal WMA was provided to the Wild Rice Watershed District and Minnesota DNR for their future use. The WRP was promoted to numerous landowners and Districts throughout the Red River Watershed as a wildlife-friendly way of reducing downstream flooding. The restorable wetland inventory maps for Big Stone and Stevens Counties were provided to the Bois de Sioux Watershed District in paper and digital forms, and made available to other users through DU's regional website www.prairie.ducks.org.

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Date of Report: June 30, 2004
LCMR Final Work Program Report

Date of Work Program Approval: July 24, 2001 (amended 1/22/02, 4/17/02, 6/17/03, 11/26/03, & 4/29/04)
Project Completion Date: June 30, 2004

I. Project Title: Red River Mediation Agreement (part 2c of CH-01 "Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors")

Project Manager: Jon Schneider
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Total Biennial Project Budget: \$265,000 - \$258,701.98 = \$6,298.02

Fiscal Year	Appropriation	Spent	Balance	Other Non-State Funds
2002	\$132,500	\$132,500	\$0	\$24,343
2003	\$132,500	\$61,162	\$6,298.02	\$39,541
Total	\$265,000	\$193,662	\$6,298.02	\$63,884

Legal Citation: Minnesota Laws 2001, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Sec. 14, Subd. 4 (e).

Appropriation Language: 4 (e) Restoring Minnesota's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Corridors \$5,873,000 the first year and \$5,872,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for acceleration of agency programs and cooperative agreements with Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Forest Service to restore and acquire fragmented landscape corridors that connect areas of quality habitat to sustain fish, wildlife, and plants. \$352,000 is for program coordination, corridor identification, and mapping. \$3,343,000 is for restoration and management activities in wildlife management areas, wetland habitat, lakes, wild rice beds, grasslands, and fisheries habitat. \$2,650,000 is for conservation easement programs on riparian areas, big woods forests, native prairies and wetlands. \$5,400,000 is for habitat acquisition activities on prairies, riparian areas, and other fish and wildlife habitat corridors. As part of the required work program, criteria and priorities for planned habitat acquisition and restoration activities must be submitted to the legislative commission on Minnesota resources for review and approval. Land acquired with this appropriation must be sufficiently improved to meet at least minimum management standards as determined by the commissioner of natural resources. Any land acquired in fee title must be designated: (1) as an outdoor recreation unit under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.07; or (2) as provided in Minnesota Statutes. The commissioner may so designate any lands acquired in less than fee title. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2004, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered, unless an earlier date is specified in the work program.

II. and III. FINAL PROJECT SUMMARY:

Ducks Unlimited provided technical assistance to six Red River Watershed District Mediation Agreement Project Teams (PT) and private landowners within the Aspen Parklands, Border Prairie, and Upper Minnesota River Project Areas (#1, 3, & 6). This included a DU biologist engineer who attended remote monthly Project Team meetings from Thief River Falls to Wheaton, DU and consultant engineering services, and contract technicians who promoted the USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). These efforts resulted in 744 acres of wetlands being restored in 231 basins that provide both wildlife habitat and flood control benefits, along with an engineering design report for a 60-acre wetland restoration to help solve a local flooding problem. Digital restorable wetland inventories for Stevens and Big Stone Counties were also developed to help Project Teams find large drained wetlands with both flood control and wildlife habitat features. Although no large-scale projects were completed during this project, the smaller wetland basins restored will provide some flood storage and were approved by Red River Watershed Districts. In addition, significant technical assistance was provided on several large-scale flood control projects that were not yet constructed due to land control and cost. Major barriers to constructing large projects with significant habitat and flood control features were (1) lack of Watershed District control of land, and (2) Watershed District focus water storage projects on existing wetlands which significantly limited wetland habitat potential of many projects. While DU technical assistance was welcomed by Watershed Districts during PT meetings, it became clear that large projects with both significant wetland and flood control features could not be constructed without long-term land acquisition or use of District eminent domain authority. Therefore, DU focused on providing technical assistance to landowners and restoring smaller basins on state, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, or The Nature Conservancy (TNC) land.

IV. OUTLINE OF PROJECT RESULTS:

Result 1: #1 Aspen Parkland Project Area

Grant Budget \$117,721.82 – Spent \$113,331.79 = Balance \$4,390.03

In 2001 and 2002, DU provided technical assistance to Red River Mediation Agreement Project Teams (PT) in the Middle River – Snake River, Red Lake, and Sandhill River Watershed Districts. This involved a DU biologist attending remote monthly PT meetings in Warren, Thief River Falls, and Fertile, MN. DU was accepted as a formal PT member in the Middle River-Snake River and Sandhill River Watershed District PTs. The Red Lake Watershed District PT was dysfunctional at the time and the Watershed District administrator was replaced several times, and DU was unsuccessful in joining their PT even after sending a formal written request. DU's recommendations to integrate wildlife habitat into flood control projects were generally well received by all three PTs, especially regarding the needs of shorebirds and the relative ease of providing shorebird migration habitat in flood control impoundments, but it became apparent that offers to help engineer and design projects with joint wetland and flood control features and provide wetland restoration cost-share was not enough incentive for Watershed Districts to divert their attention away from building new large-scale flood control projects that would take years to design and build due to scale and size in most cases. Although some of the larger projects held great potential to provide both wetland wildlife habitat and flood control, especially those involving large drained wetlands, landowner unwillingness to participate and lack of Watershed District control of land was a huge barrier to moving forward and Watershed Districts were faced with long-term land acquisition schedules and the use of their eminent domain authority. One notable exception was the

Agassiz Valley Water Resource Management Project which was sited on land owned by a local Audubon chapter that was willing to participate, however, it was located west of LCMR Corridors Project Area #1 and therefore ineligible for grant funds. Therefore, in an attempt to get more accomplished on the ground before the end of the grant period, DU turned its attention, DU attention and LCMR grant funds were reoriented towards providing WRP outreach to private landowners via contract technicians (WRP acreage is reported in the DU-NRCS WRP grant report) and restoring small wetlands on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Waterfowl Production Areas (WPA) and TNC's Glacial Ridge Project (nearly a full township in size containing numerous drained wetlands that were adding to downstream flooding concerns). These efforts late in the grant period resulted in 594 wetland acres restored in 216 basins within LCMR Corridors Project Area #1 in addition to the technical assistance provided to Watershed Districts as detailed below. Time constraints and lack of land ownership prevented additional and larger wetlands from being restored through this grant, and a balance of \$4,390.03 remains unspent as a result. Future efforts to assist Watershed Districts with mutually compatible flood control and wildlife habitat projects should (1) encourage Districts and PTs to identify large drained wetlands in which to focus, and (2) help District's secure landownership control of large drained basins for use for joint projects. The numerous drained wetland basins and interconnecting ditches are largely the cause of downstream flooding problems within the Red River Watershed, and focusing District and PT attention on securing control of these drained basins is critical to having the ability to restore them in a mutually beneficial way for both wildlife and flood control interests.

Watershed District	Project (County)	Landowner	Activity	Result: TA or Wetlands Restored
Middle/Snake	Project Team & WRP	Various	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance
Red Lake	Glacial Ridge (Polk)	TNC	Wetland Restoration	477 acres in 20 basins Restored
Red Lake	MEE WPA (Polk)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	8.4 acres in 38 basins Restored
Red Lake	Winger WPA (Polk)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	41.9 acres in 63 basins Restored
Red Lake	Vesledahl WPA (Polk)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	67.3 acres in 95 basins Restored
Red Lake	Project Team & WRP	USFWS	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance
Sandhill River	Project Team & WRP	Various	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance

Result 2: #3 – Border Prairie Project Area

Grant Budget \$131,994.18 - Spent \$126,052.19 = Balance \$1,551.99

In 2001 and 2002, DU provided technical assistance to Red River Mediation Agreement Project Teams (PT) in the Wild Rice, Buffalo-Red, and Bois de Sioux Watershed Districts. This involved a DU biologist attending remote monthly PT meetings in Ada, Glyndon, and Wheaton, MN. DU was accepted as a formal PT member in each Watershed District PTs, and each PT was very functional, active, and receptive of DU recommendations. DU's recommendations to integrate wildlife habitat into flood control projects were generally well received by all three PTs, especially regarding the needs of shorebirds and the relative ease of providing shorebird migration habitat in flood control impoundments. However, it became apparent that offers to help engineer and design projects with joint wetland and flood control features and provide wetland restoration cost-share was not enough incentive for Watershed Districts to divert their attention away from building new large-scale flood control projects that would take years to design and build due to scale and size in most cases. Although some of the larger projects held great potential to provide both wetland wildlife habitat and flood control benefits, especially those involving

large drained wetlands, landowner unwillingness to participate and lack of Watershed District control of land was a huge barrier to moving forward and Watershed Districts were faced with long-term land acquisition schedules and the use of their eminent domain authority. Elsewhere, large projects with potential to benefit shorebirds evolved but were sited west of the LCMR Corridors Project Areas downstream of the Agassiz Valley beach ridge and were not eligible for funding under this grant (e.g., Whiskey Creek Impoundment in the Buffalo-Red District and North Ottawa Impoundment in the Bois de Sioux District). In the Wild Rice District, DU surveyed and paid for contract engineering to design a restoration solution for a drained wetland basin on the Neal WMA to address a situation the District referred to as the “Rockwell Township Flooding Problem.” DU presented the solution to the District and DNR in June 2004, however, the outlet and proposed structure site needed to restore the 60-acre drained basin is located on private land and implementation of the project could not be accomplished due to landowner unwillingness to participate (easement or land sale to DNR or District is required). The District is optimistic that the landowner will work with them to implement the project, but it will likely be a long-term effort. In the Buffalo-Red River District, the PT was consumed by the Whiskey Creek project and numerous other flooding problems, and the PT had difficulty planning new joint wetland-flood control projects due to lack of watershed-wide drained wetland inventory.

In the Bois de Sioux, the PT largely focused on planning for the North Ottawa Flood Control Project in Grant County, which included an impoundment two miles west of Corridors Project Area #3 along with watershed wetland restorations in the beach ridge within PA #3. However, the District chose to actively focus on acquiring land for the impoundment without a similar proactive approach to securing drained wetlands higher in the watershed and left the wetland restoration component up to DU and partners to promote and pursue. DU was successful in working with the USFWS and Bois de Sioux District to successfully restore a 146-acre basin drained by a judicial ditch on the Giese WPA in Stevens County within PA #3, and the flood storage benefits of restoring the basin and cooperative nature of the project served as a positive example for the PT. Therefore, in an attempt to get more accomplished on the ground before the end of the grant period, DU turned its attention and LCMR grant funds to were reoriented towards providing WRP outreach to private landowners via contract technicians working in PA#3 (WRP acreage is reported in the DU-NRCS WRP grant report) and restoring 14 small wetlands totaling 4 acres on the USFWS’ Malakowsky and Sieh WPAs in Clay County as an indirect way to assist District and PT efforts. A digital inventory of restorable wetlands in Stevens County was also funded and completed under this result to help the Bois de Sioux District and PT find large drained wetlands with both flood control and wildlife habitat features, and is currently listed on the DU website (www.prairie.ducks.org). Time constraints and lack of land ownership prevented additional and larger wetlands from being restored through this grant, and a balance of \$1,551.99 remains unspent as a result. Future efforts to assist Watershed Districts with mutually compatible flood control and wildlife habitat projects should (1) encourage Districts and PTs to identify large drained wetlands in which to focus, and (2) help District’s secure landownership control of large drained basins for use for joint projects. The numerous drained wetland basins and interconnecting ditches are largely the cause of downstream flooding problems within the Red River Watershed, and focusing District and PT attention on securing control of these drained basins is critical to having the ability to restore them in a mutually beneficial way for both wildlife and flood control interests.

Watershed District	Project (County)	Landowner	Activity	Result: TA or Wetlands Restored
Wild Rice	Neal WMA (Norman)	MNDNR	Engineering & Design	Engineering Report to WD
Wild Rice	Project Team & WRP	Various	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance
Buffalo-Red	Malakowsky WPA (Clay)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	1 acre in 5 basins Restored
Buffalo-Red	Sieh WPA (Clay)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	3 acres in 9 basins Restored
Buffalo-Red	Project Team & WRP	Various	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance
Bois de Sioux	Giese WPA (Stevens)	USFWS	Wetland Restoration	146 acres in 1 basin Restored
Bois de Sioux	Project Team & WRP	Various	Planning & Outreach	Technical Assistance
Bois de Sioux	Restorable Wetland Inv.	Various	Planning	Stevens County Map Complete

Result 3: #6 Upper Minnesota River Project Area
Grant Budget \$15,284 - Spent \$14,298 = Balance \$356

DU assisted the Bois de Sioux District's efforts to restore the drained 700-acre Moonshine Lake in Big Stone County within PA#6 and Audubon's efforts to secure acquisition funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Although the District engineer and PT quickly developed the restoration design and appraised the land containing this large drained basin, the main landowner of the basin and outlet refused to sell his land for the appraised value and the project could not proceed. The District was considering acquisition by eminent domain procedure by the end of this grant period. DU provided WRP outreach to private landowners via contract technicians working in PA #6 (WRP acreage is reported in the DU-NRCS WRP grant report). A digital inventory of restorable wetlands in Big Stone County was also funded and completed under this result to help the Bois de Sioux District and PT find large drained wetlands with both flood control and wildlife habitat features, and is currently listed on the DU website (www.prairie.ducks.org). A balance of \$356 remains in this result due to a minor invoice correction regarding Big Stone County wetland mapping.

Watershed District	Project (County)	Landowner	Activity	Result: TA or Wetlands Restored
Bois de Sioux	Moonshine Lake (Big Stone)	Various Private	Planning	Technical Assistance
Bois de Sioux	Restorable Wetland Inventory	Various	Planning	Big Stone County Map Complete

Result 4: Professional Services and Unreimbursed Expenses DU Contribution: \$63,884

These funds are part of DU's match contribution to the project and include costs that are not directly attributable to specific projects (e.g., administration and coordination), unrecovered salary and operational expenses, and non-LCMR funds from other partners to complete the listed projects. These were not billed to LCMR but represent DU "other cash" contributions to the project. DU contributions were much less than projected due to the lack of large projects engineered by DU and implemented under the grant.

V. DISSEMINATION:

News of the project and individual accomplishments will be disseminated by news releases from partners (WDs, FWS, DNR) and DU, including coverage in the state DU newsletter, and on the DU webpages (www.mnducks.org and www.prairie.ducks.org).

VI. CONTEXT:

The Red River Mediation Agreement was instituted in January 1999. It was an historic effort to provide collaboration between flood control and environmental interests to overcome years of contentiousness. While the agreement provides a working framework, there is still insufficient conservation involvement in flood control planning processes due to staff limitations. Good conservation input is essential to keep the mediation agreement functional. Therefore, this LCMR grant project designed to provide biologists and contract technicians to work with Red River Watershed Districts to provide technical assistance on developing flood control projects with wildlife habitat features and with private landowners by promoting the USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program. It was also designed to help develop drained wetland maps for Stevens and Big Stone Counties and provided engineering services to Red River Watershed Districts to improve District ability to find and design joint flood control and wildlife habitat projects by using drained wetlands. Finally, it was also designed to provide wetland restoration cost-share to Districts and other landowners including state, federal, and non-profits to restore wetlands.

VII. COOPERATION:

DU cooperated with several Red River Watershed Districts, MN DNR, USFWS, and USDA NRCS field staff in completing this project. Several contract technicians are also worked with numerous private landowners in Corridors Project Areas #1 and #3 to increase enrollment in the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) as a strategy to restore wetlands on private lands.

VII. LOCATION:

The following is a table of projects and there locations for which actual restorations were completed, engineering plans completed, or restorable wetland maps developed:

Project	Landowner	Watershed District	County	Location (T/R/S, Latitude, Longitude)
Glacial Ridge	TNC	Red Lake	Polk	T149N, R44W, Sections 14, 20, 23, & 28 47 deg 42' 42" N, 96 deg 16' 31" W
MEE WPA	USFWS	Red Lake	Polk	T147N, R41W, Section 36 47 deg 30' 10" N, 95 deg, 49', 10" W
Winger WPA	USFWS	Red Lake	Polk	T147&148N, R42W, Sections 2 & 35 47 deg 35' 40" N, 95 deg 58' 25" W
Vesledahl WPA	USFWS	Red Lake	Polk	T147N, R42&43W, Sections 19, 23, & 24 47 deg 32' 25" N, 96 deg 05' 20" W
Neal WMA	MNDNR	Wild Rice River	Norman	T143N, R45W, Sections 13 & 24 47 deg 11' 42" N, 96 deg 20' 00" W
Malakowsky WPA	USFWS	Buffalo-Red River	Clay	T140N, R44W, Section 19 46 deg 55' 40" N, 96 deg 17' 03" W
Sieh WPA	USFWS	Buffalo-Red River	Clay	T137N, R44W, Section 8 46 deg 41' 50" N, 96 deg 16' 10" W
Giese WPA	USFWS	Bois de Sioux	Stevens	T126N, R43W, Section 22 45 deg, 42' 28" N, 96 deg, 03' 37" W
Stevens County Map	Various	Bois de Sioux	Stevens	Entire County
Big Stone County Map	Various	Bois de Sioux	Big Stone	Entire County

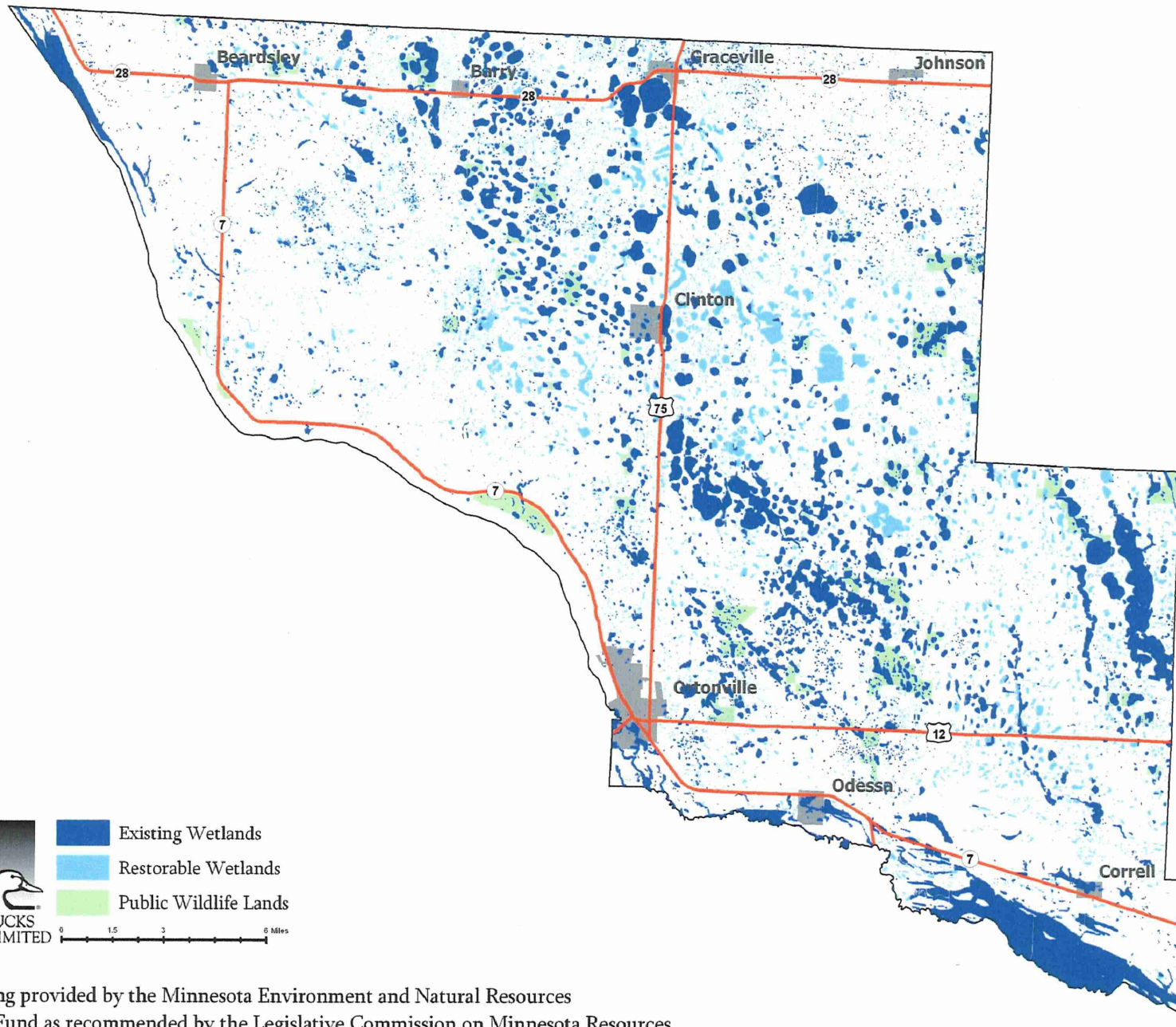
ATTACHMENT A. Final Work Program Budget, August 1, 2004.

Project Title: Red River Mediation Agreement (part 2e of CH-01).

LCMR Recommended Funding: \$265,000.

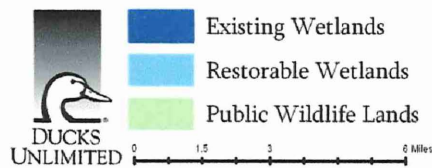
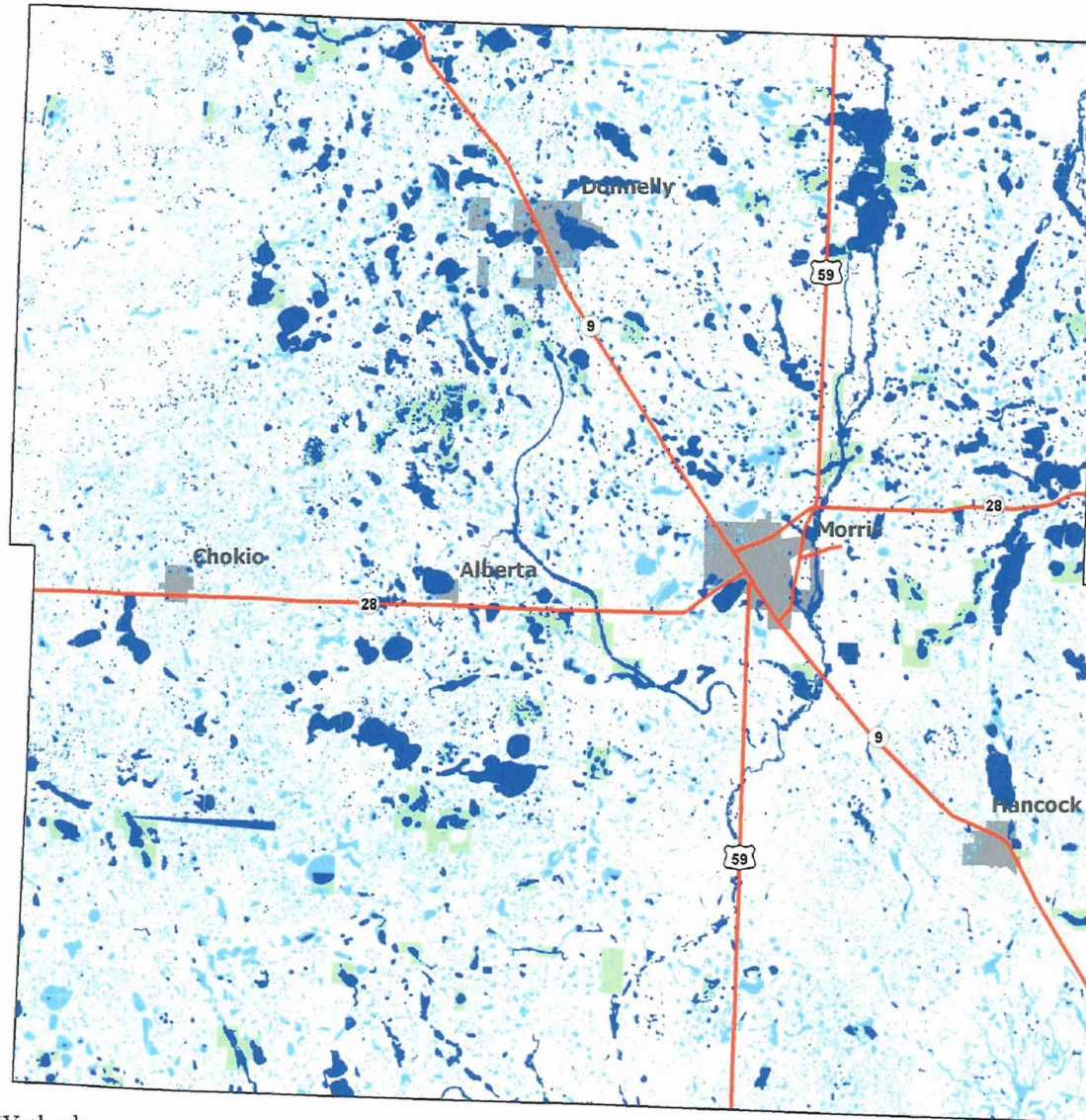
2001 LCMR Project Biennial Budget		Result 1 Budget:	Result 1 Spent:	Result 1 Balance:	Result 2 Budget:	Result 2 Spent:	Result 2 Balance:	Result 3 Budget:	Result 3 Spent:	Result 3 Balance:				
Budget Item (Title of Result)		Title: Area #1 (Aspen Parkland) Technical Assistance			Title: Area #3 (Border Prairie) Technical Assistance			Title: Area #6 (Upper Minn River) Technical Assistance			BUDGET TOTAL:	TOTAL SPENT TO DATE:	BALANCE TOTAL:	
Wages, salaries & benefits	Detail													
DU Professional Staff (Group 2):	157.5 hrs @ \$34/hr	\$136	\$136	\$0	\$5,330.18	\$4,675	\$655.18	\$544	\$544	\$0	\$6,010.18	\$5,355	\$655.18	
DU Technical Staff (Group 3):	0 hours	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Wages subtotal		\$136	\$136	\$0	\$5,330.18	\$4,675	\$655.18	\$544	\$544	\$0	\$6,010.18	\$5,355	\$655.18	
Contracts														
Contract Professional Engineer		\$1,390	\$1,390	\$0	\$20,396	\$19,500.30	\$895.70	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,786	\$20,890.30	\$895.70	
Contract Technicians		\$26,996.34	\$26,996.34	\$0	\$32,417	\$32,416.59	\$0.41	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$59,413.34	\$59,412.93	\$0.41	
Heavy Equipment Contracts		\$88,000	\$83,610	\$4,390	\$54,390	\$54,390	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$142,390	\$138,000	\$4,390	
Restorable Wetland Maps (Big Stone & Stevens Co.)	2 counties	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$18,617	\$18,616.50	\$0.50	\$14,740	\$14,384	\$356	\$33,357	\$33,000.50	\$356.50	
Contract subtotal		\$116,386.34	\$111,996.34	\$4,390	\$125,820	\$124,923.39	\$896.61	\$14,740	\$14,384	\$356	\$256,946.34	\$251,303.73	\$5,642.61	
Other														
Travel in state for contract techs	Meals & hotels	\$1,041.48	\$1,041.48	\$0	\$310	\$309.94	\$0.06	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,351.48	\$1,351.42	\$0.06	
Cell phone, misc. for contract techs	Incl. copies & postage	\$158	\$157.97	\$0.03	\$534	\$533.86	\$0.14	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$692	\$691.83	\$0.17	
Other subtotal		\$1,199.48	\$1,199.45	\$0.03	\$844	\$843.80	\$0.20	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,043.48	\$2,043.25	\$0.23	
COLUMN TOTAL		\$117,721.82	\$113,331.79	\$4,390.03	\$131,994.18	\$126,052.19	\$1,551.99	\$15,284	\$14,928	\$356	\$265,000	\$258,701.98	\$6,298.02	

Big Stone County, MN - Restorable Wetlands



Funding provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources

Stevens County, MN - Restorable Wetlands



Funding provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources