

HA11 - Metro Big Rivers

Metro Big Rivers (MBR) Phase 13 will protect, restore and enhance 1,200 acres of wildlife habitat in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area, with an emphasis on the Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers and their tributaries.

Metro Big Rivers is a proven, trusted partnership that gets results with Outdoor Heritage Funds for the LSOHC. MBR protects, connects and improves conservation lands in the metropolitan urbanizing area, expanding habitat for wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. MBR also creates and enhances opportunities for Twin Cities residents to connect with nature and wildlife near where they live.

**Metro Big Rivers Phase 13 - 1,200 acres
Protect 1,025 acres • Restore / Enhance 175 acres**

**OHF Recommendation - \$14,925,000
Anticipated Leverage - \$4,916,600 (33%)**

Metro Big Rivers exceeds goals and leverages OHF funds. Results to-date:

- 8,039 acres completed + 2,200 in progress = 10,039 acres
- 118% of acreage goals achieved in completed phases
- OHF funds leveraged 44% with another \$13 million of other funds

Why invest OHF funds in the Metro Urbanizing Area:

- Protect critical habitat and improve degraded habitat along and near the migratory flyways and tributaries in the metro area
- Protect significant habitat in the metro area from development
- Benefit wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need
- Improve water quality and in-stream food availability
- Ensure Twin Cities metro residents have meaningful opportunities to connect with nature near where they live
- Introduce more people to nature-based activities like hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, hiking and paddling

Why trust and invest in Metro Big Rivers Phase 13:

- MBR achieves the LSOHC's goals in the Metropolitan Urbanizing Area.
- MBR aggressively leverages OHF funds -- \$13 million to-date (44% of grant funds spent).
- By July 2023, MBR will have completed Phases 1-8, be almost done with Phase 9 and be well into Phases 10-12.
- MBR has spent \$22.4 million and committed another \$7.1 million in OHF grants to-date. We have \$4.6 million left in current grants, excluding Phase 12 that just started.

Metro Big Rivers works with with public partners and landowners committed to conservation to achieve the priorities of the LSOHC for Outdoor Heritage Funds in the Metro Urbanizing Area.



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Metro Big Rivers Selected Accomplishments

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is restoring and enhancing prairie and forest habitat at the new William H. Houlton Conservation Area through MBR Phases 5, 7, 8 and 12. This 335-acre site at the confluence of the Elk River and Mississippi River was acquired by the Trust for Public Land with MBR Phases 2 and 3. FMR and volunteers have removed invasive woody and herbaceous plants from the floodplain and upland forest. The former agricultural fields and degraded grasslands have been restored to diverse native prairie through seeding, mowing and prescribed burns. Through evaluation of restoration techniques and how well wildlife is returning, FMR has found high success in the restoration efforts. A bird survey identified the endangered Henslow's sparrow and four other Species of Greatest Conservation Need: the dickcissel, grasshopper sparrow, LeConte's sparrow and sedge wren.



Great River Greening restored 88 acres of former agricultural land to diverse prairie and enhanced 7 acres of oak savanna through MBR Phase 6 at the planned Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park. Located in rural Scott County between St. Catherine and Lennon Lakes, the site has a mix of high quality native forests and wetlands, regionally significant wildlife habitat, beautiful scenery and outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation. The vision for the park reflects the history of the site, the community heritage of living off the land and a passion for outdoor recreation, conservation and nature exploration. The park is currently in the land acquisition and habitat restoration phase. Through numerous volunteer events hosted by GRG, community members assisted with habitat restoration and learned about the ecology and importance of the site.

The **Minnesota Valley Trust (MVT)** acquired 196 acres in Carver County for the Rapids Lake and San Francisco Units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge with four OHF grants - MBR 5, 6, 7 & 8. These strategic acquisitions protected priority lands from residential development and created new opportunities for the public to engage in wildlife-based recreation, education and interpretation. MVT and FWS now are restoring the oak savannas and remnant prairies at each site, as well as converting former agricultural fields to high-quality prairies and wetlands. Restorations are being completed with MBR 7, MBR 9, Conservation Partners Legacy Grants and other funds.



The **Minnesota Land Trust** acquired a permanent conservation easement over 130 acres at the Science Museum's St. Croix Watershed Research Station with MBR Phases 9 and 10 and Washington County Land & Water Legacy program funds. The easement permanently protects this unique site where groundwater bubbles up to the surface through a "boiling sand spring," native plant communities like cold-water wetlands, oak forests and restored prairie harbor a large number of Minnesota's Species of Greatest Conservation Need and a clear, chilly stream boasts brook trout. The easement permanently protects the property's water resources and wildlife habitats, and allows the Research Station to continue its critical scientific work.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) acquired 119 acres with MBR 7 to expand the Janet Johnson Memorial WMA to over 750 acres. The Chisago County land consists of wetland and forested habitat, and had 35 acres of agricultural land that was restored to prairie with the MBR Phase 6 grant. This new publicly-accessible land is primarily managed for migratory waterfowl, deer and turkey habitat. It offers quality outdoor recreation and hunting opportunities for millions of Twin Cities' residents.

TPL has a signed agreement to acquire 1,840 acres to create the Keystone Woods WMA. Washington County will acquire another 760 acres. Combined, this project protects 2,600+ acres of habitat of high biodiversity significance for wildlife and people. TPL will complete its portion of this project with current and pending OHF grant funds.

