

# Andover partnership restores wetland



## Once-farmed former golf course provides wildlife, pollinator habitat plus recreational opportunities while producing mitigation credits for metropolitan road projects



ANDOVER — A wetland mitigation that transformed a former golf course into pollinator and wildlife habitat has produced recreational and educational benefits along with mitigation credits for public road impacts within the seven-county metro area.

One of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources’ (BWSR) responsibilities is implementing the Local Road Wetland Replacement Program (LRWRP). This wetland mitigation program helps balance the state’s need for safe roads with its desire to protect the natural

environment. LRWRP mitigation restores lost ecological functions and values of wetlands that are affected in the course of repairing, rehabilitating or replacing local public roads across the state each year.

In this case, BWSR staff partnered with Andover in Anoka County to complete the Woodland Creek wetland restoration on 63.4 acres of city-owned property adjacent to Coon Creek.

Over the past 75 years, the former wetland area had been drained by a series of subsurface tile and

Clockwise from top left: Emergent wetland vegetation is planted in a graded area. Grading is part of the wetland restoration work. Wetland plants emerge at the edge of a restored wetland. A contractor completes boardwalk construction and grading.

**Submitted Photos**

open ditches. For most of that time, the site was in some form of agricultural use. In 1989, the site was converted to a nine-hole golf course, the construction of which required extensive grading of the property including the excavation of numerous deep, open-water ponds.

In 2008 the golf course closed and the city of Andover took over ownership of the property. City staff recognized the site's potential for both wetland restoration and green space for residents, and approached BWSR about working together to restore the site.

Using LRWRP funds provided by the Legislature, this state-local

partnership has provided a rare opportunity to restore a wetland in a highly urbanized area where it can offset the effect of Twin Cities metropolitan road construction projects on wetlands.

Over the past five years, BWSR and city staff worked together to secure a perpetual conservation easement on the property. They also developed a restoration plan that met regulatory requirements and satisfied both the city and the approximately 75 residents whose homes border much of the property.

The approved restoration plan included extensive work to remove on-site drainage systems and level areas where fill had

been placed to construct golf course tee boxes and greens. It converted and restored the open, deep-water ponds and surrounding low areas to self-sustaining and high-functioning wet meadow, shrub-carr and shallow marsh wetland communities. Finally, it developed a comprehensive vegetation establishment and management plan to establish mesic prairie communities, which will increase wildlife use and enhance pollinator habitat.

Restoration work began in fall 2016 and finished in spring 2018. Construction included a minimum-maintenance trail system that provides local residents with recreational access to observe wildlife

and enjoy the landscape. As part of the trail system, a wooden boardwalk was constructed across a narrow wetland area.

The project provides opportunities for interpretative signage and other educational features, which nearby schools can use for outdoor education.

Andover will continue to own and manage the property as open space within the city.

The project has been a tremendous success, providing much-needed wetland mitigation credits for public road impacts within the seven-county metro area along with aesthetic, recreational and educational benefits to area residents.