



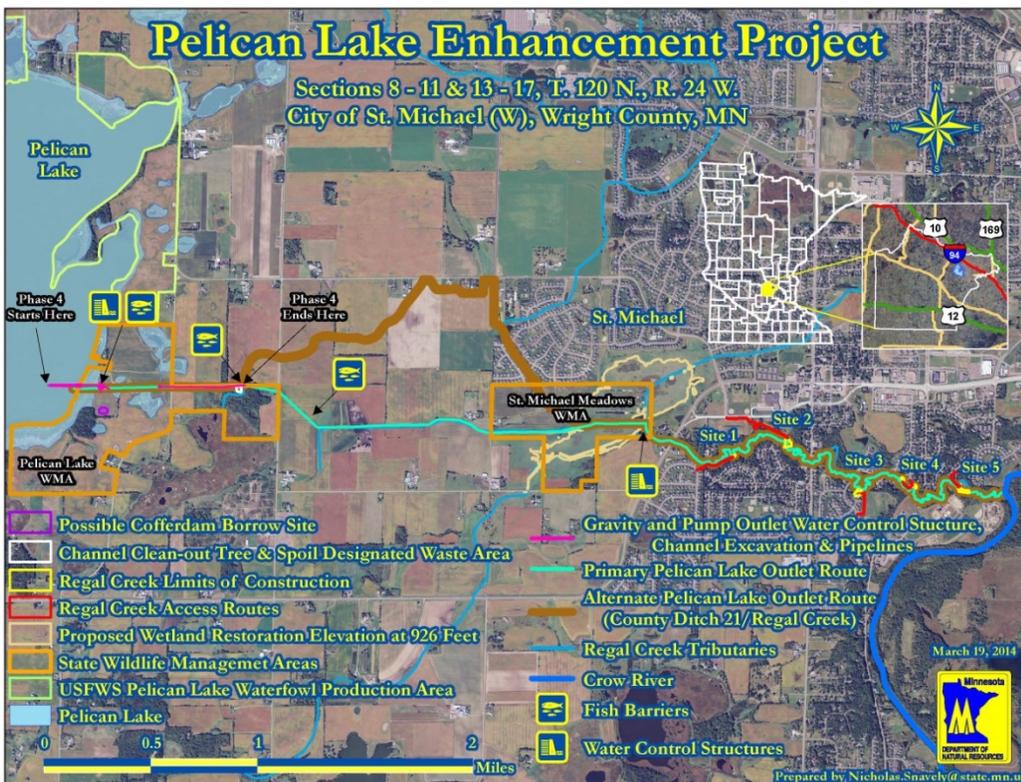
Restoring Pelican Lake

May 2014 Snapshots

Minnesota's plentiful water resources support all kinds of wildlife, but some lakes do more to support wildlife needs than others. Within lakes, there is a shallow water zone, generally less than 15 feet deep, that is considered the most important wildlife habitat. Because of this critically important component, state agencies have dedicated resources to protecting and enhancing Minnesota's shallow lakes.

One such lake is Wright County's Pelican Lake. A designated state wildlife lake, it is considered by many experts to be one of the few large shallow lakes in the state that serves as a primary migration habitat for diver duck species. Lake flooding and moderate winters have caused water levels in the lake to rise over three feet over the past decade, which has limited the aquatic vegetation that is needed for a stable waterfowl habitat. The present outlet for the lake is a 12' tile system at a high elevation, so water that leaves the lake does so slowly, and ends up flooding surrounding agricultural fields and DNR management lands.

While the higher lake levels have been good for fishing, the resulting flooding has been bad for farmers, and the impact on vegetation has negatively impacted other wildlife. Because Pelican Lake is a state wildlife lake, with a focus on preserving its habitat for waterfowl, the DNR in consultation with other state and local agencies and interested partners developed the Pelican Lake Enhancement Project. The DNR will be installing a control structure so that the water levels of the lake can be managed as a shallow lake, thus improving the waterfowl habitat.



Restoring Pelican Lake to a premier waterfowl lake required a multi-phased approach.

BWSR's involvement in the project falls under the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). While draining of the lake has the potential to impact 372 acres of surrounding wetlands, most of the impacted areas didn't exist prior to the lake's increase in depth and size. A Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) met with DNR and determined that this project could be considered "no-loss" under the WCA because the project is "conducted or authorized by a public agency for the purpose of wetland restoration, fish and wildlife habitat restoration, or improvement." The final phase of the Pelican Lake Enhancement Project involves draining the lake almost nine feet to restore it to shallow lake levels and the installation of a gravity and pump outlet to help better manage water levels moving forward. The project is not without controversy because the uptick in fishing during the past decade would soon return to its historical low level. Ultimately, the project goals are to improve water quality and clarity, improve the habitat so that aquatic vegetation flourishes and return the lake to a premier waterfowl habitat.