

1993 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending December 31, 1997

This project was supported by the MN Future Resources Fund.

Title: Niemackl Watershed Restoration
Project Manager: Jim Breyen
Organization: MN DNR
Address: 2115 Birchmont Beach RD NE, Bemidji, MN 56601

Legal Citation: Laws 1993 Chpt. 172, Sect. 14, Subd. 12(f) APPROPRIATION \$500,000 Niemackl Watershed Restoration. This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the restoration of the Niemackl Watershed by improvement of water quality, flood reduction, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation through citizen participation with federal, state, and local governments, and nongovernmental agencies. \$200,000 is available to begin the project and the remaining \$300,00 is contingent on match of \$300,000 of nonstate funds. Subd. 17 Match Requirements. Appropriations in this section that must be matched and for which the match has not been committed by January 1, 1994 must be canceled.

Laws 1994 Chpt. 580, Sect. 8 APPROPRIATION. \$300,000 is appropriated from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the restoration of the Niemackl Watershed by improvement of water quality, flood reduction, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation through citizen participation with federal, state, and local governments, and nongovernment agencies. \$150,000 is contingent on a match of \$300,000 of nonstate funds by October 1, 1994.

Laws 1995 Chpt. 220, Sect. 19, Subd. 19 Carryforward. (B) The availability of the appropriations for the following projects is extended to December 31, 1996: (1) Laws 1993, Chapter 172, Sect. 14, Subd. 12 (f).

Laws 1996 Chpt. 407, Sect. 8, Subd. 7. © APPROPRIATION \$200,000 Niemackl Watershed Improvement. This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources to continue the restoration of the Niemackl watershed by improvement of water quality, flood reduction, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation through citizen participation with federal, state and local governments, and nongovernment agencies. Unless otherwise provided, the amounts in this section are available until December 31, 1997, when projects must be completed and final products delivered.

Total LCMR Budget available thru December 31, 1996: \$300,000.00 -- Balance: 0.00
Total LCMR Budget available thru December 31, 1997: \$200,000.00 -- Balance: 0.00
Total LCMR Budget available: \$500,000.00 -- Balance: 0.00

Appropriation Amount: \$500,000.00

Statement of Objectives

To improve water quality, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, reduce flood damage and increase recreation and education opportunities in the Niemackl Lakes Watershed.

Results: Niemackl Watershed Restoration

- 1672 acres of grassed filter and buffer strips created adjacent to wetlands throughout the watershed.
- 95 acres of wetlands restored.
- 2.2 miles of grassed waterways established.
- Of 25 private septic systems discharging directly into lakes or streams, 23 were upgraded.
- 19 water and sediment control basins constructed.
- 1 animal waste storage facility (feedlot operation) modernized.
- 192 landowner conservation plans prepared.
- 2.5 miles of livestock exclusion fencing (around lakes and wetlands) erected.
- 2 high-velocity rough fish barriers installed.
- Cottonwood Lake was treated for rough fish removal and later stocked with game fish.

A formal process is now in place in the watershed to address future management and development. This process is citizen based and has been adopted by landowners within the watershed through the Citizen's Steering Committee and an agency based Technical Committee. The knowledge gained from starting this project along with the vast amounts of biological and geological information gathered during the project will greatly enhance the future continued restoration of this and similar watersheds and will be used as a focal point for educational purpose for school groups, landowners, agencies and organizations.

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY FOR NIEMACKL WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT

CASH AVAILABLE: \$500,000.00	LCMR	IN-KIND MATCH: \$147,500.00	USFWS
	101,500.00	Ducks Unlimited	10,000.00
	<u>10,000.00</u>	Grant County Sportsmen	6,000.00
TOTAL CASH	\$611,500.00		10,000.00
			15,000.00
		TOTAL IN-KIND MATCH: \$188,500.00	NRCS

	<u>LCMR</u>	<u>DUCKS UNLIMITED</u>	<u>GRANT CO. SPORTSMEN</u>
• FISH BARRIERS	71,887.00		
• LAKE RESTORATION	66,756.00		
• SEDIMENT BASINS	24,280.52*		
(Cost shared w/Fed programs and landowners)			
• GRASSED WATERWAYS	32,667.84*		
(Cost shared w/Fed programs and landowners)			
• FEEDLOT WASTE SYSTEM	27,587.03*		
(Cost shared w/Fed programs and landowner)			
• LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION	40,953.40*		
(Cost shared w/Fed programs and landowner)			
• WILDLIFE/WINDBREAKS/COVER	3,708.54*		
(Cost shared w/Fed programs and landowners)			
• SEPTIC SYSTEM UPGRADES	87,255.47*		
(Cost shared w/landowner)			
• PROJECT TECHNICIAN & SUPPORT	100,000.00		
(Preparation of conservation plans/landowners signup)			
• ENGINEERING SERVICES	18,201.00		
• NIEMACKL RESERVE PROGRAM		101,500.00*	
(Buffer strips and wetland restorations)			
• ACQUISITION			10,000.00
(Wetland easement, lake aerator, nesting structures, misc.)			
• MISC.	<u>22,348.20</u>	_____	_____
(Newsletter, mailings, phone,)			
TOTAL	\$495,645.00**	101,500.00	10,000.00

* This is the portion of these activities that was cost shared with LCMR Funds. Land owners and ACP programs funded the balance.

** \$4,355 was not spent by funding deadline of June 30, 1996.

In-kind services were provided by agencies to complete the special activities associated with the Niemackl project:

- \$10,000.00 in-kind services was provided by the Bois de Sioux Watershed District for development of an initial water management plan for the watershed; detailed soils mapping for the watershed; and hydrological analysis down to the sub watershed.
- More than \$31,000.00* of in-kind services was provided by the Grant and Stevens County SWCD and the SCS offices to cover staff time to administer activities associated with the Niemackl project.
- More than \$147,500.00 was provided from the USFWS to cover wetland easement costs as well as in-kind services for data entry (digitizing) for GIS mapping of soils, drained and undrained wetland basins, and location of buffer strips and waterways.

Date of Report: January 1, 1998

LCMR Final Work Program Update Report

I. Niemackl Watershed Restoration

Program Manager: Jim Breyen

Agency Affiliation: MN Department of Natural Resources

Address: 2115 Birchmont Beach Road NE, Bemidji, MN 56601

Phone: (218) 755-3958 Fax: (218) 755-4024

A. Legal Citation: Laws 1993 Chpt. 172, Sect. 14, Subd. 12(f) APPROPRIATION \$500,000 Niemackl Watershed Restoration. This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources for the restoration of the Niemackl Watershed by improvement of water quality, flood reduction, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation through citizen participation with federal, state, and local governments, and nongovernmental agencies. \$200,000 is available to begin the project and the remaining \$300,00 is contingent on match of \$300,000 of nonstate funds. Subd. 17 Match Requirements. Appropriations in this section that must be matched and for which the match has not been committed by January 1, 1994 must be canceled.

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Total LCMR Budget available	\$500,000.00	-- Balance:	0.00

B. LMIC Compatible Data Language: NA

C. Status of Match Requirement:

Match required: \$300,000.00	USFWS	\$147,500.00
Funds Raised to Date:	Ducks Unlimited	101,500.00
	Bois de Sioux Watershed District	10,000.00
	Grant County Sportsmen	10,000.00
	Stevens County SWCD (nonstate)	6,000.00
	Grant County SWCD (nonstate)	10,000.00
	SCS	<u>15,000.00</u>
	TOTAL AVAILABLE	\$300,000.00
	BALANCE	0.00

See VI-D.

II. Narrative: This project will consist of: land-use modifications on uplands for soil and water conservation; restoration of drained wetland basins; intensive management of fish and wildlife resources; and construction of water control structures for the purpose of metering runoff, controlling rough fish, and restoring and managing aquatic ecosystems.

III. Statement of Objectives: Improved water quality, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, flood damage reduction, reduced topsoil losses, and increased recreation and education opportunities.

IV. Objectives:

A. TITLE: Improved Water Quality.

A1. Narrative: Improve the quality of water within the watershed by reducing sediment and agriculture runoff into waterways, and reestablishing rooted aquatic vegetation in the shallow lakes and wetlands to reduce suspended solids and algae.

A2. Procedures: A minimum of 125 acres of vegetated buffer zones will be established along waterways and lakes under the administration of the DNR, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A minimum of 10% of the drained wetlands (450 acres) will be restored under the administration of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. At least six water control structures will be constructed on selected shallow lakes as a joint venture for flood control and aquatic vegetation management between the Watershed District (design and engineering service) and the DNR (Contract administration and operational planning) and the USFWS (operational planning). Monitoring stations for water quality will be established and monitored by the Watershed District, SWCD and the DNR as per recommendations provided by PCA. Some monitoring will be done by local residents at selected locations. At Least 10 lakes will be monitored by DNR for aquatic vegetation response and Secchi disk readings.

A3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$232,500.00	\$140,000.00
b. Balance:	0.00	0.00

A4. Timeline:	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95	1/96	6/96	1/97	6/97	12/97
Monitoring	.....								
Engineering		.....							
Easement Acquisition	.....								
Construction			.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

A5. Status: Vegetated buffer zones were established on 1,672 acres of tillable land along waterways and lakes. Grassed waterways were established on 11,698 feet of drainage way. One animal waste storage facility was constructed on Werk Lake. Nineteen water and sediment control basins were constructed. Of the 25 private septic systems in the watershed that were discharging directly into a lake or stream, 23 were upgraded.

Perpetual wetland easements were taken on 160 acres. A SWCD technician was hired for a two year period to work with landowners in the watershed in developing individual management plans, doing survey and design work for best management practices, and to provide construction supervision. This technician developed 192 conservation plans for landowners in the watershed. Water quality monitoring was conducted periodically on 9 lakes and at 5 runoff sites. Aquatic vegetation was monitored on 13 lakes. Two pasture management systems were completed. Two and one half miles of fence were erected to keep cattle out of lakes and streams. One critical area waterway stabilization project was completed. Six wetlands totaling 43 acres were restored and protected permanently. Sixty-one more acres of wetlands were restored along with 53 acres of buffer and were enrolled in the Niemackl Lakes Land Reserve Program. GIS mapping and digitizing of soil types, drained wetland basins, land use, ownership and highly erodible lands was completed for the watershed.

Not as many acres of wetlands were restored as anticipated. The project was planning on using existing programs from different agencies to accomplish the restorations. But these programs are for perpetual protection and landowners were very reluctant to enter into permanent agreements. There was acceptance to shorter term agreements of 10-30 years but funds for these leases were limited. The Niemackl Project has just received \$255,000 of additional match money from the North American Wetland Conservation Act to be used strictly for short term wetland easements which will allow the wetland restoration aspect of this project to proceed as planned.

Water control structures to manipulate shallow lakes were not constructed as planned due to time constraints and emphasis on other aspects of the project such as feed lot renovation, and vegetated buffer zones. Planning and engineering for the control structures are continuing.

A6. Benefits: Surface water within and leaving this watershed will have a reduced nutrient load and fewer suspended solids. The water in the shallow lakes and wetlands will be clearer, supporting rooted aquatic vegetation instead of algae. Initial results indicate water quality has improved.

B. TITLE: Enhanced Wildlife Habitat.

B1. Narrative: Restore and manage upland and wetland environments for both game and nongame wildlife.

B2. Procedures: Drained wetland basins will be restored as discussed in A. Rough fish will be eliminated/controlled and aquatic vegetation reestablished by utilizing drawdown capabilities of control structures that will be constructed on selected lakes, and by treatment of Cottonwood Lake as discussed in C2. Grass and shrub cover will be established on highly erodible uplands under the administration of the SWCD and NRCS. Wildlife populations, primarily waterfowl and nongame species, will be monitored three times annually by the DNR.

B3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
b. Balance:	0.00	0.00

B4. Timeline:	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95	1/96	6/96	1/97	6/97	12/97
Monitoring	.....								
Engineering		.....							
Construction			.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

B5. Status: A fish barrier was constructed at the outlet of the entire watershed in 1995. This will prevent the movement of carp from the Red River into the shallow lakes and wetlands in the watershed. Seventeen acres of wildlife tree planting were completed. Seven acres of winter food plots were established. In addition to the filter and buffer areas described in Section A, 93 acres of tillable land were planted to native grass species. Wildlife populations were monitored closely during the past four years. This monitoring includes the following: weekly aerial waterfowl surveys during spring and fall migration, waterfowl breeding pair surveys, toad and frog surveys, nongame breeding bird transects, and breeding bird surveys on selected lakes and wetlands. Additional wildlife benefits were described in Section A.

B6. Benefits: Increased populations of upland resident wildlife, increased production of migratory game and non-game birds, improved waterfowl migration habitat, and restored natural aquatic ecosystem.

C. Title: Enhanced Fish Habitat.

C1. Narrative: Enhance fish habitat in Cottonwood Lake through lake renovation and fisheries management practices.

C2. Procedures: Fish barriers will be constructed by the DNR at the outlet of the watershed and at the outlet of Cottonwood Lake. A fish toxicant will be applied to Cottonwood Lake and upstream wetlands in order to eliminate rough fish. The lake will then be restocked with game fish and an aeration system will be installed and operated by DNR to reduce the potential of over-winter fish die-offs. Fish population assessments will be conducted by DNR Fisheries personnel.

C3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$67,500.00	\$10,000.00
b. Balance:	\$ 0.00	0.00

C4. Timeline:	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95	1/96	6/96	1/97	6/97
Fish Pop. Assessment	...	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Fish Barrier Const.							.....	
Application of toxicant								.....
Stocking of Fish									.....
Aeration									

C5. Status: Two high-velocity fish barriers were constructed, one at the outlet of the watershed in 1995 and one at the outlet of the Cottonwood Lake subwatershed in 1996. A fish toxicant was applied to Cottonwood and Werk Lakes and to six wetlands adjacent to these lakes in October 1996. Cottonwood Lake was restocked with walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass and black crappie. An aeration system has been purchased to be used on Cottonwood Lake if needed.

Graham Lake was stocked with northern pike. Fish population assessments were done on Cottonwood, Graham, Nelson, Ohlsrud, Big and Niemackl Lakes. A lease was purchased on Werk Lake to be used as a walleye rearing pond. Other fish habitat enhancements to Cottonwood Lake were described in Section A, in particular, the removal of the year-round presence of cattle in the lake.

C6. Benefits: Improved game fish populations, fisheries habitat and water quality in Cottonwood Lake resulting in better recreational fishing. Improved fishing opportunity has been provided on Cottonwood Lake.

D. TITLE: Flood Damage Reduction.

D1. Narrative: Meter flows from the Niemackl watershed to reduce flooding within the watershed, in the City of Herman, and downstream along Five Mile Creek.

D2. Procedures: The Watershed District will develop a hydrological model for the Niemackl watershed and sub-watersheds. Flood control design features will be incorporated into the design of water control structures and fish barriers. Staff gauges will be established by the Watershed District and SWCD on all control structures and monitored by local residents/DNR. Rain gauges will be established strategically throughout the watershed by the Watershed District and the SWCD and monitored by local residents.

D3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$45,000.00	\$10,000.00
b. Balance:	0.00	0.00

D4. Timeline:	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95	1/96	6/96	1/97	6/97	12/97
Install Gages	.....								
Develop Model	.....								
Construction				.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Monitoring	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

D5. Status: Bench marks have been established on 14 basins and water levels recorded throughout the open water season. Staff gauges have been installed on 12 of these basins. Flows were monitored in waterways throughout the summers during runoff events. Rain gauges were monitored at 5 locations. Flood control design features have been incorporated into the design of fish barriers, waterways, restorations and road crossings. Negotiations and discussions are ongoing with the City of Herman, The Bois de Sioux Watershed District and other agencies on addressing flooding problems in the watershed. A hydrological model was not completed for the watershed. Due to its cost, it was felt that a model was not justified at this point.

D6. Benefits: The City of Herman and the Five Mile Creek area will receive measurable benefits in flood reduction. This project will also contribute to reduced flooding along Lake Traverse and the Bois de Sioux and Red Rivers.

E. TITLE: Reduce Topsoil Losses.

E1. Narrative: Use state and federal programs to remove the most highly erodible land from production, and implement conservation practices on erodible lands, to control wind erosion problems.

E2. Procedures: Promote conservation tillage farming practices, low input sustainable agriculture, field windbreaks and the removal of highly erodible land from crop production through various agency programs. At least 10 miles of field windbreaks will be established under the administration of SWCD's. A goal of 25% of the acres farmed in the watershed will be farmed using conservation tillage farming practices.

E3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$50,000.00	\$35,000.00
b. Balance:	0.00	0.00

E4. Timeline: Continuous.

E5. Status: One on one meetings continue with landowners in the watershed in an effort to promote conservation practices on their land. Topics covered include sediment basins, tree plantings, wetland restorations, conservation tillage, CRP, RIM, water bank, wetland reserve, and feedlot management.

Nine block tree plantings have been completed. One and one quarter miles of field windbreaks have been established. One farmstead windbreak has been completed. Conservation cropping practices have been applied to 3,429 acres. Crop pest management practices have been applied to 2,749 acres. Nutrient management practices have been applied to 473 acres. Many other conservation practices are still in the application and planning stages. Much of the work for this objective will be accomplished by the hiring of the SWCD technician as described in A5. Wetland restorations will continue with the funding from the NAWCA as discussed in A5.

E6. Benefits: A reduction in topsoil loss will maintain crop production while protecting water quality.

F. TITLE: Increased Recreational and Educational Opportunities.

F1. Narrative: Promote the improvement in hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and environmental education aspects that will result from this project.

F2. Procedures: Develop a Niemackl Watershed Newsletter, provide and maintain free and adequate public access to Cottonwood Lake and selected shallow wildlife lakes, work with the City of Herman concerning their park on Niemackl Lake, and promote environmental education.

F3. Budget:	LCMR	Match
a. Amount budgeted:	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
b. Balance:	0.00	0.00

F4. Timeline:	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	6/95	1/96	6/96	7/97
Newsletter	.....						
Public Access			.....	.....		
Promote Education	.....						

F5. Status: The concrete bath house/outhouse located below the ordinary high water mark in Cottonwood Lake has been removed. A new structure with proper setback is being planned with the Donnelly Rod and Gun Club. Contacts have been made with the Niemackl Lake Park, local sportsmen's clubs, the City of Herman and the local birding club regarding the project and their cooperation. A mailing list of all landowners in the watershed has been compiled. Articles on the project have appeared in local newspapers. Letters and brochures have been distributed to all landowners in the watershed. A newsletter was not developed. Instead, newspaper articles and periodic direct mailings to landowners in the watershed were used to promote the project and inform affected landowners of project activities.

F6. Benefits: Increased participation in outdoor recreation and education in the watershed. Increased awareness and a better understanding and appreciation of Minnesota's resources.

V. Evaluation: Several types of monitoring will occur throughout the life of the project. Different parameters of water quality will be analyzed in most of the lakes and waterways. Wildlife populations will be censused and game fish populations assessed. Hydrological and land use monitoring and modeling will be done to assess soil and water conservation. Aquatic plant surveys will be done to evaluate the effects of wetland restorations, water level management and rough fish control.

Indicators that will demonstrate that objectives have been met are: 1) clear water and submerged aquatic plants will indicate less soil erosion, fewer nutrients in the water, rough fish control and a switch from algae to rooted aquatic plants; 2) reduced flooding in Herman and the Five Mile Creek area will indicate that runoff events are being metered and drained wetlands have been restored; 3) an increase in wildlife and game fish populations will indicate that upland and wetland habitats have been improved; and 4) an increase in citizen participation in hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other outdoor activities will indicate increased recreational and educational opportunities.

Overall, considering the holistic approach to this watershed project, the success of the project will occur when both upland and wetland ecosystems are in harmony and functioning in a sustainable manner. When this occurs, bi-products such as clean water, fish and wildlife, and aesthetic values will come naturally.

VI. Context:

A. To date, work within this watershed has been piecemeal and on a small scale. Due to lack of coordination and funding, the different agencies in this project could not attempt a project of this magnitude on their own without special funding and a coordinated effort.

B. The proposed work to be accomplished by this project is not supplementary to an existing project, it is the entire project.

- C. Past accomplishments without LCMR funds have been significant but limited. They consist of mostly in-house expenditures on collecting baseline data such as: hydrographic surveys of lakes, inventories of drained and undrained wetlands, water quality monitoring land use surveys, game lake surveys, fish populations assessments, and wildlife surveys.

This watershed is a demonstration watershed for a LCMR funded GIS pilot project through the LMIC. The Niemackl project will dovetail with this GIS project.

This project will require more than two years to complete. An additional 6-8 years and \$2,500,000.00 are needed to achieve all the objectives, with funding or in-kind services derived from a diverse group of partners.

Most of the expenses incurred during the first 24 months of this project have been in-kind services provided by the participating agencies. These agencies have also shown their commitment to this project by providing personnel for monthly technical committee meetings, planning meetings, and survey and monitoring work. These agencies include Grant County SWCD, Stevens County SWCD, Bois de Sioux Watershed District, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, MN DNR, and MN PCA

VII. Qualifications:

1. Program Manager: Jim Breyen

Presently is Regional Wildlife Manager for DNR. Administers wildlife management operations in 21 counties of NW Minnesota. Coordinating the development of cooperative projects with diverse groups is a major responsibility of this position. Integrated management of natural resources is a primary vocational interest.

2. Program Coordinator: Tom Carlson

Carlson is a Waterfowl Habitat Specialist with the DNR in Fergus Falls. He has worked specifically on managing wetlands for 18 years. He has developed numerous large cooperative projects with watershed districts, DNR fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and private organizations.

3. Cooperators/Other Investigators:

Citizen's Steering Committee: representatives from township boards, the City of Herman, and sportsman's clubs.

Chairman: Randy Larson
304 1st Street East
Herman, MN 56248
218-677-2763

Technical Committee: Representatives from MN DNR-Wildlife, MN DNR-Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S.N.R.C.S., Bois de Sioux Watershed District, Grant County SWCD, Stevens County SWCD, and MN PCA.

- VIII. Reporting Requirements:** Semi-annual status reports will be submitted no later than January 1, 1994, July 1, 1994, January 1, 1995, and a final status report by June 30, 1995. Laws 1996 Chpt. 407, Sec.8, Subd.7, extended the availability of project dollars thru December 31, 1997. A final status report will be completed by January 1, 1998.