



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP)

Concerns

Recent research shows significant declines in insects across the world – raising alarms



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More than
40% of insect
species are
declining



Concerns

Bird species are also in significant decline with 3 billion less birds in North America since 1970

Rosenberg et al.
2019



Response to Declining Pollinator Populations

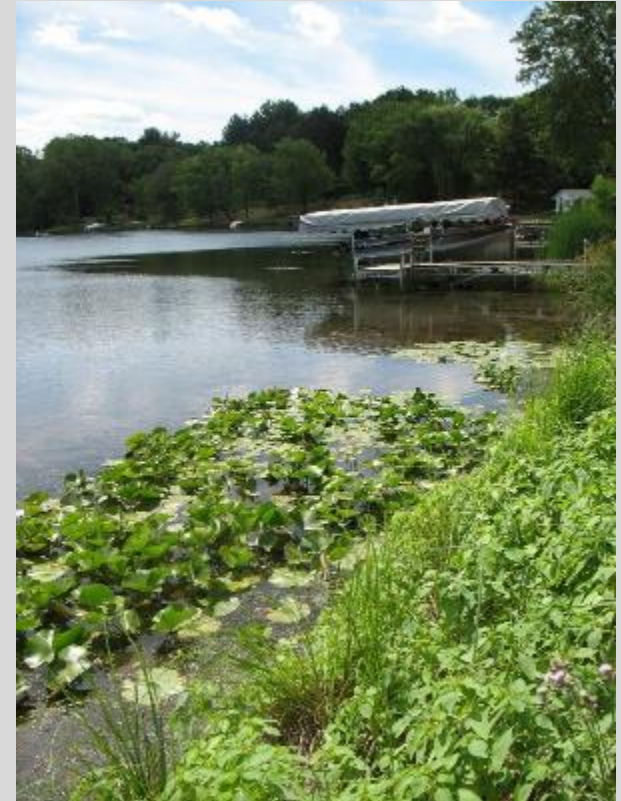
Bumblebee populations are in rapid decline



Concerns

Solutions related to pollinators, climate and water quality are all linked

Intact biology leads to improved soil and water conservation!



BWSR's Living Landscapes Initiative

Combining BWSR Programs to Support Wildlife Species, Build Corridors & Increase Resiliency

Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot



Lawns to Legumes



Cost-share Projects



Connecting to DNR, USFWS, USDA & Other Conservation Lands



Habitat Friendly Solar



Weed Mgmt Program



Easement & Wetland Programs



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)



Overview

This program is focused on restoring and enhancing strategically located, diverse native habitat across Minnesota to benefit populations of pollinators and beneficial insects as well as overall plant and animal diversity.

Funding available: \$273,740. Applicants can apply for grants of \$20,000 to \$60,000. Project can be located on multiple parcels.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Applicants

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Watershed Districts,
Watershed Management Organizations, Counties





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Project Eligibility

Eligible projects can be located on lands with a **long-term commitment** to conservation management through conservation easements, long-term conservation contracts and public ownership. Eligible lands include those with existing RIM easements, CRP (with a long-term commitment), lands with other types of conservation easements, non-profit conservation preserves, newly enrolled CRP, city parks, county parks, and protected natural areas.

To the extent possible landscapes need to be specifically identified at the time of the application as information about proposed projects and their potential for benefitting beneficial insects will be part of ranking.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Project Types

Projects can focus on:

- 1) Establishing new floral-rich plots or riparian plantings 0.25 to 10 acres in size; and/or
- 2) Converting existing non-native cover to native vegetation (.25 to 10 acres in size); and/or
- 3) Enhancing prairie, savanna, wetland, and shoreline communities that are not currently dominated with invasive species and can be enhanced to provide high value habitat that is planned to benefit a variety of beneficial insects and at-risk species (no acreage maximum).





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Project Types

- A plant or animal is considered “at-risk” when:
 - It is proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act
 - It is a candidate species for listing; or
 - It has been petitioned by a third party for listing; or
 - Its populations are rare, declining, or may be vulnerable to decline.
 - Find a partial list of [At-Risk Pollinator Species](#) on the Lawns to Legumes Partners webpage.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Match

A minimum non-state match equal to at least 25% of the amount requested and/or received is required.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Applications

Applications must be submitted via eLINK. Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must submit a request at <https://apps.bwsr.state.mn.us/elink/Account/Register> to establish an eLINK account ***no later than 7 days prior to the application deadline*** in order to ensure sufficient time to create an account. As part of the application, eLINK will require applicants to map the location of the proposed project area(s).





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Applications

The following application questions will be filled out in eLINK:

- Describe if and how your project's location/s will benefit at-risk and/or beneficial insects
- Discuss your project/s connection to statewide and local habitat corridors/pathways or areas mapped as important for pollinators and beneficial insects.
- How will partnerships be established or strengthened and how is equity considered for the project?
- Discuss the technical expertise of the applicants and partners that will be involved with assisting landowners.
- Describe the long-term management commitment for project/s and management activities that are planned, including protection from pesticide exposure
- Describe how cost-effectiveness will be considered for projects.
- Explain the anticipated outcomes upon completion of the project and how these outcomes will be obtained.



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Applications

Applicants will be required to complete a project budget summarizing proposed activities and expenditures including technical and administrative costs.

Proposals must include one image file of the project area in relation to the priority zones (.jpg, .tiff, .png) as an Application Image in eLINK.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Table 1: Habitat Enhancement Pilot Program Ranking Criteria

Ranking Criteria	Maximum Points Possible
<u>Value to at-risk and/or beneficial insects</u>	20
<u>Connection to habitat corridors/pathways or areas mapped as important for pollinator and beneficial insect plantings</u>	10
<u>Partnerships established or strengthened and equity considerations</u>	10
<u>Sufficient technical capacity of applicant and partners</u>	15
<u>Long-term protection and maintenance/sustainability of projects, including protection from pesticide exposure</u>	10
<u>Cost effectiveness of projects</u>	10
<u>Anticipated Outcomes and Project Value</u> outcomes will be obtained.	25
Total Points Available	100



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Eligible Expenses

- Project and plan development
- Site preparation, planting and management costs (tilling, burning, weed barriers, seeds, erosion fabric, hydromulch, weed free straw, containerized plants (or containers, soil and seed to grow plants), seed and seeding, containerized plant installation, inter-seeding, weed removal, mowing, conservation grazing, conservation haying, etc.). Note that non-herbicide methods of site preparation and management are preferred, see the Xerces Society guide to “Organic Site Preparation Methods.” Fence materials and installation is not an eligible expense.
- Invasive species management as part of efforts to enhance or re-establish native vegetation. Note, the removal of woody invasive species invasive grasses can be part of project costs but should not be a major component of the budget.
- Native plant rescue is an eligible cost as a source of supplemental plant materials.
- Native flowering trees and shrubs that are beneficial to pollinators and beneficial insects are eligible for funding, as they often provide early season floral resources and nesting resources.



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Project Lifespan

Projects must be sustained for a minimum of 10 years and have a focus on long-term care of ecological functions and aesthetics. All grantees must follow the **Grants Administration Manual policy and guidance** (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/gam>).

Conservation Plans

Conservation plan templates for project implementation and management have been developed to be used on all projects. These templates will include detail on project site preparation, installation and management as well as the need to document the restoration process. Projects must include plans for long-term funding, maintenance, inspection, monitoring and site access for the duration of a project as part of the project file. In addition to being filed with the local SWCD office(s) and BWSR, the conservation plans must be provided to landowners to guide long-term management.



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Additional Details

Seed and plant source, diversity levels and other topics related to vegetation are summarized in BWSR's [Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines](#).

Projects are strongly encouraged to be located in areas protected from pesticides (at least 200 feet away from pesticide application). See the BWSR/Xerces Society fact sheet on Protecting Conservation Lands from Pesticides for additional protection strategies.

When practical, pollinator focused projects must have at least three blooming species during, spring, summer and fall, with high diversity is strongly encouraged. Use of milkweeds is encouraged to provide monarch habitat.



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Timeline

November 3, 2022 Application period begins

February 23, 2023 Application deadline at 4:30 PM

April 26, 2023 BWSR Board authorizes grant awards

May 2023 BWSR grant agreements sent to recipients (proposed)

June 6, 2023 Work plan submittal deadline

June 20, 2023 Grant Execution deadline



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Timeline

The project period starts when the grant agreement is fully executed, meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds and cannot be used as match. All grants must be completed by December 31st, 2024.





Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Payments and Reimbursements

Grant payments will be made on a quarterly reimbursement schedule after submission of documentation of eligible expenditures and approval by the program manager, provided the grant applicant is in compliance with all BWSR reporting requirements for previously awarded BWSR grants.

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) funding cannot be used to pay for space and other associated overhead costs. Billing rates charged to these grants may include the employee's base hourly rate plus benefits. Required match can be provided through other facilities and administration costs such as space, vehicle, computers, and other associated overhead costs.



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Payments and Reimbursements

- Grant recipients must display program goals and major program activities on a fact sheet (or a separate webpage) that is linked to their website
- Descriptions of actual results and financial expenditures for each work plan activity must be reported in eLINK by March 15th and September 15th each year along with any reimbursement requests. Optional reimbursements can also be requested on June 15th and December 15th with a report. A final report and submission of reimbursements is also due by December 31st 2024 which is the completion date for the grant (a December 15th report is not required prior to the final report).



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Prevailing Wage

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on construction projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (Minn. Stat. 177.41 – 177.44). All laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFP shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality.

Additional information on prevailing wage requirements is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website:

<https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information>. Questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

The Program Policy is also on Apply for Grants Website



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP) Program Policy

Supporting Pollinators and Other at-risk Wildlife

From the Board of Water and Soil Resources, State of Minnesota



Version: 2.00
Effective Date: October 26, 2022
Approval: Board Order #22-48



Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear expectations for the implementation of grants delivered through this program. More specific requirements or criteria may apply when specified by statute, rule, funding source, or appropriation language.

Reason for the policy

This cost-share grant program is focused on restoring and enhancing strategically located, diverse native habitat



Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP)

Questions?

For more information contact Dan Shaw at dan.shaw@state.mn.us or at 612-236-6291

