

# Climate Resiliency: Habitat Friendly Utilities

## 2023 Proposed Funding

BWSR is requesting **\$1 million** from the General Fund to support habitat friendly utility initiatives. This funding will provide financial and technical assistance to promote the successful establishment of native vegetation as part of utility projects including solar, wind, pipelines and electrical transmission corridors to ensure the integrity and resiliency of Minnesota landscapes and protection of habitat and water resources. This program involves collaboration between federal, state and local agencies, tribes, utility companies, non-profit organizations and contractors.

## Program Background

The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) launched a Habitat Friendly Solar Program in 2016 to establish a set of standards used to certify individual projects as complying with state requirements to provide habitat benefits alongside solar installations.

The program also offers project managers and landowners technical assistance – such as recommending seed mixes and restoration guidance — to help them meet these standards.

With a cover of native vegetation planted underneath, the soil under panels improves soil health, providing long term benefits.

## Habitat Friendly Solar Achievements

- Included more than 50 solar projects as meeting the Habitat Friendly Solar standards
- Planted more than 1,300 acres on these projects with native vegetation
- Provided technical assistance to landowners and project managers in 18 Minnesota counties

## Proposed Program Expansion

This year, BWSR seeks to expand the Habitat Friendly Solar Program to apply to additional types of utility projects such as wind turbines, pipelines and electrical transmission corridors. Successfully revegetating these project sites helps ensure landscape resiliency, protects water and soil resources, and provides essential wildlife habitat.

## Contact

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**Top:** Native vegetation is planted within a solar installation near Aurora, Minnesota.

**Bottom:** Native plants are incorporated into a utilities corridor. **Photo Credits:** BWSR

