



North Oaks News

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Update on the proposed project for Wilkinson Lake

By Dawn Tanner
Contributing Writer

In April 2022, North Oaks News featured an article about early planning and conceptual design of a project to help improve Wilkinson Lake. Wilkinson is a shallow lake in North Oaks that is listed on the MPCA's Impaired Waters List because of excess nutrients. Wilkinson flows into Deep and Pleasant Lakes, and improvement of water quality in Wilkinson may have broader implications because of these connections. Since that last article, Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO) staff, the engineering team at Houston Engineering, Inc., and project partners have been busy working to make this project a reality.

To briefly recap, improving water quality in Wilkinson Lake is a priority for the VLAWMO as part of our participation in the small, priority watershed grant program with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Main project partners in this design phase are North Oaks Company/ North Oaks Farms (NOC) and the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT). Barr Engineering, St. Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS), SEH, and

Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division (RCSWCD) were involved in planning stages and provided critical early support that informed current design work.

The project area is of regional importance because it is the last stop before stormwater empties into Wilkinson Lake and because the ditch system carries water primarily from upstream cities, county, and highway areas. See the included map of project area for reference.

The proposed project is taking shape in exciting ways as we work toward construction. In early conceptual design, engineers considered a few possible types of projects. The design is now focused on a large, deep-water wetland restoration with varying depths, natural contours, and native vegetation. Project goals include reducing nutrients and improving habitat. Permitting entities, including the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), have provided important guidance in design development. Coordination for permitting continues at this time.

Updates regarding project progress and conceptual

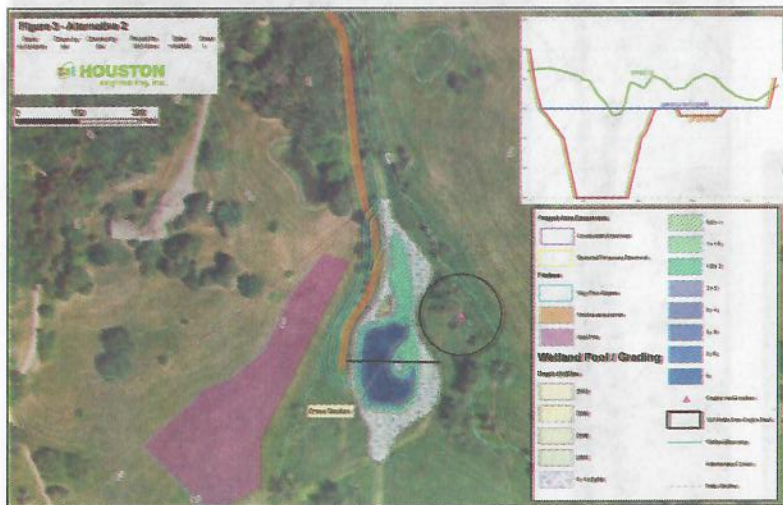
design development have been provided by VLAWMO to the city of North Oaks and the North Oaks Homeowners' Association (NOHOA). The most recent meeting was an update to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) jointly with NOHOA's Natural Environment Stewardship Team (NEST) on Feb. 13. The meeting was held via Zoom, and the recording is available on the city website. A public meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on March 22, in the Community Meeting Room at 100 Village Center Drive.

We look forward to continuing to provide updates as construction approaches for this important project. We will continue to share information with you as it becomes available.

Dawn Tanner is the VLAWMO Program Development Coordinator



The figure shows the project area to the south of Wilkinson Lake.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The figure shows the early preliminary concept design that was produced by Houston Engineering, Inc., and was included in the update to the NRC/NEST on February 13. This concept has since been updated to include more specific detail in the draft preliminary design.