Milaca Recreation Park

Rum River Habitat Enhancement Concept

Project Summary

The proposed project will improve fish habitat, fishing, and recreational access within the City of Milaca's Recreation Park. If approved by the City, the project will be fully funded with a State grant.



Why Rec Park

The proposed project location is upstream of a low head dam that was removed in 2013 using a separate Outdoor Heritage Fund grant. The dam had caused the upstream river channel to become widened, uniformly shallow, and without variation in flows that are important to fish. Adding habitat features can help increase fish habitat, quality fishing, and recreational access.

Status & Timeline

Funds are secured. A concept is done. Upcoming work would include:

Fall 2026 – City approval. Design refinement in collaboration with the City.

Winter 2026-27 – Permitting. Construction bidding.

2027 – Construction, preferably during lower water.

Roles

The Anoka Conservation District (ACD) – Design, permitting, construction bidding & oversight, and funding.

City – Provide input on the design to any extent it chooses. Assign a point person with whom ACD can coordinate construction so it is minimally disruptive to park users. Leave the project in place. No active maintenance is expected to be needed.

Mille Lacs SWCD – Input on the design.

Permits

DNR and other permits will be required. Securing & paying for permits is the Anoka Conservation District's responsibility. The MN DNR has already provided input on the project concept, so likelihood of securing the DNR permit is high.

Components

100-300 linear feet of Riverbank with new habitat features likely including:

- Rock vanes.
- Boulder clusters.
- Regrade eroding slope.
- Stepping-stone features.

Outcomes

Improved access

Improved fish habitat & fishing

Estimated Cost

Engineering/Permitting:	$5k - $10k
Construction:	$45k - $90k
Total:	$50k-$100k

Funding

Anoka Conservation District*	100%
City of Milaca	0%
Mille Lacs SWCD	0%

*State grant from the Outdoor Heritage Council. These funds originate from the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment. The Anoka Conservation District has secured this grant to work with partners throughout the full length of the Rum River to improve habitat.

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

Memorandum

To:	**Tammy Pfaff, City of Milaca Manager**
	Milaca Mayor and City Council
From:	**Jamie Schurbon, Watershed Projects Manager**
Date:	**September 10, 2026**
Re:	**Project Proposal – Rec Park Rum River Habitat Enhancement**

Summary:

The Anoka Conservation District (ACD), in partnership with the Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District, is requesting the City of Milaca collaborate on a Rum River habitat enhancement project in Recreation Park. The project will be fully funded by a state grant, will cost $0 to the city, and the city can participate in the design process as much or little as it chooses. The purpose of the project is to improve in-river habitat, fishing, and recreational access.

Requests of the City NOW:

- **Authorize the proposed project**, contingent upon approval of a final design by the city council and/or city staff.
- **Designate a staff person** to coordinate with ACD. A city staff person engaged in park management would be ideal. This person will participate in the design process as little or as much as the city chooses. During construction this person will advise ACD to ensure construction staging and timing is not disruptive to any planned events in the park.

Requests of the City LATER:

- **Review and approve the design.**
- **Authorize signing a project agreement** specifying the city contribution is $0 and the city will not remove the project after construction. A draft will be prepared by ACD for city review.

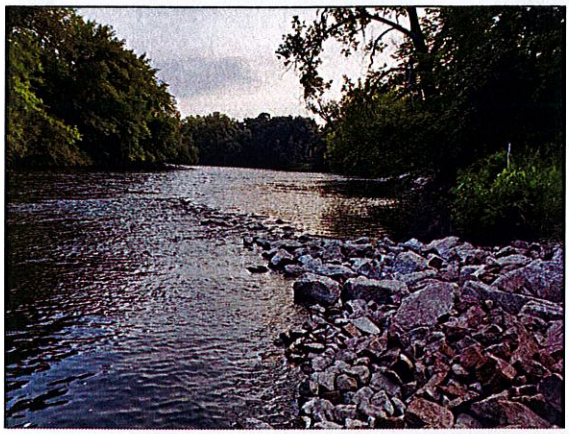
Additional Information:

Additional project details, a preliminary concept, and example photos are on the following pages.

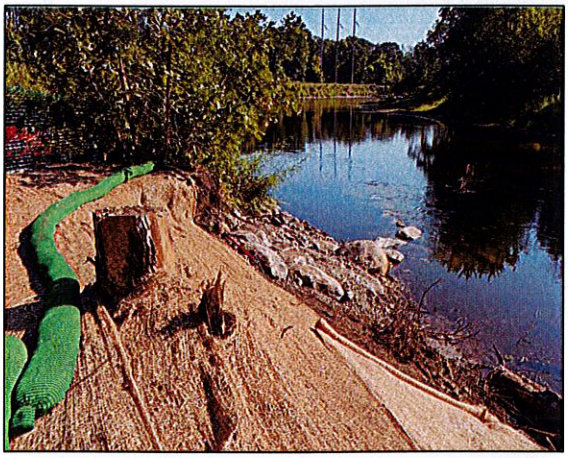
Molly Clyne from the Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District and
Jamie Schurbon from the Anoka Conservation District will be present at your September 16 city council meeting to briefly present and answer questions.

www.AnokaSWCD.org 1318 McKay Drive NE Suite 300 Ham Lake, MN 55304 763-434-2030

Example Photos from Similar Rum River Projects



Rock Vane
City of St. Francis, Dellwood Community Park
Deflects flow from shore and provides a small pool on the downstream side.



U-Shaped Rock Vane
City of Oak Grove, Canoe Landing Park
Deflects flow from shore and provides a small pool on the downstream side. Photo is during construction. May include logs or root wads for additional habitat.



Boulder Clusters
City of Ramsey, Rum River Central Regional Park
Provides habitat for insects and crayfish which fish feed upon, as well still water resting places behind each rock.



Fishing access and enjoyment
City of St. Francis, Dellwood Community Park
Shoreline accessiblity improved with stepping-stone type features that require no maintenance and minimize foot trampling that can lead to wash-outs.

A variety of other habitat features can be considered including root wads, logs deflectors, and others.

My name is Molly Clyne, and I work at the Mille Lacs Soil & Water Conservation District. I'm reaching out on behalf of the Anoka Conservation District regarding a potential shoreline and fish habitat project at Milaca Rec Park. We wanted to bring the project concept to your attention and see if the City would be interested in learning more.

The project is intended to improve both the natural resources and recreational opportunities at the park. Specifically, Anoka Conservation District is proposing to enhance in-stream fish habitat along this stretch of the Rum River through the installation of rock vanes and large wood structures, which would provide additional holding and resting areas for game fish. This is also one of the few publicly accessible fishing areas within this portion of the Rum River that could benefit from this type of habitat enhancement.

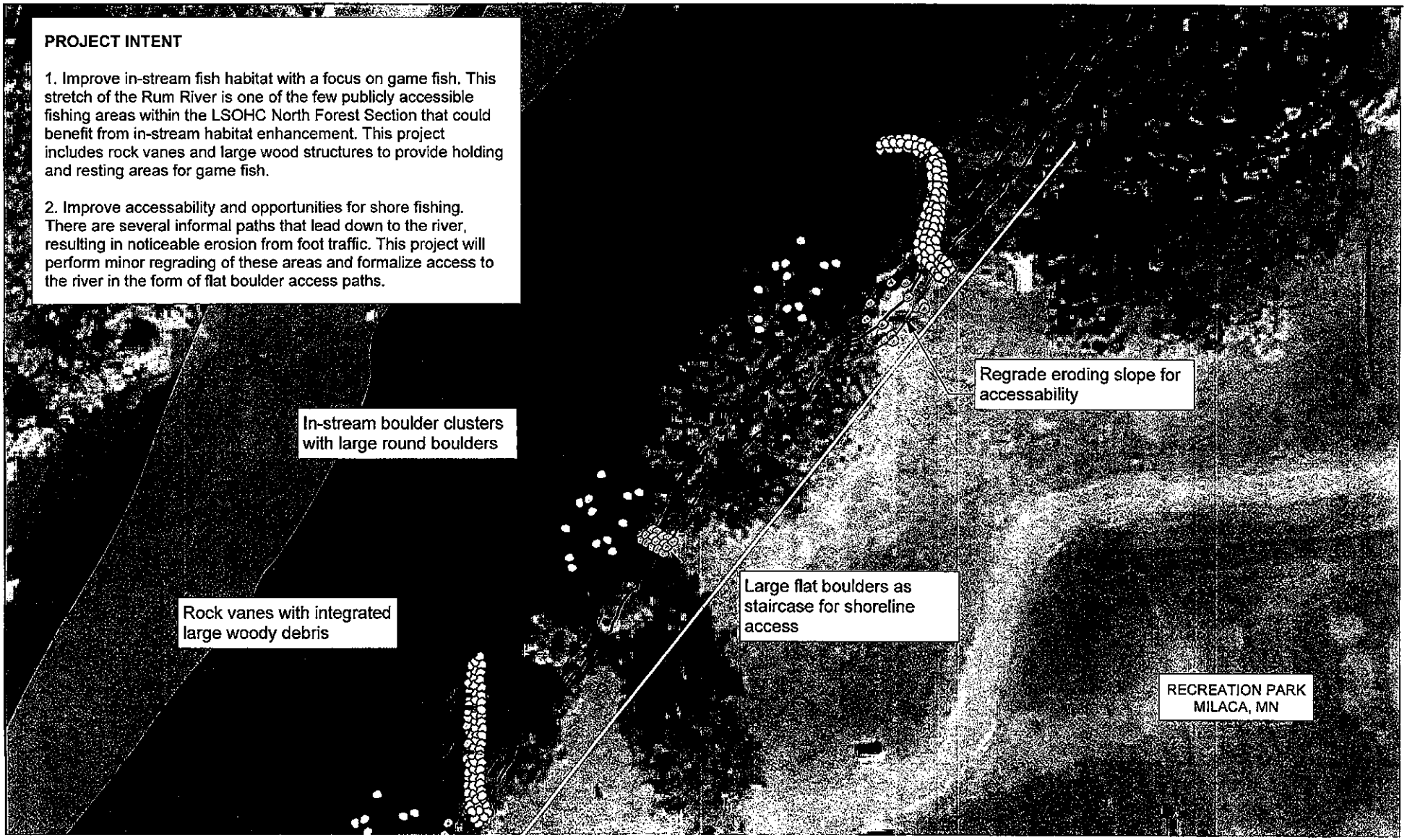
The project would also improve access to the river for shore fishing. There are currently several informal paths leading down to the river that have resulted in noticeable erosion from foot traffic. The proposed project would include minor regrading and formalize access through flat boulder paths, helping reduce erosion while making the river more accessible to park visitors.

Importantly, the project is not intended to interfere with the existing use or long-term goals of Rec Park, and the improvements are designed to complement the park while providing additional fishing and recreational opportunities.

I've attached a summary of the project concept for your review. We'd be happy to answer any questions and, if helpful, someone from Anoka Conservation District and/or I would be glad to attend an upcoming City Council meeting to provide a brief overview of the project and discuss its potential benefits to the park and community.
Please let me know if you'd be interested in discussing the project further.

Thank you!

Molly Clyne
Watershed Coordinator & Forestry Organizer
Mille Lacs Soil & Water Conservation District
320-983-2160
molly.clyne@millelacs.mn.gov


PROJECT INTENT
1. Improve in-stream fish habitat with a focus on game fish. This stretch of the Rum River is one of the few publicly accessible fishing areas within the LSOHC North Forest Section that could benefit from in-stream habitat enhancement. This project includes rock vanes and large wood structures to provide holding and resting areas for game fish.
2. Improve accessability and opportunities for shore fishing. There are several informal paths that lead down to the river, resulting in noticeable erosion from foot traffic. This project will perform minor regrading of these areas and formalize access to the river in the form of flat boulder access paths.
Regrade eroding slope for accessability
In-stream boulder clusters with large round boulders
Large flat boulders as staircase for shoreline access
Rock vanes with integrated large woody debris
RECREATION PARK
MILACA, MN