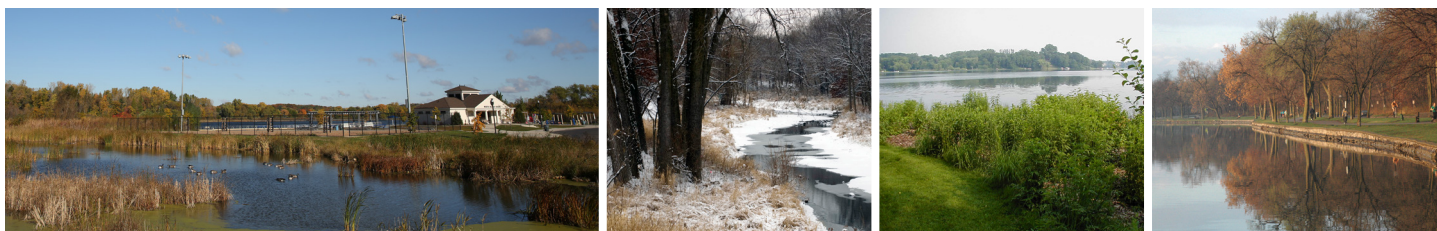


# Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan

2015 – 2020

*The Hennepin County Natural Resources Strategic Plan is intended to guide the county and its partners in responding to natural resource issues and developing internal and external policies, programs and partnerships that improve, protect and preserve natural resources. The following provides a summary of the plan and highlights strategies and key elements to meet our natural resources goals. The full plan is available at [www.hennepin.us/naturalresources](http://www.hennepin.us/naturalresources).*



## Goal 1: Hennepin County waters are clean and healthy

- Protect and restore lakes, rivers and streams
- Protect groundwater resources
- Protect and restore wetlands

### Restoring wetlands and banking mitigation credits

Under the Wetland Conservation Act, landowners who cannot restore or avoid impacting a wetland must replace lost wetland acres by purchasing wetland banking credits. Because there are limited wetland mitigation banking credits available in Hennepin County, credits are often purchased outside of the county, resulting in a net loss of wetlands within the county. To bolster the availability of mitigation credits within Hennepin County, the county will identify and evaluate wetland restoration and funding opportunities on county-owned properties and tax-forfeited lands. In addition, the county will assist the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in locating willing county landowners with potential wetland restoration sites.



## Goal 2: Hennepin County landscapes are diverse and functional and natural areas are preserved

- Protect and enhance natural areas, corridors and green spaces
- Establish and restore landscapes that serve an ecological function
- Control and prevent vegetative and biological threats to maintain healthy ecosystems
- Practice and promote environmental stewardship of the county's soil resources

### Establish a conservation easement program

Conservation easements restrict development and certain types of use on a piece of property in perpetuity in order to protect its natural resources. The county will explore options for establishing a board-adopted conservation easement program that provides guidance for the consideration of potential easement properties as opportunities arise via tax-forfeiture, capital projects or private landowner inquiries.



### Maintain and increase a healthy tree canopy

Left unmanaged, the overall tree canopy in the county will likely continue to decline due to loss of trees from age, development, invasive species, disease, pests climate change and storm damage. The county will provide technical assistance to cities to enhance tree canopy and will evaluate the feasibility of providing financial and logistical assistance for planning and mitigation efforts related to the emerald ash borer.



## Goal 3: Hennepin County fosters effective partnerships

- Foster partnerships and strengthen collaboration with natural resource management entities
- Collaborate with internal partners to incorporate sustainable natural resource management strategies

### Hennepin Natural Resources Partnership

The county has convened a group of representatives from watershed districts, water management organizations, cities, county departments, and state and regional natural resource agencies. The Hennepin Natural Resources Partnership promotes collaborative land and water management efforts on issues transecting political and hydrologic boundaries, encourages sharing of resources and information, increases opportunities to leverage resources, and provides a venue to address countywide policy issues.

## Goal 4: Hennepin County motivates environmental stewardship

- Engage the community in taking action to protect the environment

### Environmental education

The county develops educational resources, shares technical information and provides funding for partners to implement environmental education projects that empower residents to take action to protect water and land. The county supports programs and projects that help audiences understand that they are part of an ecosystem and can take action to protect the environment regardless of where they live.



## Goal 5: Hennepin County leverages financial resources

- Integrate the work of Hennepin County and partners to achieve the goals of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment
- Provide financial assistance

### Leveraging financial resources

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment provides funding for projects that protect, enhance and restore natural resources, including lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater, wetlands, prairies, forests and wildlife habitat. In an effort to lessen the burden on local taxpayers, the county will seek partners to jointly pursue grant funds on projects and programs that address common natural resources issues, needs and goals.

