



Rice Lake Wetlands

Washington County Priority Conservation Area

Land Area

- **Total Area:** 2,864 acres
- **Forest/Woodland:** 388 acres
- **Grassland:** 75 acres
- **Wetland:** 2,181 acres

Immediate Threats

- Human activities
- Hydrological alterations
- Continued urban growth

Species of Concern

- Red-Shouldered Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Common Snapping Turtle
- Blanding's Turtle
- Halberd-Leaved Tearthumb



Land and Water Legacy Program

In 2006, a \$20 million bond referendum passed, initiating the creation of the county's Land and Water Legacy Program, which purchases land or land interests to preserve its natural condition. The program is ongoing and has used collaborative partnerships to invest over \$40 million in protection, conserving over 1,300 acres of high-quality natural lands.

Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas

The Washington County "Top 10" Priority Conservation Areas represent the county's highest priority areas for land protection. They were identified using a ranking system based upon the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System and other available nature-related datasets. These areas serve as a guide for county land protection projects, however land outside of these areas may still be considered.

Priority Area Description

The Rice Lake Wetlands Priority Conservation Area parallels Hardwood Creek in Hugo and Forest Lake, within the Rice Creek Watershed District. Most land is privately owned, and the Department of Natural Resources owns about 90 acres that are open to the public. This area is a significant terrestrial and wetland ecological area in the seven county metro. The DNR also has large landholdings surrounding Rice Lake and within the Hardwood Creek and Paul Hugo Farms Wildlife Management Areas, forming a large area for habitat and public use.

Nearby Rice Lake and the Hardwood Creek drainages form a large, contiguous wetland and upland complex dominated by maple and oak forests; wooded wetlands of tamarack, black ash, and alder; and open wetlands with fens and sedge meadows. Egg Lake is a shallow lake of less than five feet with continuous cover of shoreline vegetation that provides excellent wildlife habitat.

Hardwood Creek is on Minnesota's List of Impaired Waters for a low index of biological integrity for fish and low dissolved oxygen levels.

Conservation Objectives and Benefits

Protecting Water Quality

Reducing ditching and other human activities will help prevent alterations to the natural hydrology.

Protecting undeveloped land and wetlands helps clean and filter runoff before it enters Hardwood Creek, helping to restore the water quality of the lower portion of the creek, as outlined in watershed plans.

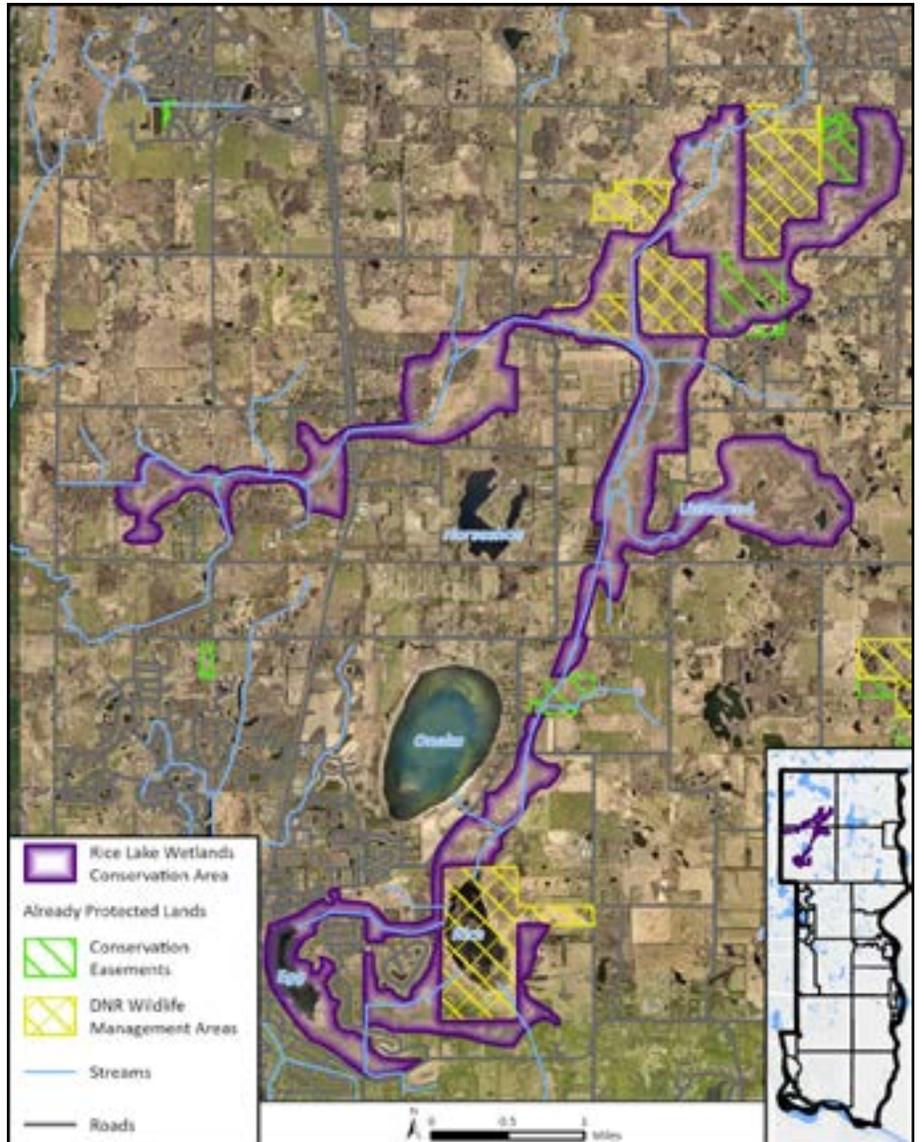
Additionally, protecting wetlands and uplands with highly permeable soils helps ensure clean aquifer recharge.



Protecting Habitats

Land acquisition and management to protect the area from continued urban growth and wetland development will help maintain and improve the area's ecological health and support rare species that depend upon specific habitats and natural resources.

Preserving natural habitat maintains a corridor along the lower reaches of Hardwood Creek to connect the Hardwood Creek and Paul Hugo Farms Wildlife Management Areas.



For more information:

Washington County
Land and Water Legacy Program
WashingtonCountyMN.gov/LWLP