



A Case Study *Nature for the future in Sauk Rapids*

"Having the natural resources inventory funded by the DNR and its continued support by Community Assistance staff were invaluable assets. Community Assistance helped the city create useful ways to include natural spaces in our community".

—Todd Schultz, Community Development Director, Sauk Rapids

THE CHALLENGE

For years, a stretch of the Mississippi River from the city of Sartell north to the Blanchard Dam had been unprotected. To evaluate this river section, a natural resources inventory using MLCCS was funded by the DNR. When a woodlot with an eagle's nest was cut down in 2005, Sartell used the MLCCS inventory to develop a city-wide environmental protection ordinance. Inspired by Sartell, neighboring river city Sauk Rapids also decided to take action.

CCA ACTION

At the request of Sauk Rapids, CCA brought financial and technical aid to the city. CCA staff worked with city staff to identify natural resources of value to the community and increase the city's role in protecting the Mississippi River. DNR further assisted the city by analyzing the inventory to identify the city's rarest habitats for protection.

THE SOLUTION

Sauk Rapids is working on a new Conservation Overlay District. This will allow for greater natural resource protection while providing flexibility during the permitting process.



DNR Central Region



Does your community want to conserve its vital natural resources as it plans for the future? To explore options, contact DNR's Community Conservation Assistance staff.

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Natural Resources Support *To guide community conservation and development*



Build Better Communities *Make informed decisions about land and water use*

- A safer and healthier quality of life
- Enhanced property values
- A lasting legacy of Minnesota's woods, wetlands, prairies, and waters



land use fact

Future growth and development in Minnesota will require making room for over 1.3 million more people by 2030. More than a half million households and commercial spaces will be built on undeveloped land.

What's at risk?

High Stakes
Local decisions have far-reaching effect

Local land use decisions affect land and water resources far beyond the originating community. Community Conservation Assistance helps local governments bridge a critical gap between conservation and development planning by providing information, financial assistance, and other support to:

- ▶ **Make the state's immense store of knowledge** available to local land-use policymakers in easily understandable ways.
- ▶ **Help local government staff to integrate use of natural resources information** into planning and development decisions.
- ▶ **Encourage local governments and developers to adopt** land and water safeguards on lands over which state government has limited or no control.

Natural resources information helps guide growth

land use fact

Conservation of Minnesota's natural resources takes everyone's help. MN DNR owns and manages about 10% of the state's land base. Most decisions that affect land and water resources are made by local governments, developers, and private landowners.

Who's responsible?

Natural Resources
An essential element of community planning

Everyone reaps the economic, social, and environmental benefits when community leaders make well-informed land use decisions that conserve sensitive natural resources. Of benefit to people, plants, animals—all life—natural habitat conservation provides these valuable life-supporting services:

- Food, shelter, energy
- Cleaner water and air
- Aquifer recharge
- Soil erosion control
- Flood control and drought mitigation
- Wildlife habitat for successful nesting and growth
- Carbon storage
- Recycling of nutrients

Cultivating Partnerships
Land and water conservation requires working together

Partnerships help communities achieve conservation in the face of change. Community Conservation Assistance helps local government staff and officials to interpret and analyze natural resources information and data for use in local planning and decision making.

Partnerships help to maximize public and private benefit. Community Conservation Assistance seeks to improve local government capacity to address increasingly complex land and water-related issues.

Community Conservation Assistance
Information, context, guidance, and support

Community Conservation Assistance staff acknowledges local land use expertise and aims to:

- ▶ **Develop and offer workshops, training, and case studies** relevant to local officials and staff on important conservation-development issues
- ▶ **Financially support innovative approaches** to conservation and development
- ▶ **Assist with analysis and problem-solving** around land use issues
- ▶ **Involve local and field experts** to develop useful land use tools
- ▶ **Communicate with other state agencies** to better coordinate with local governments on land use policies and practices
- ▶ **Build awareness and support** for critical public and private investments in land and water protection
- ▶ **Provide up-to-date natural resources support.** Some examples of resources Community Conservation Assistance provides to help local government staff and officials make well-informed land-use decisions are:
 - Grants for natural resource inventories using Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS)
 - Identification and mapping of important natural areas for protection and restoration
 - Green infrastructure and watershed planning