DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Progress Report on Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) Investments

Reporting period of July 1, 2023 – Sept. 30, 2024

Report date: Nov. 27, 2024

Legislative Charge

Minnesota Laws of 2023, Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 3, Subdivision 10 (d)

No later than Nov. 30 each year, the commissioner must provide a progress report on the expenditure of money appropriated under this subdivision to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over environment and natural resources finance.

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Executive Summary

The $150 million Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences) investments appropriated to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) focus on five investment categories:

- Enhancing access and welcoming new users to public lands and outdoor recreation facilities
- Modernizing camping and related infrastructure
- Modernizing boating access
- Enhancing fisheries and fishing infrastructure
- Restoring streams and modernizing water-related infrastructure to support outdoor recreation

These investments, which include $110 million in General Fund[1] and $39.9 million in capital investment[2] dollars, are helping the DNR ensure Minnesotans of all abilities and interests enjoy a world-class recreation system, whatever outdoor experience they choose. Through Sept. 30, 2024, the DNR has spent $3.586 million of the Get Out MORE investments — $2.814 million from the General Fund appropriation and $772,000 from the capital investment appropriations. Additionally, the DNR has encumbered (committed to projects) $14.967 million and anticipates an acceleration of spending over the next twelve months. These Get Out MORE projects to modernize and enhance the state's outdoor recreation system are in 63 of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Since the Get Out MORE funding became available on July 1, 2023, the DNR has engaged with partners and the public to identify specific projects within the five investment categories; assembled an internal, interdisciplinary team to coordinate and track the investments; developed a detailed timeline for design, contracting or purchasing, and construction or deployment of the projects; and completed the first projects in the timeline. This report highlights the progress made from July 1, 2023, through Sept. 30, 2024, and previews the work scheduled for the coming years.

The Get Out MORE project work accomplished during the reporting period primarily involved development of a Get Out MORE programmatic plan, stakeholder and partner engagement, and project scoping and planning. Existing DNR staff largely accomplished this work while the agency developed and filled Get Out MORE-specific positions. The DNR anticipates a majority of the encumbrance and expenditure of Get Out MORE funding to take place in the remaining years of the appropriation, as project implementation accelerates.

[1] Minnesota Laws of 2023, Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 3, Subdivision 10.

[2] Minnesota Laws of 2023, Chapter 72, Article 1, Section 7, Subdivisions 2, 3, 6.

Introduction

Outdoor recreation, and the natural resources that support it, are central to Minnesota's identity, fundamental to our economy, and essential for our health and quality of life. Minnesota consistently ranks among the top states in which to live, and a key factor to that ranking is our healthy natural environment with abundant parks, natural lands, and high-quality outdoor recreation experiences.

The DNR provides enriching public outdoor recreation opportunities — such as hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, camping, skiing, hiking, biking, off-highway vehicle riding and naturalist programs — for Minnesotans of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. It does so, in part, by managing a statewide outdoor recreation system that includes state parks, trails, forests, wildlife and aquatic management areas, public water access sites and other recreation facilities. While Minnesota is known for its unique outdoor recreation experiences, many of the DNR-managed facilities that support these experiences are showing their age, and in some cases do not meet the needs of today's outdoor users. Further, Minnesota's incredible natural resources need ongoing management and stewardship – such as fish stocking, habitat restoration and enhanced climate resiliency – to continue to provide the amazing places and activities that draw people outdoors.

The Get Out MORE initiative adopted in 2023 provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address the need for investment. This $150 million, transformative investment is enabling the DNR to develop more modern and inclusive outdoor recreation experiences. As a result, Minnesota will better serve current outdoor enthusiasts, connect even more people to the outdoors, and help ensure future generations will also benefit from time spent in our unparalleled natural places.

The $150 million Get Out MORE investments are allocated as follows across five investment categories:

- Enhancing access and welcoming new users to public lands and outdoor recreation facilities — $35.4 million
- Modernizing camping and related infrastructure — $9.5 million
- Enhancing fisheries and fishing infrastructure — $60 million
- Modernizing boating access — $35 million
- Restoring streams and modernizing water-related infrastructure to support outdoor recreation — $10 million

Table 1 shows the mix of General Fund and Capital Investments that is supporting the investments in each of these five categories.

Table 1. Specific funding source (i.e., General Fund or Capital Investments) and amounts for each Get Out MORE investment area (dollars in thousands).

Category	General Fund	Capital Investments	Total Amount ($ in 000s)
Enhancing access and welcoming new users to public lands and outdoor recreation facilities	$25,000	$10,400	$35,400
Modernizing camping and related infrastructure	$5,000	$4,500	$9,500
Modernizing boating access	$35,000	$0	$35,000
Enhancing Fisheries and Fishing Infrastructure	$35,000	$25,000	$60,000
Restoring Streams and Modernize Water-related Infrastructure	$10,000	$0	$10,000
Total	**$110,000**	**$39,900**	**$149,900**

**The total funding allocated to the DNR for the Get Out MORE initiative is $149.9 million, generally rounded to $150 million in this report.*

This report highlights the DNR's progress in implementing these historic investments from July 1, 2023, through Sept. 30, 2024. It begins by highlighting the stakeholder and partner engagement that the DNR conducted to inform site selection, project development and project sequencing in each of the Get Out MORE investment areas, as well as internal coordination and efficiency efforts. Subsequent sections describe accomplishments in each of the five investment categories. Finally, the report previews the anticipated accomplishments during the next reporting period with work that is currently in the planning or design process. Throughout, the report highlights the benefits these efforts are providing to Minnesotans and their communities.

Getting Started

To best take advantage of the transformational opportunity afforded by the Get Out MORE investment, and in recognition that the level of spending far exceeded our typical project budget, DNR committed to a department-wide and programmatic approach to funding allocation decisions. The DNR determined that funding allocations would meet the following principles:

- Projects/programs must involve modernization of an existing facility, land, or service
- Follow a programmatic approach (rather than a list of separate, individual projects)
- Be informed by public engagement
- Prioritize underserved communities
- Prioritize work that meets DNR priorities as well as public interest

The DNR also determined that funding allocations would consider:

- Opportunities to take advantage of partnerships with other agencies, local units of government, tribal governments, or nongovernmental organizations
- Opportunities for efficiency and cost savings
- Accomplishment of multiple objectives
- Amount of coordination/resources required

To identify specific sites and projects in each of the five Get Out MORE investment areas, the DNR coordinated internally; prioritized projects based on current conditions, amount of public use, and recreation opportunities provided; created interdisciplinary teams to facilitate project flow and identify and solve for capacity limitations in areas like contracting, purchasing, and environmental review; partnered with local governments, conservation organizations, accessibility organizations, lake associations, and others; reviewed existing management plans; asked for input from the public on their priorities; and took into account population centers, geographic coverage, and existing recreation opportunities. Although this planning approach took some time, the DNR strongly believe it ensures the agency is spending the investments as efficiently and effectively as possible to improve the outdoor recreation experience for Minnesotans and visitors.

Implementation Progress by Investment Area

Enhancing Access and Welcoming New Users to Public Lands and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

These investments are refreshing recreational facilities, improving roads and trails that provide access to recreational opportunities, and enhancing accessibility for all Minnesotans. Of the $150 million in Get Out MORE investments, $35.4 million will go toward more than 100 access and accessibility projects throughout the state, including:

- $15 million for accessibility improvements in state parks and wildlife management areas
- $9.4 million for road improvements
- $8 million for improvements to hiking and paved trails at state parks and hunter walking trails at wildlife management areas
- $2 million for improved wayfinding and signage
- $1 million for adaptive equipment, including track chairs and accessible hunting blinds, and supporting infrastructure

General Fund ($25 million)

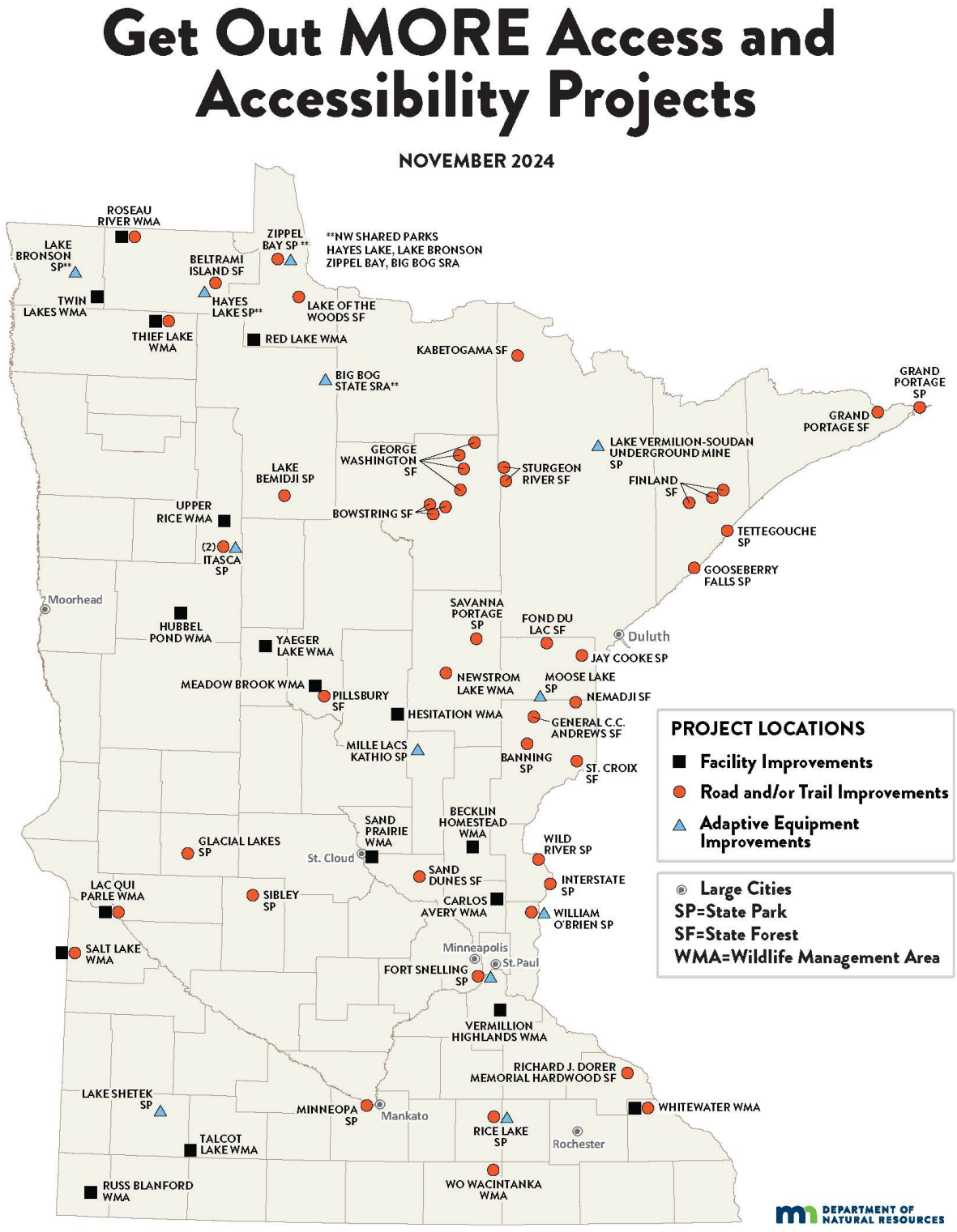
Minnesota has a vast outdoor recreation system, and the DNR continues to invest in making outdoor recreation experiences more accessible to Minnesotans of all interests and abilities. Much of the DNR's infrastructure is 60-90 years old and designed when no accessibility standards existed. Such shortcomings present barriers to visitors with mobility needs and other disabilities, and in some cases create safety concerns. Additionally, recent advancements in specialized adaptive equipment provide opportunities to improve the outdoor experiences of people with a variety of disabilities and allow them to enjoy Minnesota's outdoor recreation system with their friends and family. Finally, studies have shown that user-friendly wayfinding signage and maps are key to creating a welcoming environment for new and existing users. Investments in this category will improve accessibility at existing facilities; provide more adaptive equipment at state parks, recreation areas and wildlife management areas; and improve roads that provide access to outdoor recreation opportunities and enhance wayfinding, signage and maps at DNR-managed public lands across Minnesota.

Capital Investment ($10.4 million)

The DNR's approach to capital investment and asset preservation focuses on both the repair and replacement of outdated facilities and infrastructure and improving capital assets to serve all Minnesotans. Get Out MORE capital investments support wide-ranging accessibility enhancements at state parks, recreation areas, and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs); repairs and improvements to roads and parking lots; and rehabilitation of segments of the most used state trails.

Figure 1 shows the locations of the enhancing access investments ranging from facility improvements, road and trail improvements and various types of adaptive equipment improvements across the state.

Figure 1. Map of Get Out MORE Projects regarding Enhancing Access and Welcoming New Users to Public Lands and Outdoor Recreation Facilities.



Projects Funded

State Park Accessibility and Wayfinding Improvements

Minnesota has 64 state parks and nine recreation areas, enjoyed by roughly 11 million visitors each year. Many park buildings and other types of infrastructure are 50-plus old and do not meet the needs of today's visitors, particularly visitors with accessibility needs. The DNR is improving accessibility at five state parks, with construction already underway at one of the five: William O'Brien State Park (Table 2). These accessibility improvements include updates to wayfinding signage to ensure signage meets current accessibility standards.

Table 2. State Park Accessibility and Wayfinding Improvements funded by the Get Out MORE initiative.

State Park	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
William O'Brien	Park-wide accessibility improvements	Construction	2024-25
Banning	Accessibility improvements in day use area	Design	2025
Great River Bluffs	Park-wide accessibility improvements	Planning	2026
Minneopa	Park-wide accessibility improvements	Planning	2026
Rice Lake	Park-wide accessibility improvements	Planning	2027

William O'Brien State Park Accessibility Upgrades

Significant improvements are currently under construction at William O'Brien State Park, including additional accessible campsites, an accessible canoe and kayak launch, trail upgrades to better accommodate mobility devices, and new restrooms and shower facilities that are both accessible and more accommodating to the needs of families and other users (Figure 2). Funds for this project come primarily through 2020 state capital investment funds[3], with additional funds provided from the Get Out MORE investment. Construction is underway and has required the lower portion of the park near Lake Alice and the St. Croix River to close to visitors through early 2025, the estimated completion date of the project.

[3] Minnesota Laws of 2020, Chapter 3, Article 1, Section 7, Subdivision 6.

Additional updates underway at William O'Brien State Park include:

- Improved accessibility in the picnic area, amphitheater, Riverside Trail, and Riverway Campground
- New picnic shelter
- Safer parking lot with better beach access
- Larger, more accessible swimming beach

Figure 2. Map of improvements coming in 2025 to William O'Brien State Park.

Track Chair Expansion

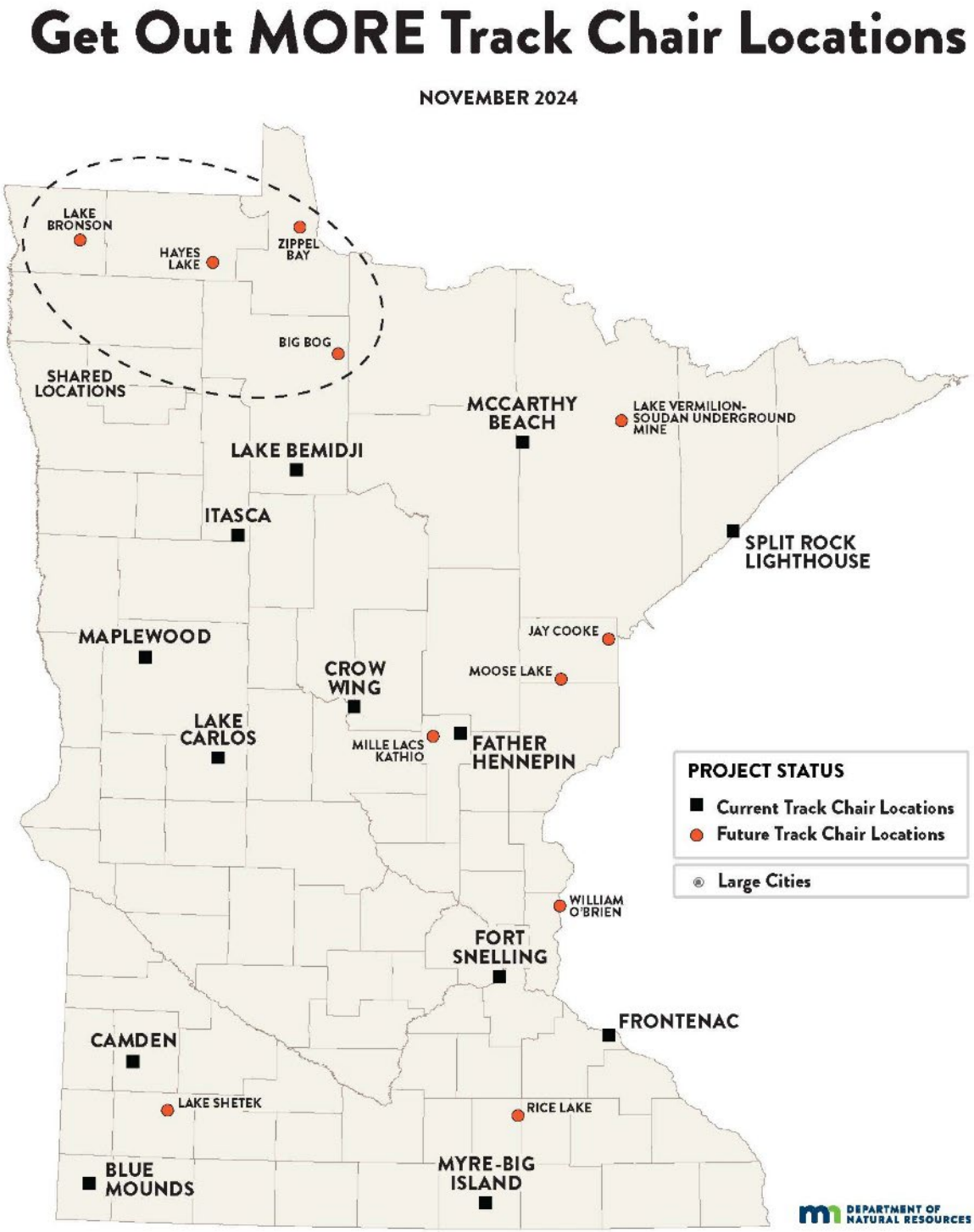
Track chairs are all-terrain, electric-powered mobility devices. These chairs can traverse trails and areas that would not be suitable for standard wheelchairs or electric wheelchairs. The DNR is expanding its track chair program from 13 to 22 chairs, adding nine additional chairs at state parks and recreation areas throughout the state (Table 3, Figure 3). After thorough discussions with partners and careful review of the pilot program, the DNR chose new sites where there are needs in the community, suitable trails, storage for equipment and charging locations. The Minnesota Council on Disability was heavily involved in creating the pilot program in 2021 and is actively contributing to discussions related to additional adaptive equipment. The Great Plains ADA Center, Dovetail Trail Consulting, and local disability advocates are also offering their feedback on the expansion.

Table 3. State Park Track Chairs.

Location	Improvement	Current Status	Scheduled Completion
Fort Snelling State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Jay Cooke State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Lake Shetek State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Mille Lacs Kathio State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Moose Lake State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Northwest parks (Big Bog State Recreation Area, Hayes Lake State Park, Zippel Bay State Park, Lake Bronson State Park)*	Track chair	Planning	2025
Rice Lake State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
William O'Brien State Park	Track chair	Planning	2025
Lake Vermilion – Soudan Underground Mine State Park	Track chair	Planning	2026

**Specific parks in this location will share a track chair during use seasons dependent upon staffing, seasonality, special events, and use. Reservation information and track chair location will be available for the public online and in-person.*

Figure 3. Map of current and future track chair locations in state parks and recreation areas. Parks within the dashed line circle represent state parks that will be sharing a track chair during use seasons dependent upon staffing, seasonality, special events, and use.



Additional Adaptive Equipment for State Parks

After a successful introduction of assistive glasses for visitors with colorblindness at five state parks, the DNR will purchase glasses in youth and adult sizes for all state parks with staffed ranger stations or visitor centers. The DNR is also adding assistive listening devices to sites, like the assistive glasses. These supporting devices will enhance visitor experiences as they attend interpretive programs, visit interpretive displays, observe nature, and recreate in state parks.

DNR staff is currently in the planning process to expand other adaptive equipment offerings to nine state parks (Table 4). Staff have consulted with product manufacturers, adaptive trail consultants, and other adaptive outdoor recreation specialists working in government agencies, planned product demonstrations, and ordered other specialized adaptive equipment such as beach chairs, beach mats, and standard electric wheelchair, which will be delivered in 2025.

Table 4. State Parks Receiving Additional Adaptive Equipment.

Location	Improvement	Status	Scheduled Completion
Bear Head Lake State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Father Hennepin State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Flandrau State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Itasca State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Lake Carlos State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Mystery Cave State Park	Standard electric wheelchair	Planning	2025
William O'Brien State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Zippel Bay State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2025
Lake Bemidji State Park	Beach chair and beach mat	Planning	2026

Accessible Hunting

Wildlife Management Areas currently provide 75 partially accessible facilities statewide, such as raised or ground hunting blinds, observation platforms or boardwalks. Work is currently underway to design templates to guide modifications to these current facilities and construction of additional facilities that more fully meet contemporary accessibility standards. An architect will design the templates for staff or local contractors to follow to ensure accessibility of these facilities.

The DNR will add four hydraulic lift hunting blinds to the statewide WMA system, with one housed in each DNR administrative region. These lift blinds are mobile, and DNR area wildlife offices and local accessibility partners will schedule their use at specific locations. The DNR is currently developing specifications and will release a request for quote to manufacturers of these lift blinds. The blinds will likely be available for use during the 2025 deer seasons at select WMAs. Figure 4 shows an example of the types of the hydraulic lift hunting blinds considered for future investments in the state's WMA system.

Figure 4. Capable Partners staff conducted a demonstration of a hydraulic lift hunting blind at Vermillion River Wildlife Management Area in Sept. 2024. The demonstration was part of a media event hosted by DNR and Capable Partners to highlight planned projects funded by Get Out MORE investments to make the outdoors more accessible for all.

Wildlife Management Area Trailheads

The DNR will build accessible trailheads, including designated accessible parking areas, at seven WMAs. Architects and staff at two WMAs (Carlos Avery and Whitewater) have commenced work on the designs. The DNR completed one such trailhead in 2023 at Carlos Avery WMA in Anoka County using Game and Fish funds from hunter license fees. User feedback from this first-of-its-kind WMA facility is being used to inform the design and implementation of these GOM funded facilities.

Wildlife Management Area Comprehensive Accessibility Assessments

The DNR selected Sand Prairie WMA near St. Cloud, Carlos Avery WMA near Forest Lake, and Becklin Homestead WMA near Cambridge from more than 1,400 WMAs to receive a comprehensive accessibility assessment. This assessment will illuminate existing accessibility deficiencies to prioritize future investments on these and other

WMAs. These three WMAs have the highest impact for this assessment given their proximity to population centers, current opportunities that are offered, and potential for high impact accessibility additions. DNR architects received these assessments and staff have started kick-off meetings.

Hunter Walking Trails Wayfinding Improvements and Accessibility

Hunter Walking Trails (HWTs) provide access to the interior of WMAs, state forests, and other land management units. Currently, wayfinding and informational signage is lacking at many HWTs, making it difficult for hunters unfamiliar with the area to find, use, and stay on these designated trails. Wayfinding improvements will be implemented in coordination with conservation partners, including the development of online resources such as geospatial maps and information kiosks at trailheads for several large multi-jurisdictional HWTs. These wayfinding resources will be developed, installed, and evaluated for effectiveness before being implemented on a broader scale. Ultimately, the DNR hopes to add effective wayfinding to HWTs and trailheads statewide.

In addition, the DNR is assessing HWTs to identify those with potential for accessibility improvements to provide opportunities for increased user access. Results from pending comprehensive accessibility assessments on several WMAs will assist DNR staff in planning strategic future investments to create more accessible hunter trails on WMAs.

State Park Hiking and Paved Trails

As hiking has increased in popularity in the last 10 years and state park visitation increases, the need for accessible and sustainably engineered trails has become vitally important to Minnesota's state parks. In addition, state park visitor surveys have shown that hiking trails are among the most important amenities to visitors. Paved trails are particularly important because they offer experiences for visitors who have short amounts of time, families with older adults and/or small children, and visitors with disabilities, especially those who use adaptive equipment. Get Out MORE funds are addressing trails at nine state parks, selected based on the greatest needs for updates and visitation patterns (Table 5).

Table 5. State Park Trail Project List.

State Park	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Banning	Hiking and paved trails near the day use area	Design	2025
Glacial Lake	Hiking and paved trails	Planning	2025
Grand Portage	Hiking and paved trails, including Middle Falls trail	Design	2025
Gooseberry	Paved trail to waterfall	Planning	2026
Interstate	Hiking and paved trails	Planning	2026
Itasca	Paved trails in park	Planning	2026

State Park	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Jay Cooke	Hiking and paved trails at Oldenberg Point	Planning	2026
Lake Bemidji	Hiking and paved trails, including Rocky Point	Planning	2026
Minneopa	Hiking and paved trails near the bison range	Planning	2026

State Park Roads

Many state park roads are essential to providing visitor access, and unfortunately many roads have experienced deterioration due to high use and severe weather events (Figure 5). DNR is using Get Out MORE funding to address roads in five state parks, including roads within several of Minnesota's busiest campgrounds and day use areas. One project is already in construction at William O'Brien State Park, with expected completion in winter 2025 (Table 6).

Table 6. State Park Road Project List. Future construction years are best estimates at the time of publication.

State Park	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
William O'Brien	Road repairs	Construction	2024-25
Itasca	Bear Paw Campground Roads	Design	2025
Itasca	Pine Ridge Campground Roads	Design	2025
Savanna Portage	Road repair	Design	2025
Tettegouche	Baptism River Campground Road	Design	2025
Wild River	Road repairs	Planning	2026

Figure 5. Example of a deteriorated state park road in need of repair.

Wildlife Management Area Access Roads

WMAs provide recreational opportunities throughout the year, and the road system leading to these units of land is crucial to access those opportunities. DNR is preparing to upgrade access roads at ten WMAs across the state. These upgrades will include resizing and replacing culverts, a bridge replacement, and installing a ditch crossing. All projects are in the initial phase of engineering and design.

State Forest Roads

Workers constructed Minnesota's state forest road network throughout the 20th century, and it traverses some of the most difficult landscapes for road construction in the state. In addition to enabling forest management, wildfire response, and transportation of forest products, all forest roads are open to the public for access to recreation on state forest land.

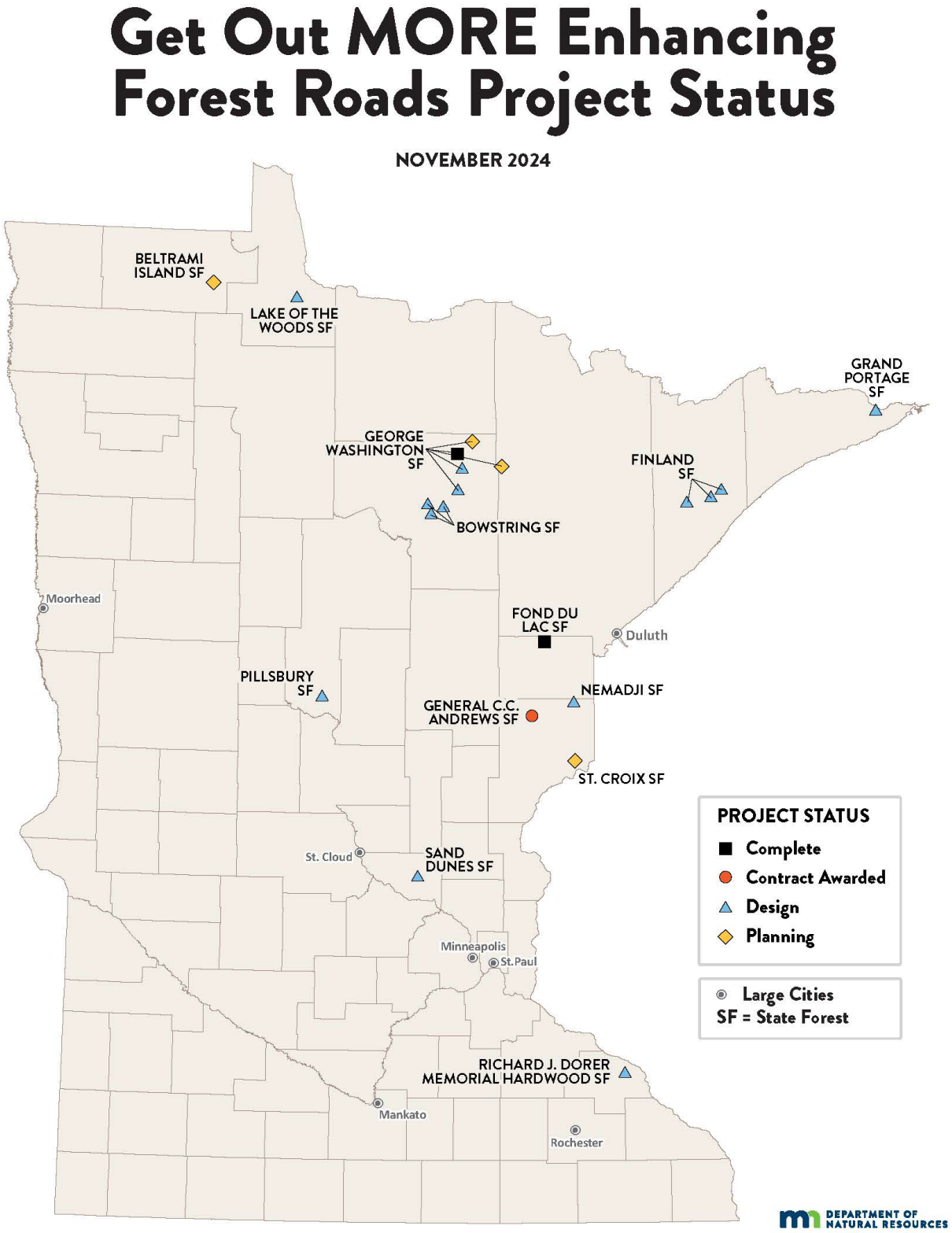
Time and changing environmental conditions such as more intense precipitation events mean that many of these roads need repairs and, in some instances, redesigns. There is high public interest in recreating in state forests, including using these roads to reach areas such as forest campgrounds, forest day use areas, public water accesses, and recreation/hunting trails. This Get Out MORE initiative is accelerating efforts to modernize state forest roads, by increasing resilience to weather extremes, expanding access, and making roads easier and safer to travel for low clearance vehicle traffic. In identifying forest road segments for Get Out MORE investments, DNR has focused on improving Minnesotans' access to these important recreation areas. The DNR is planning 15 state forest roads projects with funding from the Get Out MORE investment (Table 7, Figure 6).

Scope of the projects include road resurfacing, culvert redesigns, road segment reconstruction, and bridge replacements.

Table 7. Forest Road Project List.

Project Name	State Forest(s)	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Ditchbank Road Reconstruction	Fond Du Lac	Complete	2024
Larson Lake Campground Road Resurfacing	George Washington	Complete	2024
Ann Lake Day Use Road Reconstruction	Sand Dunes	Design	2025
Bemis Hill Campground Road Resurfacing	Beltrami Island	Planning	2025
Deer River Area Forest Recreation Roads Reconstruction	George Washington and Bowstring	Design	2025
Hibbing Area Forest Recreation Roads Resurfacing	Sturgeon River and George Washington	Planning	2025
Kruger Campground Road Resurfacing	Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood	Design	2025
McCormick Lake Day Use Area Road Resurfacing	General C.C. Andrews	Contract Awarded	2025
Net River Bridge Replacement	Nemadji	Design	2025
Otter Lake Road Culvert Replacement	Grand Portage	Design	2025
Rock Lake Campground Road Culvert Replacement	Pillsbury	Design	2025
Stoney Grade Culvert Replacements	Finland	Design	2025
Tamarack Campground Road Resurfacing	St. Croix	Planning	2025
Pitt Grade Road Reconstruction	Lake of the Woods	Design	2025-26
East General Grade, Manitou, and Baptism River Bridge Replacements	Finland	Design	2026-27

Figure 6. Forest road enhancement project status through Nov. 30, 2024.



Completed Forest Road Projects

Larson Lake Campground Road

The Larson Lake Campground Road, located in the George Washington State Forest, accesses a state forest campground and public water access. The entire road was resurfaced to ensure low clearance vehicles can saftely reach the recreation facilities (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Resurfacing of Larson Lake State Forest Road in Itasca County.

Ditchbank State Forest Road

Significant improvements to the Ditchbank State Forest Road in the Fond Du Lac State Forest during the summer of 2024 included the complete redesign of three water crossings and the reconstruction of a section of road that historically experienced frequent flooding, resulting in extended road closures. Figure 8 shows the Ditchbank State Forest Road before construction. The road was unsafe for vehicle traffic, with water up to the road surface. A corrugated metal pipe was in poor condition and undersized for the water feature being crossed.

Improvements provide the following benefits:

- Increased public safety
- Decreased road closures due to poor road condition
- Facilitate the movement of fish and other aquatic organisms through the redesigned water crossings
- Improved user experience through increased aesthetic appeal of the road

Figure 9 shows the improved road surface which is now safe for low clearance vehicle traffic. Road ditches slope properly and are covered by an erosion control blanket. Workers installed a box culvert that is properly designed for the stream crossing in the same location as the culvert in the pre-construction photos.

Figure 8. Preconstruction condition of Ditchbank State Forest road.

Figure 9. Construction photos of Ditchbank State Forest Road.

Modernizing Camping and Related Infrastructure

DNR-managed camping experiences and related infrastructure were developed between the 1930s and 1960s, and these original facilities don't always meet modern needs (Figures 10 and 11). Today's users camp in a variety of ways, including larger groups, multiple vehicles, and a variety of recreational vehicles and boats. The growing use of our state campgrounds and larger camping equipment are taxing on systems like wastewater management, especially when many current systems are at the end of their useful life. Surveys and visitation patterns also suggest many current visitors now prefer higher-amenity experiences and need access to technological infrastructure to accommodate self-service payment and remote work while vacationing. DNR is funding two projects through Get Out MORE to address these kinds of needed updates.

General Fund ($5 million)

- $5 million for a pilot to modernize camping experiences at Minneopa State Park. This comprehensive project includes a campground designed with larger, accessible sites and modernized facilities, and improved wayfinding and trails throughout the park.

Project Funded

Minneopa State Park campground and related infrastructure updates

Minneopa State Park, located near Mankato, will receive a campground upgrade that will serve a wider range of campground users.

The DNR is considering the following updates for Minneopa State Park:

- An improved entry plaza with user friendly self-service and Wi-Fi access
- Reconfiguration of the campground to align with modern campground design standards
- Improvements of ADA accessible spurs and to accommodate RVs
- Additional group camping options to support a wide variety of new and non-traditional users camping experiences
- New and upgraded electric service for campsites including EV chargers at select campsites
- Restroom facility upgrades
- Replacement of the septic system and RV dump station
- Accessible hiking trail options and trails to accommodate mobility devices

This project is in the early planning phase and construction will likely begin in 2027. Funds for this project come primarily through the Get Out MORE investment, with supplemental funding from Legacy and capital investment funding.

Figure 10. A view of a campsite and campground road in the current campground at Minneopa State Park.

Figure 11. A view of an undersized campsite for RV camping in the current campground at Minneopa State Park.

Capital Investment ($4.5 million)

Myre-Big Island State Park wastewater system rehabilitation for park and campground infrastructure

Myre-Big Island State Park is at the top of DNR's priority list for wastewater system replacement. The DNR is allocating $4.5 million of Get Out MORE capital investment funds to renew the park's wastewater infrastructure,

which is outdated and at the end of its useful life. The design for the replacement system, which will involve connecting to the City of Albert Lea's municipal wastewater treatment system, is complete and construction will begin in 2025. With several important natural and cultural features in the park, engagement with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers will continue throughout the construction period.

Modernizing Boating Access

General Fund ($35 million)

Minnesota's extensive system of state public water accesses (PWAs) needs significant investment to enhance accessibility, meet the needs of modern watercraft and towing vehicles, improve protection of public waters from stormwater runoff and invasive species, and enhance climate resilience.

This investment will enable the DNR to update at least 115 of Minnesota's 1,700 state-managed PWA sites, in total including both levels of project scale noted below:

- $30 million for 40-60 large-scale projects, which will include rehabilitated ramps and parking areas, stormwater improvements, aquatic invasive species prevention, healthy shorelines and accessible access for non-motorized boats and other accessibility features.
- $5 million for 75-125 small-scale projects, including longer launch ramps, improvements to parking lots and drive lanes, improved stormwater treatment as well as shore fishing and fishing piers replacements.

Projects Funded

Large Scale Projects

The DNR has initiated engineering, design, and environmental review for 29 large-scale projects (Table 8). Two projects were fully completed by Sept. 30, 2024, with two additional projects completed by Nov. 15, 2024. Figure 12 shows all large-scale PWA improvements funded from Get Out MORE investments and other funding sources, as well as projects considered for future investments as funding allows.

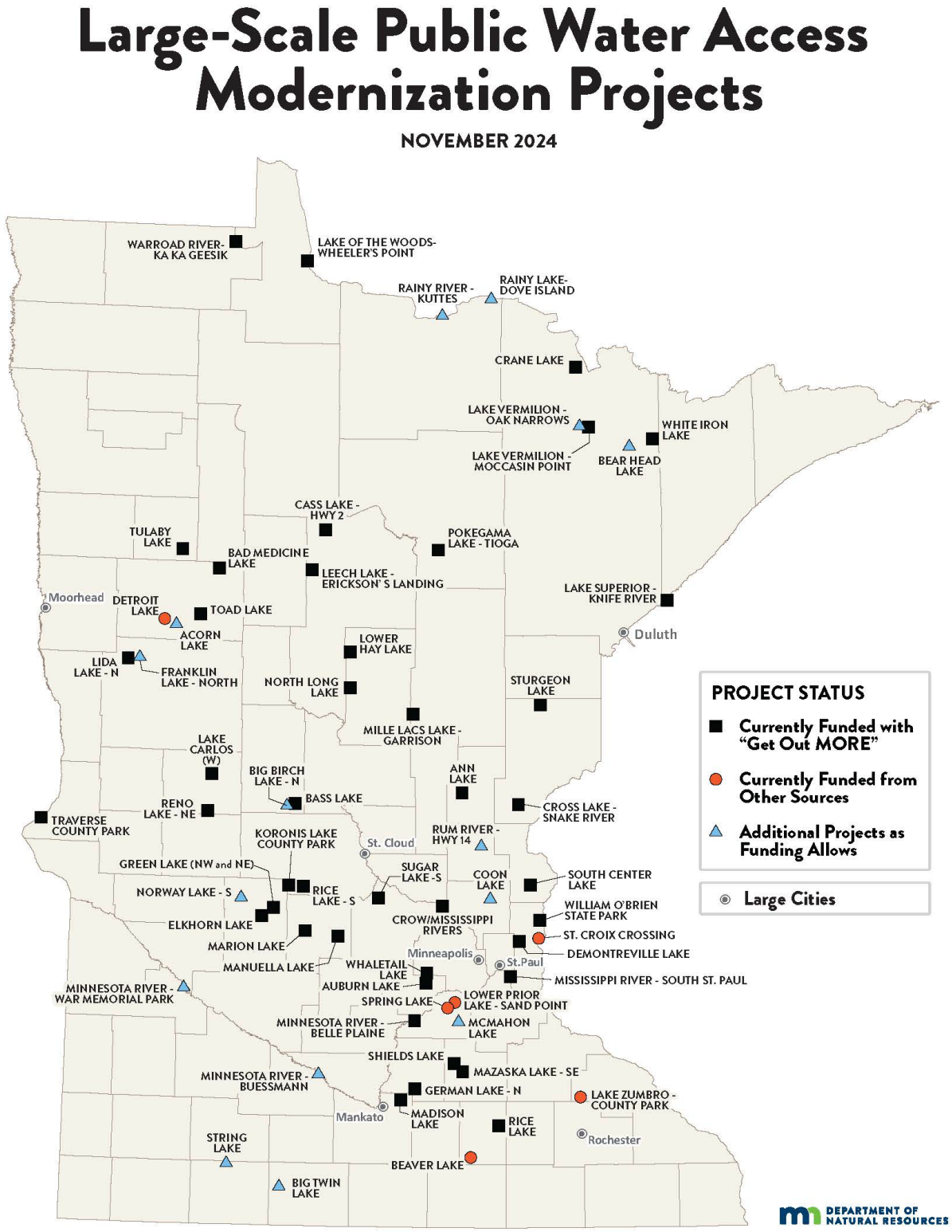
Table 8. Large-scale Public Water Access (PWA) projects and current project status.

County	Waterbody/PWA Name	Status of Project	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Blue Earth	Madison Lake, East	Complete	2024
LeSueur	German Lake, North	Complete	2024
Pine	Sturgeon Lake	Complete	2024
Wright	Sugar Lake, South	Complete	2024

County	Waterbody/PWA Name	Status of Project	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Becker	Toad Lake	Design	2025
Carver	Auburn Lake, County Park	Design	2025
Crow Wing	Lower Hay Lake	Design	2025
Dakota	Mississippi River, South St. Paul	Design	2025
Kandiyohi	Green Lake, NE, County Park 5	Design	2025
Kandiyohi	Green Lake, NW, Rush Brown	Design	2025
Lake	Lake Superior, Knife River Harbor	Design	2025
McLeod	Marion Lake, SE	Design	2025
Pine	Cross Lake, Snake River, S, Riverside	Design	2025
Rice	Shields Lake	Design	2025
Roseau	Warroad River, Ka Ka Geesik	Design	2025
Sibley	Minnesota River, Belle Plaine	Design	2025
St. Louis	Crane Lake, Waters Edge	Design	2025
St. Louis	Lake Vermilion, Moccasin Point	Design	2025
Stearns	Koronis Lake, County Park	Design	2025
Stearns	Rice Lake, South	Design	2025
Traverse	Traverse Lake, County Park, #3	Design	2025
Washington	St. Croix River, William O'Brien SP	Design	2025
Cass	Cass Lake, Hwy 2 Wayside	Design	2026
Cass	Leech Lake, Erickson Landing	Design	2026
Douglas	Lake Carlos, West	Design	2026
Douglas	Reno Lake	Design	2026

County	Waterbody/PWA Name	Status of Project	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Hennepin	Crow/Mississippi River, Dayton	Design	2026
Hennepin	Whaletail Lake	Design	2026
Itasca	Pokegama Lake, Tioga	Planning	2026
Kandiyohi	Elkhorn Lake	Design	2026
Lake of the Woods	Lake of the Woods/Rainy River, Wheeler's Point	Design	2026
Meeker	Manuella Lake	Design	2026
Ottertail	Lida Lake, North	Planning	2026
St. Louis	White Iron Lake	Design	2026
Becker	Bad Medicine Lake	Planning	2027
Chisago	South Center Lake	Planning	2027
Crow Wing	Mille Lacs, Garrison, Pike Point	Design	2027
Crow Wing	North Long Lake, NW-371	Planning	2027
Kanabec	Ann Lake	Planning	2027
Mahnomen	Tulaby Lake	Planning	2027
Rice	Mazaska Lake, SE	Planning	2027
Steele	Rice Lake, Rice Lake State Park	Planning	2027
Washington	Demontreville Lake	Planning	2027

Figure 12. Map of Get Out MORE Projects regarding Modernizing Boating Access.



Examples of public water access projects completed to date

Sturgeon Lake in Pine County

Prior to the improvements at the Sturgeon Lake PWA, the paved parking lot had severely deteriorated, and the site was not accessible. The new parking lot boasts 24 parking spaces for vehicles and trailers, including one accessible parking space. There are two new boat ramps, a floating dock, an accessible portable restroom enclosure, improved stormwater management that meets best practices, widened drive lanes, and an aquatic invasive species boat and trailer cleanout lane.

The Sturgeon Lake access reopened for public use on Aug. 16, 2024, making it the first PWA project funded by Get Out MORE to reach completion. Throughout the fall, staff will continue to monitor the site to ensure that stormwater management is working properly and that grass seedings and tree plantings are all performing well.

Sugar Lake South in Wright County

The Sugar Lake South PWA was built by the DNR in 1983 and rehabilitated in 2009. The facility's bituminous surfaces had become severely deteriorated and did not meet accessibility requirements. Staff designed the project to incorporate a small adjacent property the DNR had acquired in 2011 with expansion in mind. The improvements to this PWA include replacement of all existing bituminous parking areas, providing 19 vehicle/trailer parking stalls, and drive lanes; the relocation and installation of a new concrete plank launch ramp and a new floating dock; and incorporation of stormwater improvements and a new aquatic invasive species cleaning/tie-down lane on the previously acquired expansion property. Workers completed construction and the Sugar Lake South PWA opened for public use in Sept. 2024 (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Sugar Lake (South) PWA after improvements to the ramp and parking lot.

Projects Funded

Small-Scale Projects

Small-scale projects fall between the more extensive projects described above and the temporary patches and urgent repairs that typically consume the available resources in DNR's annual PWA maintenance program. The funds are providing opportunities to purchase the needed materials and supplies, hire contractors to extend or replace a boat ramp, fix parking lots and driveway for both paved and unpaved sites, and improve accessible routes and elements. DNR has initiated engineering, design, and environmental review for 18 small-scale projects (Table 9).

Table 9. Small-scale PWA projects and current project status.

County	Waterbody/PWA Name	Project Feature(s)	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Carver	Wasserman Lake	Ramp replacement	Complete	2024
Chisago	North Center Lake	Fishing pier replacement	Complete	2024
Lake	Lax Lake	Ramp replacement	Complete	2024
Otter Tail	Pelican Lake, East	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Otter Tail	West Lost Lake	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Pine	Cross Lake/Snake River	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Ramsey	Turtle Lake	Ramp replacement	Complete	2024
St. Louis	Wild Rice Lake	Ramp replacement	Complete	2024
St. Louis	Lake Vermilion, Wakemup Bay	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
St. Louis	St. Louis River, Munger Landing	Fishing pier replacement	Complete	2024
St. Louis	Rainy Lake, Bohman Memorial	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Stearns	Pearl Lake	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Stearns	Pleasant Lake	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Todd	Bass Lake	Fishing pier replacement	Complete	2024
Wright	Buffalo Lake	Parking lot improvement	Complete	2024
Cook	McFarland	Ramp replacement	Planning	2025
Koochiching	Rainy River, Kutte Landing	Parking lot improvement	Planning	2025
Polk	Union Lake	Ramp replacement	Planning	2025
Scott	Spring Lake	Ramp replacement	Planning	2025
St. Louis	Ban Lake	Parking lot improvement	Planning	2025
St. Louis	Lost Lake	Parking lot improvement	Planning	2025
St. Louis	Rainy Lake, Dove Island	Parking lot improvement	Planning	2025

Examples of completed small-scale projects

Wild Rice Lake in St. Louis County

The DNR replaced the existing concrete ramp, increasing the ramp's length and depth. The project created a safer user experience and enhanced erosion control and drainage at the site (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Wild Rice Lake PWA before improvements showing the degraded concrete ramp (left) and after improvements showing the modernized boat ramp and sidewalk in use by a boater (right).

West Lost Lake in Otter Tail County

The DNR partnered with the Otter Tail County Highway Department to complete the repaving of the PWA parking lot (Figure 15).

Figure 15. West Lost Lake PWA before improvements showing the crumbling asphalt in the parking lot (left) and after improvements showing the new asphalt in the parking lot (right).

R*eplacement of three aging fishing piers*

- North Center Lake, Chisago County, partnership with the city of Center City: replaced pier from 1997. The pier is the main element in a small park adjacent to the downtown area.
- St. Louis River, Munger Landing, partnership with the city of Duluth: replaced pier from 1986. In summer 2022, the Munger Landing closed to the public for a contaminated sediment removal project conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in partnership with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and industry partners. After the sediment removal project, workers reconstructed the whole site in 2023 and it reopened in 2024.
- Bass Lake, Todd County, partnership with the city of Grey Eagle: replaced from 1993. This was one of the only piers in the nearby area lakes and it was a top priority for replacement due to failing floats, soft boards, and railings not meeting accessible requirements. The railings on the new fishing pier meet accessible requirements and it will continue to provide shore fishing opportunities at Bass Lake Park for years to come (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Bass Lake Fishing pier, before (left) and after (right).

Enhancing Fisheries and Fishing Infrastructure

Fishing in Minnesota is a $4.4 billion industry and a favorite outdoor activity for many Minnesotans and visitors. Several of the state's fish hatcheries were constructed in the 1950s or earlier and are still operating with original equipment. Feasibility studies completed in 2018 and 2019 indicated that the state's fish hatcheries needed significant investment to address critical issues related to biosecurity, aging infrastructure, and safety. Addressing these needs will move Minnesota toward a state-of-the-art fish hatchery system with safe and biosecure water supplies, increased fish production capacity, and improved staff safety. Investments in these facilities will help sustain high-quality fish populations across Minnesota and support fishing opportunities into the future.

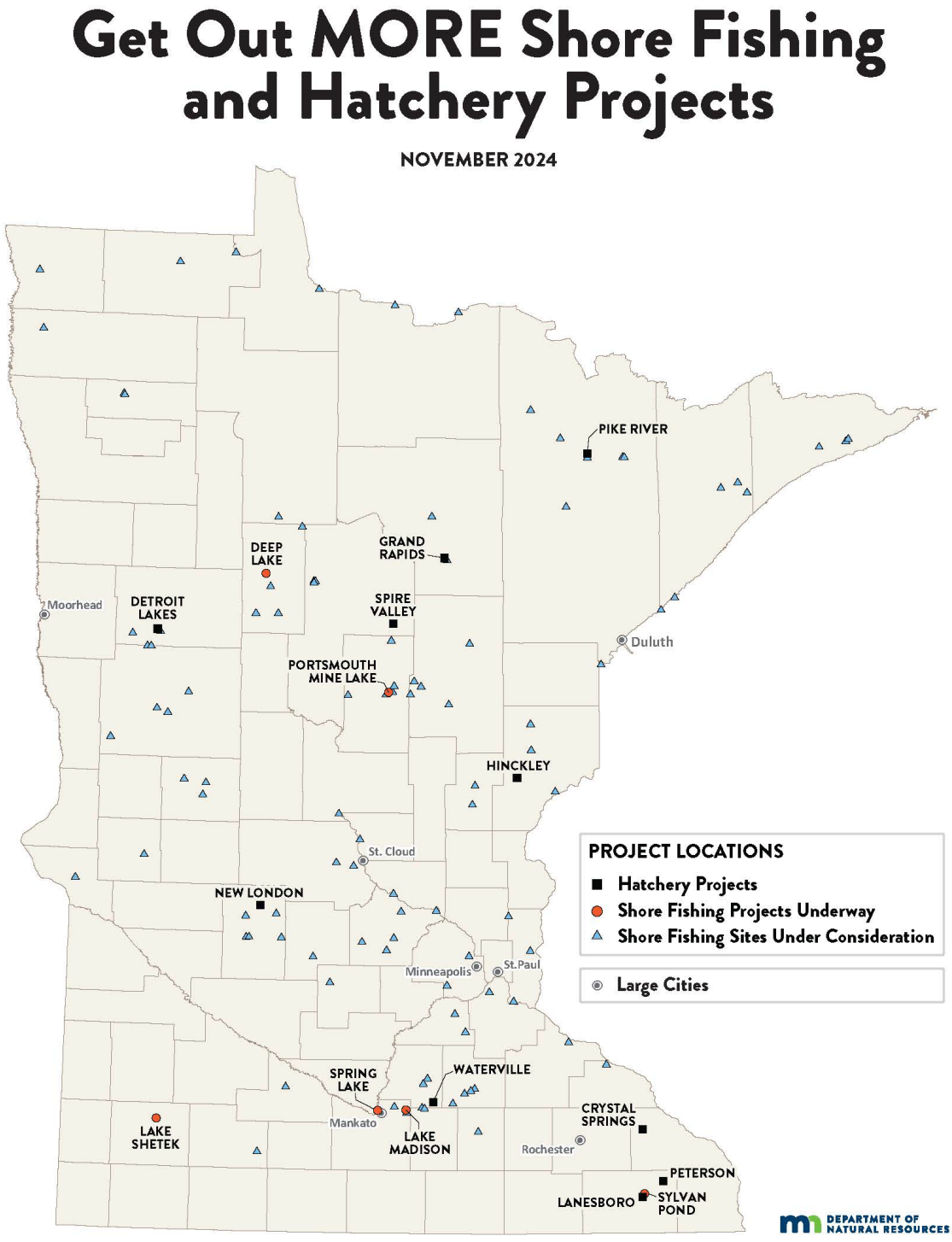
Although Minnesota is renowned for its fishing experiences, the system needs investments so that people have greater access to fishing opportunities. In addition to state-owned fishing piers, the DNR is working to enhance fishing opportunities by collaborating with local government units on more than 80 shore fishing sites. These shore fishing sites will enhance fishing opportunities for new anglers, families and children, individuals with limited mobility, and people with more limited economic resources. A total of $60 million in Get Out MORE funding is allowing the DNR to move forward on the most pressing needs within the hatchery system and enhancing shore fishing opportunities.

Hatchery and shore fishing enhancements within Get Out MORE received $35 million in General Fund and $25 million in capital investments that is being allocated as follows:

- $24 million for a new hatchery building and significant improvements to fish ponds at the Waterville State Fish Hatchery.
- $19 million to replace water supply lines, raceways (flow-through tanks that hold trout), and hatchery buildings at Crystal Springs Hatchery.
- $12 million for improvements at other hatcheries including upgrades to dikes, ponds, raceways, and water and power supply.
- $5 million to enhance shore fishing sites and opportunities across the state.

Figure 17 shows the locations of the state's hatchery and shore fishing enhancements across the state.

Figure 17. Fish Hatchery and shore fishing projects and site evaluations through Sept. 30, 2024.



General Fund ($35 million)

Projects Funded

Modernized fish hatcheries: Crystal Springs Hatchery

Crystal Springs Hatchery raises more than 50,000 pounds of brook trout, rainbow trout and steelhead each year to be stocked in lakes and streams across Minnesota. Concrete infrastructure at Crystal Springs Hatchery that dates to the 1930s is crumbling. Clay waterlines that bring 48-degree artesian spring water into the facility cracked and could fail at any time, putting the hatchery's entire operation at risk. To address this risk, Get Out MORE investments are providing $19 million for upgrades at Crystal Springs, including constructing a new hatchery building and replacing degraded raceways and waterlines. Pre-design/design work is underway. The modernized hatchery will allow for increased trout production, greater efficiency, and a more biosecure environment for the fish. The DNR anticipates beginning construction on this project in 2026 and completing the project in fall 2027.

Funded Projects - Other Hatchery Improvements

Since July 1, 2023, DNR has also used Get Out MORE funding to initiate, and in several instances complete, important hatchery repairs and improvements, including:

- Pike River Hatchery — complete repair of the main drain line
- Spire Valley Hatchery — complete installation of a large production tank
- New London Hatchery — complete installation of a UV sterilizer, addition of feed room temperature control, and installation of a recirculating water supply for muskie production
- Spire Valley Hatchery — virtually complete conversion of hatchery pond bottoms to system that will be easier to clean at the end of each rearing season and reduce the potential for fish health issues

Several additional projects are undergoing feasibility studies, are out for bid, or are in pre-design/design phases. These include:

- New London Hatchery — rebuild the hatchery water supply filter and replace an 18-inch water delivery line
- Peterson State Fish Hatchery — construct new raceway layout and cover system, repurposing existing elements to the extent possible
- Spire Valley Hatchery — construct a cover for the main spring pool to increase hatchery biosecurity

Projects that are still in the design and planning stages include:

- New London Hatchery — pond repairs
- Detroit Lake Hatchery —water supply and biosecurity evaluation
- Grand Rapids Hatchery — repairs to the water supply head tanks and valve replacements
- Hinckley muskie production ponds —water line replacement

- Lanesboro Hatchery — construct new spring house to protect the pool that supplies water to the hatchery

New and Revitalized Shore Fishing Opportunities

DNR fisheries staff identified more than 300 potential sites to add or enhance shore fishing across the state. In coordination with local partners, DNR has field-evaluated nearly 100 of these potential projects in 2024 to determine the highest priority for investing Get Out MORE shore fishing funding (see Figure 17 for a map of these locations). Connecting with local partners to talk through how the DNR can improve shore fishing access and generate additional amenities in their communities has moved many of these projects forward quickly. The DNR started shore fishing projects at six different sites as of Sept. 30, 2024. These projects are in cooperation with Hubbard County at the new Deep Lake County Park, Blue Earth County at a shore fishing site on Madison Lake, Murray County on Lake Shetek, city of Lanesboro at their local trout fishing ponds, city of North Mankato on a popular fishing pond in a city park, and at Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area where the DNR is expanding accessible fishing opportunities. The DNR identified another 25 sites as the highest priority, coordinated with local partners, and anticipates construction to begin in 2025. The DNR is evaluating additional shore fishing sites statewide and local partnerships will continue to improve shore fishing opportunities around the state.

Examples of shore fishing projects underway

Madison Lake, Buckmaster Bridge in Blue Earth County

This project involved modifying an existing shore fishing area on Lake Madison to improve accessibility. The sidewalk to the shore structures and the concrete pads had cracked over the years and settled, creating edges and barriers to wheeled access at eight shore fishing sites on the lake. In coordination with Blue Earth County, workers poured new concrete, and extended the sidewalk to connect all the way to the parking area and a dedicated accessible parking stall. In addition to the concrete work at this site, the county also removed trees and vegetation that had grown around the fishing sites to create a better fishing experience for anglers (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Before (left) and after (right) photos of a shore fishing station at Buckmaster Bridge.

Sylvan Pond in Fillmore County

DNR's fisheries habitat crew, in cooperation with the city of Lanesboro, is restoring eroded shoreline (Figure 19) and adding new fishing platforms on Sylvan Pond (Figure 20), a popular trout fishing pond in the city. The stabilized shoreline will create fishing opportunities around the entire pond and workers are adding shore fishing platforms to create additional accessible locations for anglers to target trout in the spring.

Figure 19. Shoreline stabilization and grading for shore angling on Sylvan Pond.

Figure 20. Accessible shore fishing station on Sylvan Pond.

Lake Shetek, County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 13 Causeways in Murray County

The DNR is partnering with Murray County to improve shore fishing opportunities on Lake Shetek by adding dedicated shore fishing areas to the causeways on CSAH 13. The county and the local DNR fisheries office reviewed the road construction plans to determine the best locations for these fishing structures (Figure 21). The causeway is currently a popular, but unsafe, shore fishing area. These structures will provide multiple safe and accessible areas for anglers.

Figure 21. Lake Shetek CSAH 13 causeway shore fishing station locations.

Capital Investment ($25 million)

The $25 million capital investment dollars the DNR received for Fisheries and Fishing infrastructure investments are allocated as follows:

- $20 million to modernize the Waterville Hatchery
- $5 million for fish hatchery improvements

Projects Funded

Waterville Fish Hatchery Modernization

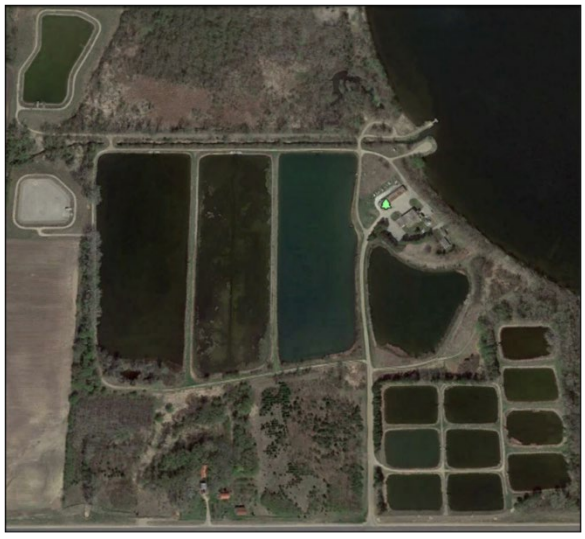
Opened in 1954, the Waterville Hatchery is the state's largest cool-water facility and propagates walleye, northern pike, and muskie (Figure 21). This modernization project includes design and construction of a new hatchery to increase production and enhance biosecurity. The modernized hatchery will include a recirculating

aquaculture system, updated growing chambers, and improved egg incubation equipment that will facilitate reduced water consumption, production of larger muskie yearlings, increased reliability of walleye hatching, greater environmental controls on production, and year-round fish production.

Many of the production ponds at the Waterville hatchery are inefficient because they are too large and drain poorly. The project will divide several large ponds into numerous smaller ponds that facilitate fish production and harvest using proven design criteria (Figure 22). Design work is underway. The DNR anticipates beginning construction in 2025 and project completion in early 2027.

Figure 21. The current Waterville Hatchery resides below office space in a converted garage. A new hatchery at this site will facilitate significant improvements in fish production.

Figure 22. Aerial photo of the Waterville hatchery production ponds showing the large ponds that will be subdivided.



Fish Hatchery Infrastructure Improvements

The DNR is also using Get Out MORE capital investment funds to address a backlog of deferred maintenance that affects the safety, usability, and effectiveness of the state's hatchery infrastructure (Table 10).

Since July 1, 2023, DNR has completed several projects. These include:

- Glenwood Hatchery - water heating system replacement,
- Tower Fisheries – muskie production pond water control valve replacement, and
- New London Hatchery - kettle replacements, drainage grading, and dike repairs (partially completed).

Projects in the planning, design, construction, and completion stages, include:

- Bemidji area - Clearwater muskie pond dike repairs and drainage improvements. This project will facilitate increased muskie production and the DNR anticipates beginning construction in 2025.
- Detroit Lakes Hatchery - back-up generator replacement
- Pike River Hatchery - back-up generator and water chiller system replacement
- Lanesboro Hatchery - raceway building roof and siding repairs and upgrade.

Table 10. Fish hatchery infrastructure projects and current project status. The table includes the hatchery or fish production facility, a brief project description, project status, and scheduled construction time. The table denotes the funding source as either Get Out MORE General Fund (GF) or Get Out MORE Capital Investment (CI) funding.

Hatchery	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Pike River (CI)	Muskie production pond water control valve replacement	Complete	2023
Spire Valley (GF)	Installation of large production tank	Complete	2023
New London (GF)	Installation of a UV sterilizer, addition of feed room temperature control and installation of a recirculating water supply	Complete	2023-24
Glenwood (CI)	Water heating system replacement	Complete	2024
Pike River (GF)	Main Drain Line	Complete	2024
Spire Valley (GF)	Conversion of hatchery pond bottoms	Complete	2024
New London (GF/CI)	Pond kettle and dike repairs/replacements and pond grading	Partially completed	2024-26

Hatchery	Project	Current Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Peterson (GF)	Construct new raceway layout and cover system in existing structure	Design	2025
Pike River (CI)	Water chiller system replacement	In progress	2025
Spire Valley (GF)	Main spring pool cover construction to improve biosecurity	Delayed due to contractor issues	2025*
Detroit Lakes (GF)	Water supply improvements	Planning	2025-26
Hinckley (GF)	Muskie production pond water supply line replacements	Planning	2025-26
Lanesboro (GF)	Reconstruct spring house pool and protective cover	Design	2025-26
Waterville (CI)	New hatchery building and significant improvements to fish ponds	Pre-design/Design	2025-27
Bemidji (CI)	Clearwater muskie pond dike repairs and drainage improvement	Planning	2026*
Grand Rapids (GF)	Water supply head tank repairs and valve replacements	Planning	2026*
New London (GF)	Rebuild hatchery water supply and replace 18-inch water delivery line	Planning	2026*
Pike River (CI)	Back-up generator replacement	Planning	2026*
Crystal Springs (GF)	Replace water supply lines, raceways, and hatchery buildings	Pre-design/Design	2026-27
Detroit Lakes (CI)	Back-up generator replacement	Planning	2027*
Lanesboro (CI)	Raceway building roof and siding repairs and upgrades	Planning	2027*

**Estimated construction timeline*

Restoring Streams and Modernizing Water-related Infrastructure to Support Outdoor Recreation

General Fund ($10 million)

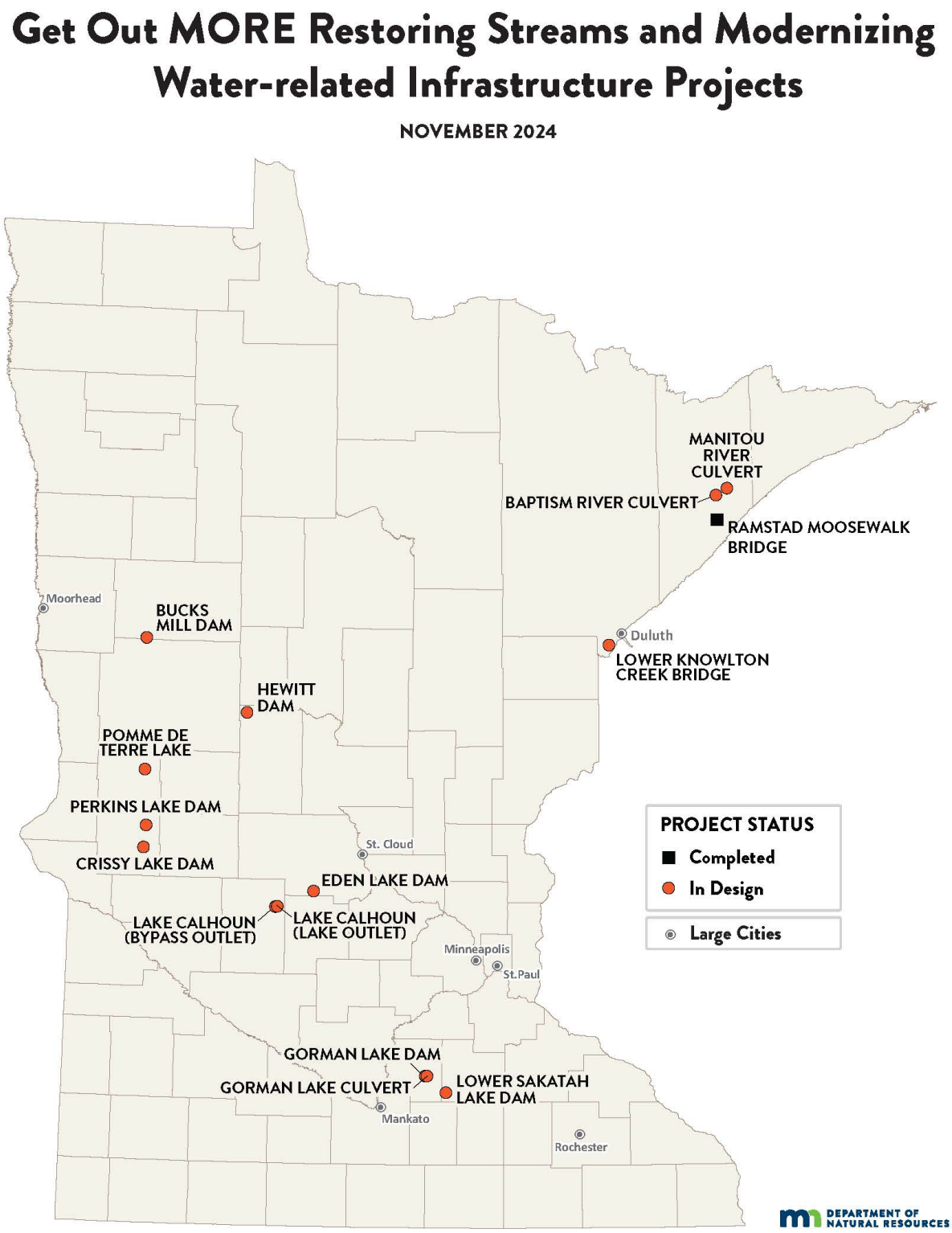
More intense rains combined with changes in land use are causing more flooding and road washouts, degrading streambanks, and overwhelming water control structures. This impacts our fish, waterfowl, and recreation opportunities. Using $10 million in Get Out MORE funding, the DNR is modernizing culverts and replacing bridges to enhance climate resiliency, and to improve overall stream ecology by ensuring connectivity between upstream and downstream stream segments bisected by this infrastructure. Connectivity is important for the movement of water, sediment, and nutrients, and is also essential to fish and other aquatic species that need to access different habitat areas seasonally or to complete elements of their life cycle. The DNR is also using these funds to enhance connectivity and restore habitat through selective dam removals, enhancing fish passage, spawning and protection. Better fish passage enhances recreation through improved angling opportunities, including new or improved shore fishing sites.

This $10 million investment includes 10 dam removal or modification projects and five culvert replacements reconnecting an estimated 158 miles of streams (Figure 23).

Currently, $9.125 million has been allocated to 15 projects including dam removal or modification and culvert replacements on streams throughout Minnesota. The DNR requested project proposals from DNR staff and partners in Sept. 2023 and Feb. 2024. Staff ranked submissions based on criteria including project type, resource potential, scale of impact, critical habitat and biodiversity, timing, technical feasibility, and community support.

The DNR is reserving the remaining $875,000 for possible additional funding needs for the 15 selected projects and staff time for project implementation. If all current projects are within or below budget, the remaining dollars will fund another water-related infrastructure project.

Figure 23. Map of awarded water-related infrastructure projects.



Projects Funded

Selected Dam Removal and Stream Restorations

Dam removal, modification, and stream restoration projects have far-reaching watershed-wide benefits including providing fish passage and enhancing fish populations at already established access sites. The DNR has further enhanced recreation through new and improved paddling or tubing opportunities and improved wildlife viewing. The removal of existing barriers also helps to improve public safety, support movement and migration of mussels (through enhanced fish passage, as fish serve as host for juvenile mussels), increase climate resiliency by reducing erosional energy along banks and ensuring design is appropriate for large flood events, and improve biodiversity within the watershed.

Pomme de Terre River Watershed

Taking a watershed approach, the DNR selected three remaining dams on the Pomme de Terre River — the Perkins, Pomme de Terre and Crissy dams — for funding. These dams are beyond their design life and block a significant portion of the Pomme de Terre watershed to fish migration. Each project will reconnect a portion of the watershed; together, they will reconnect 53 miles of river habitat. The DNR is completing these projects in partnership with the Pomme de Terre River Association and the Stevens County Soil and Water Conservation District who will provide construction administration and public outreach. Staff have encumbered funding for all three of these projects, assembled project teams, and completed site surveys. The projects are now in the design phase.

- Perkins Lake Dam ($500,000) – The Perkins Lake Dam is located at the outlet of Perkins Lake (Figure 24). This project will replace the dam with rock arch rapids. The rock arch rapids will maintain the runout elevation of the lake while allowing for fish passage over rock weirs. The rapids will be passable by fish and will reconnect 31 miles of the Pomme de Terre River. Rock arch rapids typically provide enhanced shore fishing opportunities.

Figure 24. Perkins Lake Outlet Dam.

- Pomme de Terre Lake Dam ($500,000) – The Pomme de Terre Lake Dam is adjacent to the city of Elbow Lake's Tipsinah Mounds Campground (Figure 25). This project will replace the dam with a rock arch rapids, reconnecting 12 miles of the Pomme de Terre River. The rapids will be passable by fish and will provide recreation for the campground.

Figure 25. Pomme de Terre Lake Dam.

- Crissy Dam ($2.5 million) – The Crissy Dam is adjacent to the Morris City Campground and Dog Park (Figure 26). This project will replace the dam with a partial rock arch rapids, reconnecting 10 miles of the Pomme de Terre River. The partial rapids will be lower than the current dam runout elevation, but will not eliminate the waterbody behind the dam. A portion of the river in the upstream reaches of the reservoir will return to a more natural flow. The rapids will be passable by fish and will provide recreation for the city park. The Crissy Dam is a significant safety hazard and has had three recent near-drowning incidents. This project will remove the unsafe hydraulic roller effect caused by the dam.

Figure 26. Crissy Lake Dam.

Cannon River Watershed

Again taking a watershed approach, the DNR is addressing two dams and one culvert road crossing in the Cannon River watershed. These structures are beyond their design life and block fish migration in a significant portion of the watershed. In combination, the projects will reconnect 23 miles of river habitat. The DNR is doing these projects in partnership with Clean River Partners who will provide construction administration and public outreach coordination. Staff have encumbered funding for all three of these, assembled project teams and completed site surveys. The projects are now in the design phase.

- Lower Sakatah Dam ($500,000) – Located at the outlet of Lower Sakatah Lake (Figure 27), this project will reconnect three miles of the Cannon River by replacing the dam with a rock arch rapids. The rapids will improve passage for 28 species of fish, including a genetically rare form of walleye.

Figure 27. Lower Sakatah Lake Dam.

- Gorman Lake Dam ($350,000) – Located at the outlet of Gorman Lake, this project will replace the dam with a rock arch rapids (Figure 28). The rapids will be passable by fish, reconnecting 19 miles of the Cannon River for fish passage. This project is adjacent to a public access and will improve recreation at the site.

Figure 28. Gorman Lake Dam.

- Gorman Lake Culvert ($150,000) – Located just downstream of the Gorman Lake Dam, this project will replace an undersized culvert under Dodd Road (Figure 29). The new culvert will reconnect one mile of the Cannon River up to the Gorman Lake Dam. The new culvert design will be more resilient to increased flood events than the existing culvert.

Figure 29. Gorman Lake Culvert on Dodd Road, downstream of Gorman Lake Outlet.

Middle Fork Crow River Watershed

In partnership with Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District, the DNR is replacing two dams with rock arch rapids to improve fish passage, remove aging infrastructure, and benefit watershed-wide recreation. Together, these projects will reconnect eight miles of stream habitat. Staff have encumbered funding for both projects, assembled project teams, completed site surveys, and begun design work.

- Lake Calhoun Outlet ($662,500) – The DNR is replacing an aging outlet dam located at the outlet of Lake Calhoun with rock arch rapids (Figure 30). The rapids will reconnect seven miles of the Middle Fork Crow River and will improve passage for 45 species of fish.

Figure 30. Lake Calhoun Outlet Dam.

- Lake Calhoun Bypass ($662,500) – The DNR is replacing an aging outlet dam located on the diversion channel west of Lake Calhoun with a rock arch rapids (Figure 31). The rapids will reconnect one mile of channel and improve passage for 45 species of fish.

Figure 31. Lake Calhoun Bypass Dam.

Bucks Mill Dam

Bucks Mill Dam ($1 million) – The DNR is replacing the dam, located at the outlet of Lake Melissa, with rock arch rapids (Figure 32). The rapids will improve passage for 23 species of fish and reconnect 15 miles of the Pelican River. This project will contribute to the development of a county park by improving safety for fishing access. The DNR is partnering on this project with Pelican River Watershed District who will provide construction administration and public outreach. Staff have encumbered funds for this project and have begun site survey and public outreach.

Figure 32. Bucks Mill Dam.

Culvert Modernization and Bridge Replacements

Culvert modernization and bridge replacement projects provide important ecosystem, climate resilience and recreation benefits. Improved culvert design that more closely matches a stream's natural gradient, width and bed can improve fish passage and reconnect miles of fish habitat, supporting enhanced fishing opportunities. Improved culvert design or replacement enhances climate resilience by increasing flood flow capacity (reducing stress on the crossing during high flow events), and the improved sediment transport and reduced scour and bank erosion supports improved water quality and ecosystem health.

- Lower Knowlton Creek Bridge ($750,000) – The DNR is removing and replacing a severely undersized culvert, located on the Willard Munger State Trail at the confluence of Knowlton Creek and the St. Louis River, with a bridge (Figure 33). The bridge will reconnect two miles of recently restored trout habitat. This bridge will also provide climate resilience for the Willard Munger State Trail. The bridge will allow for floodplain connection through the crossing, increase flow capacity, and reduce stress on the crossing during larger flood events. Staff have encumbered funds for this project, assembled a project team and completed a site survey. The design is 60% complete.

Figure 33. Lower Knowlton Creek culvert under the Munger Trail.

- Ramstad/Moosewalk Bridge ($250,000) – Completed in fall of 2024, the project replaced a perched and undersized culvert with a bridge on the C.J. Ramstad State Snowmobile Trail crossing on Hockamin Creek, a tributary to the Baptism River in the Lake Superior Basin (Figures 34-37). Trout now have access to an impressive 14 miles of additional cold-water habitat and the crossing better protects the trail from large flood events.

Figure 34. Ramstad/Moosewalk culvert before replacement with a bridge.

Figure 35. Aerial view of Ramstad/Moosewalk bridge construction.

Figure 36. Ramstad/Moosewalk snowmobile trail bridge just after construction. The stream channel is now passable by fish and the bridge is wide enough to sustain larger floods.

Figure 37. Moose walks over the new bridge at sunset.

- West Branch Baptism River Culvert ($250,000) – The DNR is replacing an undersized culvert, located in the Finland State Forest on the West Branch of the Baptism River under East General Grade Road (Figure 38). The DNR is designing the new culvert using the geomorphic approach, reconnecting two miles of river habitat for 16 species of fish. Staff have assembled the project team, completed a site survey, and started design work.

Figure 38. West Branch of the Baptism Culvert.

- Manitou River Culvert ($250,000) – The DNR is replacing an undersized culvert on the Manitou River under East General Grade Road (Figure 39). Staff is designing the new culvert using the geomorphic approach, reconnecting 5 miles of river habitat for 16 species of fish. Staff have assembled the project team, completed a site survey and started design work.

Figure 39. Manitou River Culvert.

Other Funding Sources Contributing to this Work

Water-related infrastructure projects take years to develop. Three of these stream restoration and stream infrastructure modernization projects were already in development and partially funded when Get Out MORE funding became available. An additional $2.2 million from other funding sources is being put toward these projects, allowing the DNR to accomplish significantly more with the Get Out MORE funding appropriated (Table 11).

In addition to leveraging additional funding, partnership is critical in other ways to the success of these restoration and modernization projects, which require local support and engagement. Partners include the Pelican River Watershed District, Clean River Partners, Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District, Pomme de Terre River Association, Todd County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District, as well as funding from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC). Additional matching funding is available for three of the 15 stream and water-related infrastructure projects. Buck Mills Dam and Lower Knowlton Creek Bridge projects will use LSOHC funds as match. The Ramstad/Moosewalk Trail Bridge project will use funds from the Minnesota chapter of Trout Unlimited as well as Save Our Great Lakes funds as a match.

Table 11. Project award details for Restoring Streams and Modernizing Water-related Infrastructure.

Project Name	Get Out MORE Funds	Other Funding	Status	Scheduled Construction Timeframe
Ramstad/Moosewalk Trail Bridge	$250,000	$284,000	Complete	2024
Eden Lake Dam	$550,000	$0	Design	2025
Gorman Lake Culvert	$150,000	$0	Design	2025
Gorman Lake Dam	$350,000	$0	Design	2025
Lower Knowlton Creek Bridge	$750,000	$900,000	Design	2025
Lower Sakatah Lake Dam	$500,000	$0	Design	2025
Perkins Lake Dam	$500,000	$0	Design	2025
Pomme de Terre Dam	$500,000	$0	Design	2025
Bucks Mill Dam	$1,000,000	$1,000,000	Design	2026
Lake Calhoun (Bypass Outlet)	$662,500	$0	Design	2026
Lake Calhoun (Lake Outlet)	$662,500	$0	Design	2026
Manitou Culvert	$250,000	$0	Design	2026
West Branch Baptism River Culvert	$250,000	$0	Design	2026
Crissy Lake Dam	$2,500,000	$0	Design	2027
Hewitt Dam	$250,000	$0	Design	2027

Expenditure Summary

The DNR spent $3.586 million of the Get Out MORE investments as of Sept. 30, 2024—$2.814 million from the General Fund appropriation (Table 12) and $772,000 from the capital investment appropriations (Table 13). The majority of General Fund expenditures through Sept. 30, 2024 were used primarily to enhance public water access site projects under the Modernizing Boating Access investment area because these projects were "shovel ready." A majority of the funding expended from capital investment appropriations was in the Enhancing Access investment area, including a number of accessibility improvements at William O'Brien State Park, improvements to State Forest Roads, and asset preservation work at New London hatchery and pre-design of the Waterville Hatchery.

Spending will accelerate in the months ahead as more projects commence. The DNR has encumbered (committed to projects) $14.967 million across the General Fund and capital investment appropriations and anticipates putting numerous projects out for bid for the 2025 construction season. The DNR plans to expend all funds before they are due to cancel.

Table 12. Get Out MORE General Fund expenditures by category in the reporting period of July 1, 2023 – Sept. 30, 2024.

Investments (General Fund)	Amount Appropriated	Amount encumbered* *Includes pre-encumbrances*	Amount expended *
Enhancing Access	$25,000,000	$1,313,638	$18,612
Revitalizing Camping	$5,000,000	$379,297	$0
Modernizing Boating	$35,000,000	$2,908,924	$1,911,954
Enhancing Fishing	$35,000,000	$975,816	$797,671
Modernizing Water-related Infrastructure	$10,000,000	$7,031,086	$86,330
Total	**$110,000,000**	**$12,608,761**	**$2,814,567**

**Encumbered and expended amounts are as of Sept. 30, 2024.*

Table 13. Get Out MORE Capital Investment expenditures by category in the reporting period of July 1, 2023 – Sept. 30, 2024.

Investments (Capital Investments)	Amount Appropriated	Amount encumbered* *Includes pre-encumbrances*	Amount expended*
Enhancing Access	$10,400,000	$1,626,118	$738,800
Revitalizing Camping	$4,500,000	$0	$0
Enhancing Fishing	$25,000,000	$730,664	$33,300
Total	**$39,900,000**	**$2,356,782**	**$772,100**

**Encumbered amounts are as of Nov. 14, 2024. Expended amounts are as of Sept. 30, 2024.*