Hennepin County Landowner Guide for Conserving Natural Resources

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This guide is intended to help landowners care for their land and the natural resources on their property. The guide recommends practices that can be implemented to protect and enhance natural systems. Each section also suggests resources and publications that offer additional, more specific information for each subject area.

This guide provides information regarding natural areas such as prairies, wetlands, water resources and woodlands. Information about the control of noxious weeds and invasive plants, management of pastures and livestock, maintenance of private wells and septic systems, care of wildlife habitat, and management of household wastes is also included. By promoting environmental stewardship, we hope to preserve and enhance the environment in Hennepin County for current and future generations.

This resource was produced by Hennepin County Environmental Services in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Service of Hennepin County.
Identifying and Protecting Natural Areas

Natural areas on your property

To find out if part or all of your property is located within a natural area, check the Hennepin County Natural Resources Inventory available at www.hennepin.us/naturalresources. The inventory identifies the remaining natural areas in the county as well as important corridors or greenways that link areas of ecological significance throughout the county. Corridors are important because they facilitate the growth and movement of wildlife and native vegetation between natural areas.

If your property is located within a natural area or corridor, Hennepin County encourages you to manage, protect and enhance the natural resources on your land.

Landowners play an important role in protecting the natural areas that still exist within Hennepin County. Natural areas are lands that consist primarily of native vegetation and have not been significantly altered by human activity. There are a variety of natural areas in Hennepin County, including different types of forests, prairies and wetlands.

Natural areas are important for several reasons. They provide critical habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for landowners, and they can protect water quality and provide flood control.
Implement Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are projects or practices that landowners can implement that preserve or restore critical habitats, reduce erosion, control nutrient runoff, control invasive species, and protect or improve water quality.

Examples of BMPs include, but are not limited to:
- Native vegetation restoration or establishment
- Steam bank stabilization
- Wetland restoration
- Noxious weed and invasive species control
- Livestock, manure and pasture management
- Filter strips and buffers
- Clean water diversions

Hennepin County provides technical assistance to landowners implementing BMPs. More information on how to implement BMPs in specific types of natural areas can be found throughout this guide.

Consider establishing a conservation easement

Conservation easements are one of the most effective tools available for permanently preserving private lands as open space. The establishment of a conservation easement restricts development and certain types of use on a piece of property in perpetuity in order to protect its natural resources. Conservation easements are legally binding agreements that can be either voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner. They protect land for future generations while allowing owners to retain many private property rights and potentially providing them with tax benefits.

Hennepin County holds conservation easements that range in size from a half acre to almost 100 acres. Hennepin County provides technical assistance for tasks related to establishing conservation easements, such as surveys, title work, appraisals and practice implementation.

To protect water quality and prevent erosion, don’t mow to the water’s edge and maintain a buffer of native vegetation.
For more information

- Hennepin County
  Natural Resources Inventory
  www.hennepin.us/naturalresources
  612-348-3777

- Minnesota Land Cover
  Classification System
  MN Department of Natural Resources
  www.dnr.state.mn.us/mlccs/index.html

- Ecology of Greenways: Design and function of linear conservation areas
  Smith, Daniel S. and Paul Cawood Hellmund
  University of Minnesota Press

- Field Guides to the Native Plant Communities of Minnesota
  Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2005.
  www.dnr.state.mn.us/npc/index.html

- Greenways: A guide to planning, design and development
  Flink, Charles A. and Robert M. Searns.

- Minnesota’s Native Vegetation: A Key to Natural Communities
  Aaseng, Norman E., John C. Almendinger, Robert P. Dana, Barbara C. Delaney,
  Hannah L. Dunevitz, Kurt A. Rusterholz, Nancy P. Sather and Daniel S. Wovcha.
  Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 1993.
  files.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nhnrp/nckey.pdf

- Preserving Family Lands: Essential Tax Strategies for the Landowner
  Small, Stephen J. Landowner Planning Center, Newton, Massachusetts. 1998.
  www.preservingfamilylands.com
Resources

- Hennepin County Environmental Services
  www.hennepin.us/naturalresources
  612-348-3777
  Hennepin County provides a variety of information and technical assistance for managing your land.

- University of Minnesota Extension – Hennepin County
  www.extension.umn.edu/county/hennepin
  612-596-2110
  The University of Minnesota Extension provides outreach for the University of Minnesota and delivers educational programs and technical assistance on a variety of land management topics.

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
  www.mda.state.mn.us
  651-201-6000

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
  www.dnr.state.mn.us
  651-296-6157

- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov
  763-241-1150, ext. 3

- Minnesota’s bookstore
  www.minnesotasbookstore.com
  Minnesota’s bookstore sells a variety of publications from Minnesota state agencies including many of the publications listed in this guide.

- Midwest Plan Services
  www.mwps.org
  Midwest Plan Services, based out of Iowa State University, sells a variety of low-cost agricultural publications.

Books & publications

- A Quick Reference Guide for Earth Friendly Home Landscaping
  Hennepin County Environmental Services.
  www.hennepin.us/sustainablelandscaping

- Beyond the suburbs – A landowner’s guide to conservation management

- Guide to Rural Living
  www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving

- Living on Acreages

- Small Scale/Small Field Conservation
  NRCS, Washington, D.C.
  landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov