



PRESS RELEASE

BELWIN PARTNERS WITH CITY, COUNTY AND DNR TO CREATE CONSERVATION AREA PARK IN AFTON

More than 40 acres of land will be conserved and open to the public.

(AFTON, Minn.) — On June 23, 2020, the Washington County Board of Commissioners approved a Land and Water Legacy Program project that supports creation of a conservation area park with public hiking trails in the City of Afton.

Belwin Conservancy, the City of Afton, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the county reached an agreement on the concept, funding, and conservation easement partnership. The project requires the purchase of a 31-acre parcel from a willing seller and the placement of a permanent conservation easement on it. Valley Creek flows southeasterly through the property for 750 feet, and the parcel contains wetlands, a pond, and forested uplands.

The land is adjacent to approximately 17 acres of Belwin Conservancy. As part of the overall project, approximately 5 acres of two of the City of Afton's adjacent parcels to the north will be protected by conservation easements and host a segment of trail. Portions of Belwin Conservancy to the south will also host public trails.

“Many people had a hand in making this complex acquisition work, and in the process we have built some meaningful partnerships with the City of Afton and Washington County,” says Belwin Conservancy Executive Director Katie Bloome. “Over the next few years, we will work to create a 40-plus acre preserve open to the public less than a mile from downtown Afton.”

Belwin will contribute \$157,500, own and manage the natural resources of the 31-acre parcel, and provide public access to a trail extending through 41 acres of land.

The county will contribute \$507,500 to the project, and hold the 31-acre conservation easement. The city will contribute approximately nine acres in a conservation easement area, trail access, and funding for removal of buildings on the land, an archeological survey if needed, and management plans.

The state will contribute \$290,000 to the project, with funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).



BELWIN CONSERVANCY

Inspiring through Nature

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ABOUT BELWIN CONSERVANCY

[Belwin Conservancy](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, restoration and appreciation of our natural world. Belwin Conservancy owns nearly 1,500 acres of permanently protected land in Afton and West Lakeland Township, Minnesota. The property comprises one of the largest nature preserves in the region. Its focus is connecting people and the land through a variety of innovative experiential programs that include the arts, astronomy, athletic fields, bison, education, land protection, research and restoration.

ABOUT THE LAND AND WATER LEGACY PROGRAM

The Land and Water Legacy Program is a voter-approved program that allows Washington County to acquire and improve land and interests in land for the purposes of improving water quality of rivers, lakes and streams; protecting drinking water sources; purchasing parklands; preserving wetlands and woodlands; and protecting land along water bodies from development.

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