HEKKEMA-BISHOP WETLAND PRESERVE

WHITE RIVER CELERY FLATS RESTORATION

What are the Celery Flats?

For decades, this area was farmed for celery. To make farming possible, earthen berms were built to separate the White River from its natural floodplain, allowing the land to be drained and cultivated.

Today, those same berms prevent the river from accessing its historic wetlands. Without seasonal flooding, the area provides fewer benefits for fish, wildlife, and water quality.

Why is this Important?

Healthy floodplains provide many benefits for both people and wildlife.

Improved Fish Habitat

- Creates seasonal nursery habitat for young fish.
- Provides access to wetlands used by northern pike and other native species for spawning.

Increases food sources and shelter for aquatic life.

- Cleaner Water
- Wetlands naturally filter sediment and nutrients before they reach White Lake.
- Slows floodwaters, reducing erosion downstream.

Wildlife Benefits

- Expands habitat for waterfowl, turtles, amphibians, pollinators, and other wildlife.
- Restores native wetland vegetation.

More Resilient Landscapes

- Reconnected floodplains help rivers function more naturally during high water events.
- Healthy wetlands improve the long-term health of the White River watershed.

What is the Restoration Project?

This project will restore the former celery flats by strategically opening sections of the existing berm. These carefully designed openings will allow water from the White River to once again flow into the floodplain during high-water events while maintaining the stability of the surrounding landscape. We will also be removing the old pumps, pump houses and infrastructure.

By reconnecting the river to its historic floodplain, natural wetland processes can return, creating healthier habitat and improving the overall function of the ecosystem.





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Property was purchased from the Hekkema Family via NAWCA grant funds in 2012

The pumps were turned off on the Hekkema side in 2015

Berm breach and high water levels 2018-2021

Remaining parcel was purchased from the Bishop family in 2021

Conservation easment was set on the property to protect it in 2022

MCD recieved GLFC funding for a feasibility study for restoration in early 2025

MCD, DU, GLFC, MSU Extension and AWRI collect samples, complete surveys in 2025 and 2026

MCD applying for funding with hopes to start construction in 2027

What's Next?

This project is currently in the planning and design phase. Before construction begins, project partners are working hard to complete engineering designs, conduct environmental reviews, and obtain the necessary permits. By the end of the feasibility study, full designs will be done, permits will be submitted and bid packets will be created.

MCD, DU, DNR, GLFC and other partners are exploring multiple funding opprotunities through various avenues to get this project to the final construction phase.

Community input is an important part of this process. Feedback gathered during this public meeting and stakeholder engagement will help inform the final design.

Once planning is complete and funding is secured, restoration activities will begin. Construction will be carefully timed to minimize impacts to wildlife and the surrounding area. Following construction, the site will be monitored to evaluate how the restored floodplain is functioning and to guide any future management needs.

Working Together

This restoration is a collaborative effort between conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, and local partners dedicated to improving the health of the White River and White Lake watersheds.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about this project. We welcome your questions and feedback as restoration moves forward on the Hekkema-Bishop Wetland Preserve.



To keep up on project progress and learn more,
contact Chelsey Lawton at chelsey.lawton@macd.org,
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or
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