

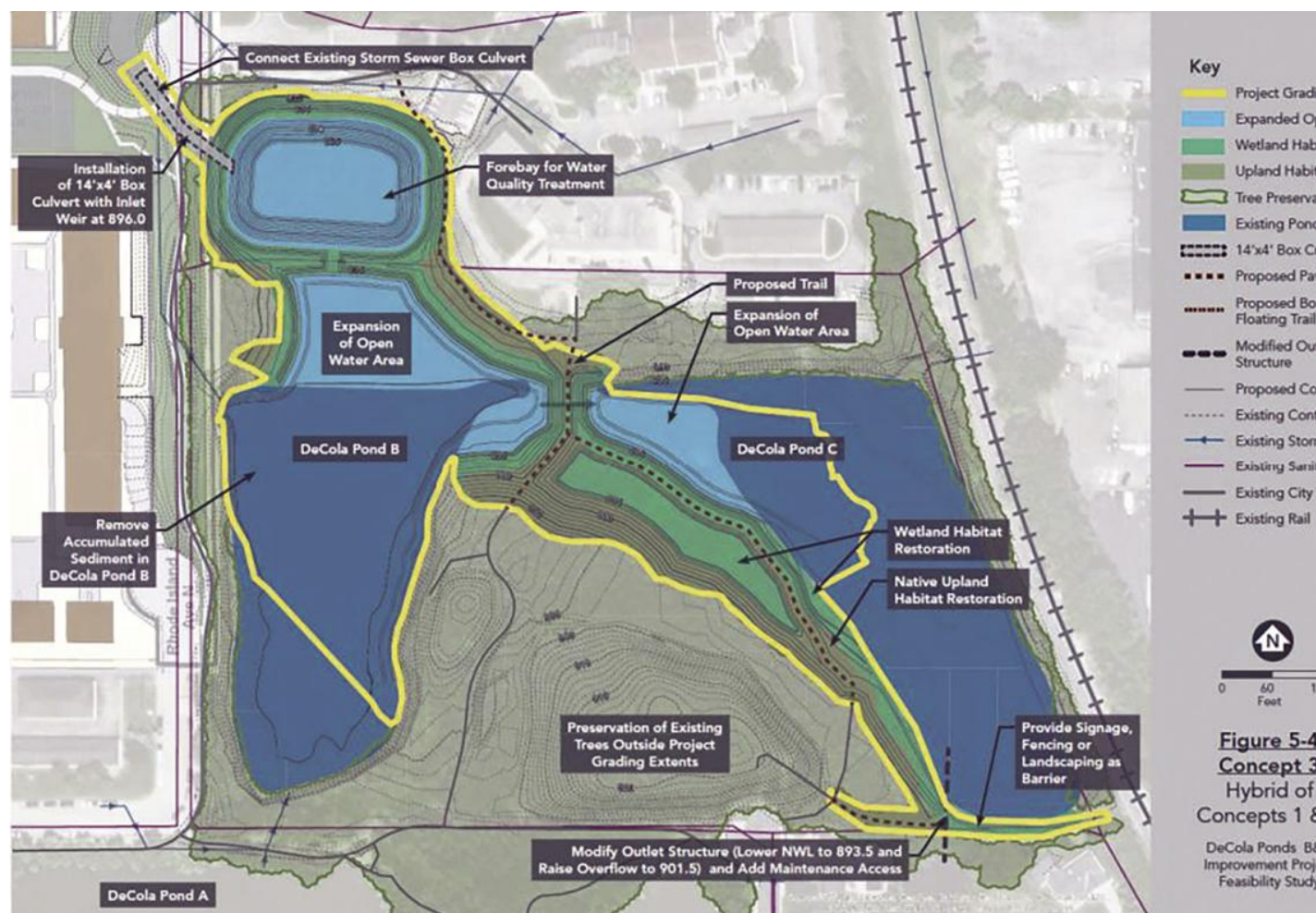
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https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_post/community/crystal_robbinsdale/golden-valley-approves-decola-ponds-flood-mitigation-improvement-project-for/article_4b7c1aac-c65c-11e8-965e-0bddd7224c.html

FEATURED

Golden Valley approves DeCola Ponds flood mitigation improvement project for \$4.6 million

Laura Kay Prosser Oct 2, 2018



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Pictured is the approved concept for DeCola Ponds B & C. This concept is a combination of concepts 1 and 2, which finds a balance between water storage and tree preservation.

Laura Kay Prosser

The intersection at Medicine Lake Road and Winnetka Avenue has had chronic flooding issues since the 1970s, with several feet of water on the road and over 39 homes and businesses impacted by flooding.

Golden Valley approved agreements to move forward with the DeCola Ponds flood mitigation project at the Sept. 20 meeting. The \$4.6 million project will add stormwater storage to the ponds area and help alleviate flooding.

The project is part of a bigger regional issue affecting public health and safety, according to Eric Eckman, Golden Valley development and assets coordinator. The project involves Golden Valley, New Hope and Crystal.

"The ponds are part of a long-term flood mitigation plan, which came from three cities identifying potential solutions to create flood storage and lower flood levels in the area," Eckman explained.

Several years ago, city officials were looking at the flood modeling and trying to solve the problem individually. They realized the wide scope of the project, which canvases all three cities, couldn't be funded alone.

With the help of project partners like the Department of Natural Resources, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and Hennepin County, the cities could implement the long-term plan and make an impact on the one square mile watershed in the three cities.

"Several capital projects were identified by the three cities," Eckman said. "With the first being completed last year in the Liberty Crossing project."

The \$22 million to \$25 million plan continues with the DeCola ponds B & C project.

"Each project is developed to create flood storage," Eckman explained. "We need to create storage first before moving stormwater into the area, giving it a place to go instead of into people's homes, businesses or on the roads."

The Liberty Crossing project created flood storage just like DeCola ponds B & C will. However, there was not enough storage created in the first project to allow water to flow between the two areas.

As the new flood storage is added to DeCola ponds area, a large box culvert will also be constructed between the two flood storage areas.

"The two projects tie into each other and work together," Eckman said.

The two projects will create 25 to 30 acre-feet of flood storage.

“That’s like a football field of water storage 20 feet deep if you can imagine that,” Eckman said.

In 2017, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission approved a proposal from the commission engineer to perform a feasibility study for the project, which began in October of that year.

“The commission implements large capital projects like this all across the watershed to reduce flooding and improve water quality,” said Laura Jester, watershed commission administrator. “The benefits that go along with projects like this one are improved habitats, lower flood levels and educational opportunities.”

In November, a public open house gathered resident input about the area. Another of these open houses, in April, provided answers to questions and the opportunity to understand resident concerns.

In May, the feasibility study was completed and approved by the commission. The approved concept was a hybrid of two concepts reviewed in the study.

“Concept one had more wetland and open water, but had a bigger impact on the natural area that residents enjoy,” Jester explained. “Concept two was less of an impact on the natural areas but didn’t have enough flood storage to be worth completing the project. Concept three was the compromise.”

“We struck a balance between tree preservation and creating flood storage with a focus on preserving as many significant hardwood trees as possible,” Eckman added.

The Dover Hill Apartments property owners have dedicated a permanent easement on the low area of their property, and the ponds expansion and reconstruction of the trail loop will not encroach on any of the other surrounding properties.

“The challenge of projects like this is to create flood storage in cities that are fully developed. Opportunities often come from either redevelopment or dedicated easements,” Eckman explained. “The majority of the work for this project will be on the Dover Hill dedicated easement.”

The partners are working together on the funding of this project. The watershed provides a local match funding of \$1.6 million, DNR is funding \$2.3 million and Hennepin County and the cities provide \$700,000.

The project will receive a \$68,000 grant from the Minnesota Broad of Water and Soil Resources.

“With the completion of this project, the 10-year flood depth goes down by 1 foot,” Jester said. “Not to mention, Rosalyn Court Apartments will get out of the floodplain completely.”

Local flooding around Medicine Lake Road and downstream of ponds A, B, C and D will be reduced and water quality improved by trapping sediment in the expanded storage.

“In the long run, we will see water quality improvement in Bassett Creek and the Mississippi River,” Jester explained.

The project will add 1.9 acres of open water and will remove existing trees, brush, and invasive species like buckthorn. The area will be restored with a mix of new trees, shrubs, and native plants and grasses. The majority of the project will be excavating the current low areas in the Dover Hill easement and around DeCola ponds B & C. The knoll in the pond area will be untouched by the project.

“Residents will see a difference in the better environment both in the aquatic wetland and along the trails,” Jester said.

Final project design and community engagement begins this fall. Bidding for the project is scheduled for the summer of 2019 with construction starting in the fall of 2019. The project is expected to be complete sometime in 2020.

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