

Planning Commission – Cover memo

Lester-Amity-Hawk-Ridge Designated Natural Area - Management Plan



MEETING DATE: 06/9/2026

SUBJECT/TITLE: LESTER-AMITY-HAWK RIDGE NATURAL AREA –
MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUBMITTED BY: Kate Kubiak, Natural Resources Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Management Plan

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: Natural Resources Commission – Approve – June 3, 2026.

PREVIOUS COMMISSION AND COUNCIL ACTION: May 13, 2025: Planning Commission approved nomination of the area as a Designated Natural Area (Provisional until a Management Plan is complete). June 25, 2025: City Council approved nomination.

BACKGROUND: The [Duluth Natural Areas Program](#) (DNAP) is contained in City ordinance: [Duluth City Code, Chapter 2, Article XXIX](#). The DNAP is a mechanism for designating certain lands of environmental value as permanently protected natural places. The criteria for eligibility includes observed plant and animal communities, habitat for special species, natural water features, important bird habitat areas, and geologic landforms. Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area meets all five criteria.

City code outlines a two-step process to designate City lands as a Duluth Natural Area: step one is the approval of a nomination, and step two is the development and approval of a Management Plan. The Management Plan describes the natural features of the area and identifies prioritized projects to protect and/or restore said natural features over a ten-year period.

There are [currently three designated areas](#) in Duluth: Hartley, St. Louis River, and Magney-Snively. These Natural Area Designations were coordinated by the City. This fourth Natural Area Designation is being brought forth by four of the City's Natural Resources partners: The Minnesota Land Trust, Minnesota Trout Unlimited, South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District, and Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

The provisional Natural Area designation for Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge was approved by Commissions in Council in 2025. The Management Plan is now complete and being presented to the Natural Resources Commission and Planning Commission, as prescribed by City Code. If the Planning Commission recommends approval of this Management Plan, the recommendation will be forwarded to City Council for Approval of the Management Plan and approval of final designation status as a Natural Area.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT: There is no financial commitment for the City. Partners are bringing \$1.5 million in federal and state funding, plus their own staff time to implement restoration projects within the Natural Area over the next 2-5 years with more funding expected over the next ten years. These partner-supplied funds will support implementation of the Management Plan activities.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A: Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Designated Natural Area Management Plan

