



PROJECT:

Thompson Wetland Bank

Leading the way with sustainable solutions

LOCATION

Palisade, Minnesota

PROJECT TYPE

Wetland Restoration and Banking

COMPLETION DATE

1995

BANK RECIPIANTS

US Steel, Inland Steel

NEED

Open pit mining and processing of taconite (iron) pellets consumes thousands of acres of land in Northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. Open pit mines, waste rock stockpiles and tailings basins eliminate forever the wetlands over which they are built. Under the U.S. Clean Water Act (Section 404) and Minnesota Wetland Restoration Act (WCA) mitigation of these wetland losses is required. In the 1990's, mitigation was commonly done in abandoned tailings basins at a cost exceeded \$14,000 per acre. The creation of wetlands in the sterile tailings basin environment and conditions unnatural for wetland creation made for very low diversity wetlands. The sustainability of wetland creation projects in mining areas and the harsh conditions made several projects unsuccessful. In most cases tailings basin created wetlands became high maintenance systems. Between US Steel and Inland Steel alone there was between 400 and 500 acres of wetland restoration needs.

SOLUTION

Jacques Whitford NAWE developed a project to restore 640 acres of farmed peat land in the mining region. The farm land was converted by Thompson Farms according to the design with ditch blocks, minor grading and plantings. With the State acceptance of the banking application, US Steel and Inland Steel purchased the land for \$1,200 per acre and placed it into the wetland bank.

BENEFIT

The Thompson Farms property was accepted as wetland mitigation credits thereby allowing mining expansion at two of Minnesota's largest mining companies. The creative approach to solving a major environmental concern of the mining companies resulted in saving of over \$8 million dollars. Everyone benefited including; the mining companies, state and federal regulators, Thompson Farms and the environment. Farmed wetlands were placed back into high quality wetlands. The unavoidable loss of wetlands in nearby mining properties was mitigated. The habitat values of the Thompson Wetland Bank are exceptional for both upland and wetland habitat. One of the largest Aitkin County sharp tail dancing grounds now exists on the site. Upland song birds and numerous wetland bird species now make this large wetland restoration site their home.



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