

**The Ponds at Heifort Hills Homeowners Association Board of Directors**  
Buffer Zone Management plan

During the summer of 2024, the Ponds at Heifort Hills HOA board of directors developed the buffer zone management plan that will remove dead and diseased trees and invasive plants with these objectives: 1. Eliminate the risk of trees injuring people and/or damaging houses, 2. Enable native plants and trees to be planted in an environment that allows them to thrive, and 3. Ultimately, create a buffer zone that can be economically maintained as a sustainable area populated with native trees and plants.

Buffer zone current state and next steps:

✓ Buckthorn and small black locust tree population control:

*Current state:* In the fall of 2022 & 2023, Minnesota Native Landscape (MNL) applied a Triclopyr Herbicide on new growth and re-spouting buckthorn (and small black locust trees as a side benefit). Large buckthorn trees are removed, once the buckthorn tree is identified.

*Next steps:* MNL will spray the buffer zone in the fall of 2024. An additional buckthorn spraying can be applied in the fall of 2025 if it becomes part of the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP) \$15,000 grant's implementation plan.

✓ Dead and invasive tree removal:

*Current state:* The buffer zone contains 100 +/- dead, dying or invasive trees that present a danger to people and homes.

*Next steps:* The board will contract with a Tree Service Company to remove approximately fifty +/- dead trees from the buffer zone in the first quarter of 2025. These marked trees will be cut down and completely removed from the buffer zone. This project will not remove all the dead and invasive trees. However, it does eliminate existing risks to homes and the dead tree removal facilitates preparation of the buffer zone for implementation of the HELP project.

Note: Brett Stolpestad, Washington Conservation District (WCD) Landscape Restoration Specialist, agrees with the plan to remove the marked trees.

✓ Habitat Enhancement Landscape Program (HELP) grant implementation:  
*Current state:* The Ponds at Heifort Hills HOA has/will pay for the three-year buffer buckthorn spraying project that was approved by the Brown Creek Watershed (BCWD) in 2022. The HOA has searched for grants to assist in paying for increasing the health of the buffer zone and the HELP grant will jump start the HOA efforts.

*Next steps:* The HOA board will complete the agreement between the HOA and BWSR that outlines the deliverables and responsibilities of each party by the end of 2024. The board will designate a HELP project manager that will be the primary contact between WCD, BCWD, and the HOA board to ensure the successful implementation of the HELP grant.

Summary:

The Ponds at Heifort Hills HOA board plan is to reclaim the Buffer zone's tree and plant population to create sustainable vegetation free of invasive and diseased trees and plants. The BWSR grant provides funds that are critical to enabling this plan to proceed.

This plan does not create an unblemished Buffer zone urban lawn environment. And, this plan complies with the Brown Creek Watershed (BCWD) Declaration dated September 26, 2016, and incorporates the July 5, 2021, Heifort Buffer Zone Management plan the BCWD paid to be developed for the Ponds HOA.

The HOA board understands that after the HELP project is implemented, the HOA will maintain the buffer zone in the resulting natural status.