

General Mills Nature Preserve

Location: 9201 Olson Memorial Highway, 8900 Betty Crocker Drive

Nature Area Size: 26.64 Acres

Description

General Mills Nature Preserve is located on the southwestern corner of the city east of Highway 169 and north of Betty Crocker Drive. Access is from both Betty Crocker Drive and Olson Memorial Highway South Frontage Road. A looped trail system exists within the nature preserve. The preserve is a mix of manicured parkland, upland buffer composed of native prairie, and wetland. The wetland portion is restored wetland, which has been enrolled as a wetland bank for the City of Golden Valley. Bassett Creek runs along the south side of the preserve.

Forest and Woodlands

Forest and woodland communities are present in two areas within the Preserve. The primary wooded portion lies along Bassett Creek, and is composed of floodplain forest. This is composed of mature trees including box elder, silver maple, basswood, and oaks. This is likely a mixture of remnant trees that were along the creek prior to development, and those that have grown in the last 50 years. The second area is located in the northeast portion of the Preserve, which is composed of mixed upland hardwoods, including several basswood and oak trees.

Wetlands

The Preserve is centered on a created wetland, which is composed of cattail-dominated shallow marsh. A wet meadow fringe is also present, although it has an abundance of reed canary grass. Floodplain forest is present along Bassett Creek for the entire length through the Preserve.

Aquatic Resources

Bassett Creek flows through the Preserve, and is present along the entire southern boundary. This portion of Bassett Creek has been historically ditched and straightened, but retains a small naturalized floodplain. Two bridges cross Bassett Creek, and are part of the trail system that passes through the Preserve.

Wetlands

Wetland is the dominate feature of the General Mills Nature Preserve, as the site was designated a wetland bank. The majority of the wetland is composed of shallow marsh, which is dominated by cattails and shallow open water. A wide emergent wetland fringe is also present, which includes a mixture of native species, but is dominated by reed canary grass. The wetlands are large, and dominate the site. They also connect to Bassett Creek floodplain, and provide for additional flood storage. The existing floodplain is likely smaller than was historically present, but remains an important resource.

Prairie and Grassland

The entire north side of the Preserve is composed of a native buffer that was established during the wetland creation, and is part of the wetland bank. The buffer is dominated by native prairie, which has been maintained to be a high quality grassland. Several spruce trees have been planted within the buffer for aesthetic purposes. A trail system crosses through the prairie.

Invasive Species

Invasive species are present within the preserve, and are primarily wetland related. Reed canary grass is a primary invasive species of concern, as it has the potential to spread and dominate the site. Control is difficult, as periodic flooding will continuously bring new seed into the site. Buckthorn is present, and is a potential concern within the wooded portions of the preserve. Buckthorn control is possible if adjacent properties are also managed.

Table 5.7 Invasive Species Cover Percent Change 2003-2013			
Description	%Cover2003	% Cover 2013	% Change
Common Buckthorn – Along Bassett Creek	70	50	-20
Reed Canary Grass – Wet Meadow	100	100	No change

Site Recommendations

Natural Resources

Because the majority of the Preserve is composed of a wetland bank, or associated with Bassett Creek, there are several requirements already in place to protect these resources and maintain a minimal level of vegetative quality. The primary recommendation is to maintain the quality of the wetland bank, in part because that is a requirement of the crediting, and the deed of restrictions and covenants already placed upon the property.

Maintain high quality wetland bank (high priority)

The wetland within the preserve is required to be dominated by native species, and periodically the site will require control of invasive species, and encouragement of native species to prosper.

Maintain high quality wetland buffer and native prairie (high priority)

In establishing the upland buffer, and high quality native prairie has been created along the north side of the site. Maintenance should be continued to ensure that this area remains high quality.

Enhance the wooded upland and floodplain forests (medium)

The floodplain forest and upland woods contain many mature species, including some of the oldest trees within the City. The health of the woods would be enhanced if younger trees could be planted to offset the eventual loss of some of the older trees.

Manage buckthorn (low priority)

Buckthorn is present within the preserve, but is localized. Management of buckthorn would require management on adjacent properties in order to be effective.

Amenities

Little needs to be done with the amenities in the nature preserve at this time; they tend to be functional and in good condition. Entry boulder signs are used at the two main access points to the nature area. These could remain as unique features as this is the only Nature Preserve in Golden Valley. The City may want to evaluate the condition of the benches, signs and other amenities as they wear and replace according to City approved Sign and Amenity Design Guidelines recommended earlier in this section.

Improve physical access (high)

The eastern leg of the loop trail is located on adjacent private property, but has been utilized by the public for years. Discussions should occur that lead to formalizing this arrangement through easement or agreement.

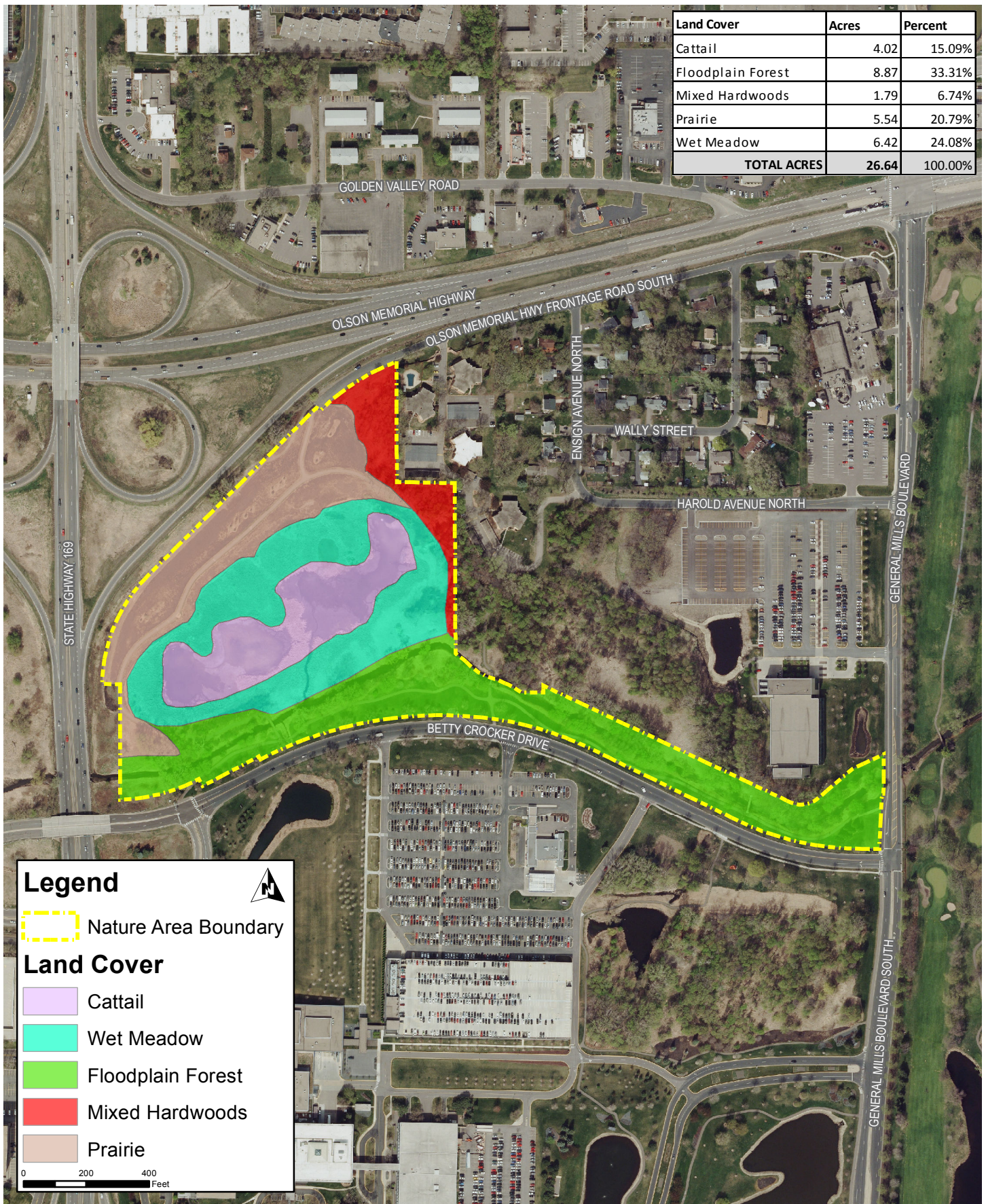
Install pet waste disposal system (high)

General Mills Nature Preserve should include waste disposal systems for dogs; one at each main entry. This not only keeps the park clean and attractive but it helps to maintain the water quality of Bassett Creek.

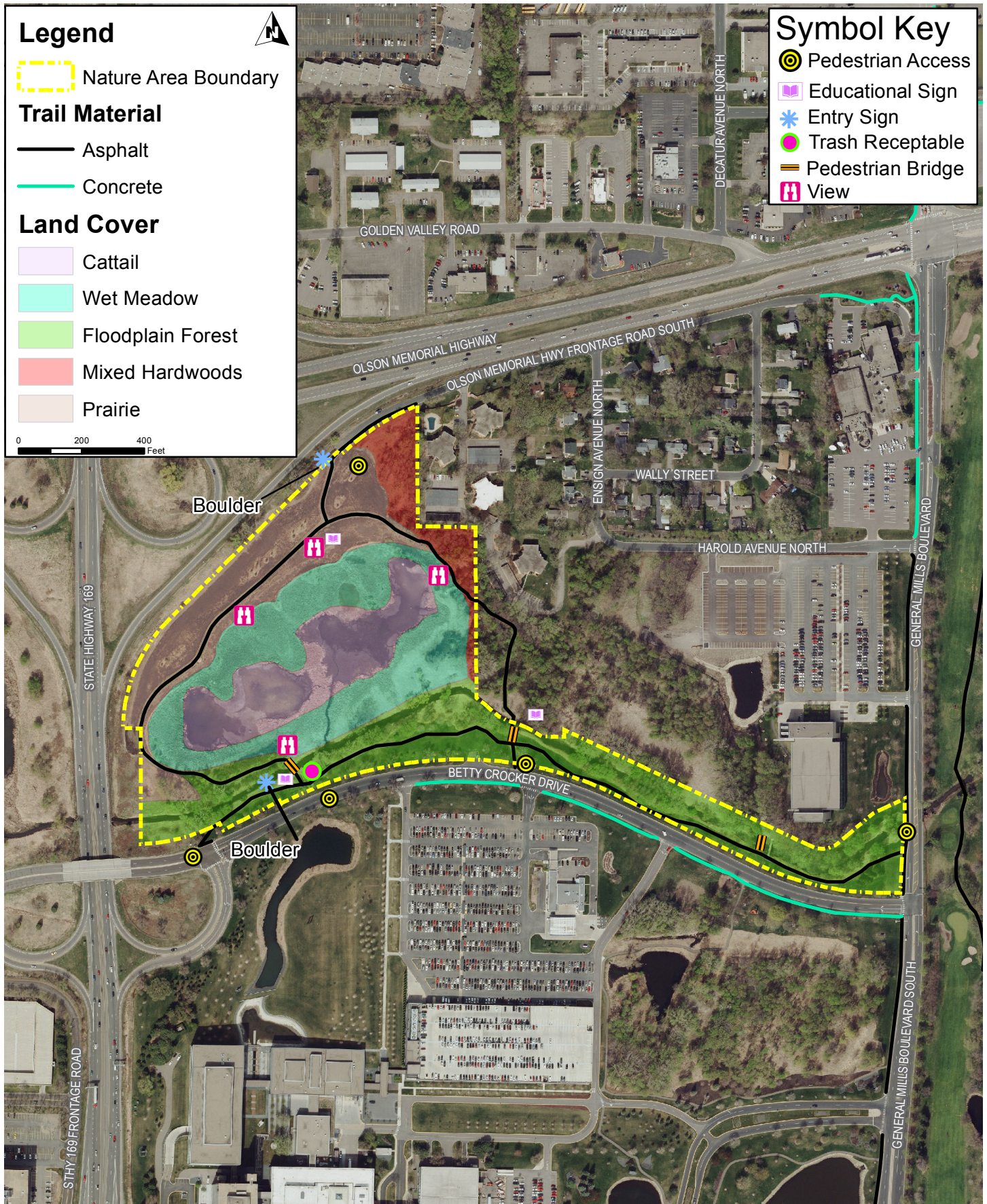
Table 5.8 General Mills Nature Preserve Improvement Priorities

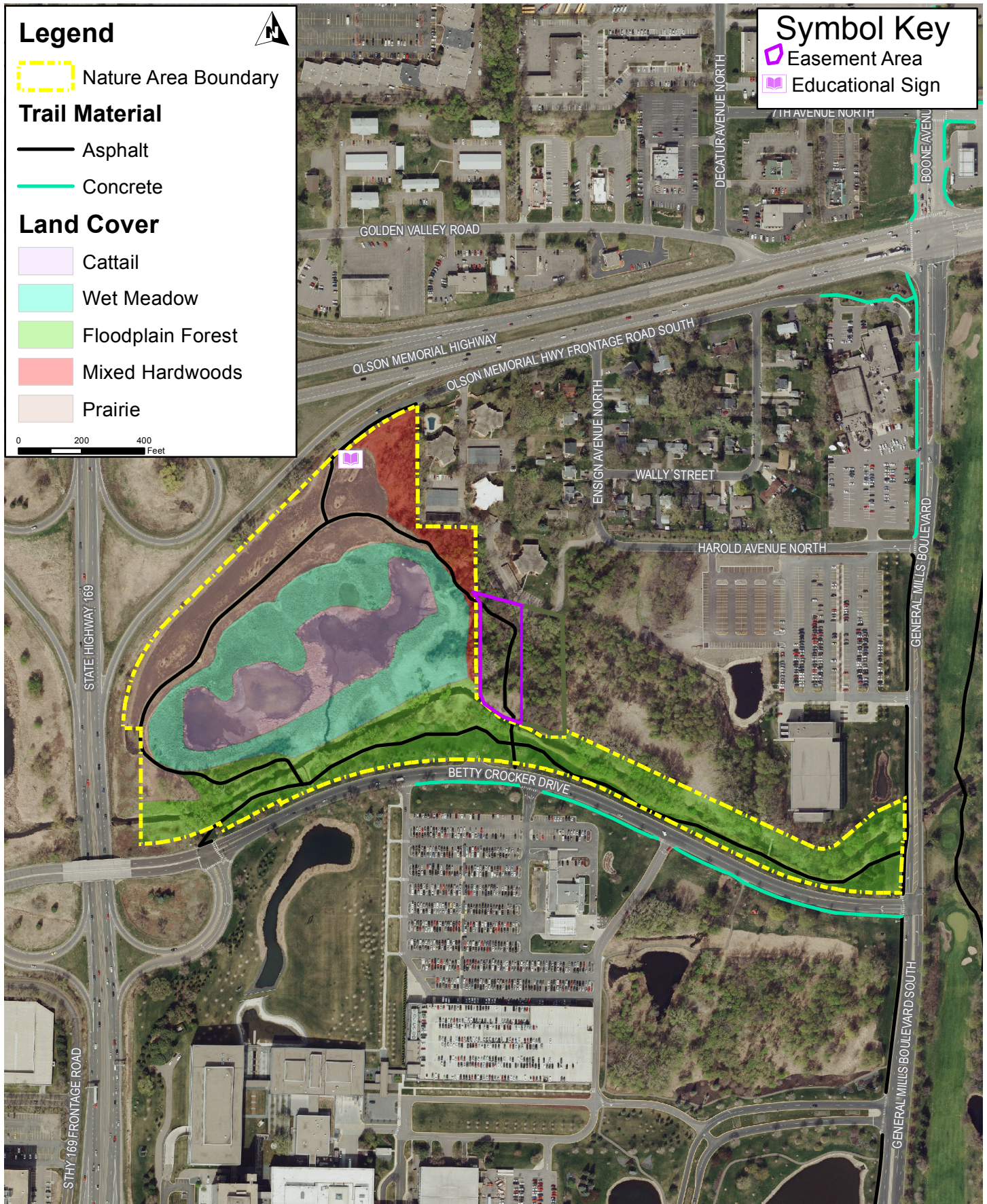
Priority (H, M, L)	Management Type/Area	Description	Action	Qty	Unit	Unit Cost	Cost Opinion
High	Wetland bank	Shallow and emergent marsh	Reed canary grass control	20	Acre	\$1,750	\$35,000
High	Upland buffer	Maintain high quality native prairie	Controlled burns, herbicide applications, periodic reseeding	6	Acre	\$3,500	\$21,000
Low	Upland woods	Manage buckthorn	Remove buckthorn	3	Acre	\$3,500	\$10,500
Low	Upland woods and floodplain forest	Encourage forest health	Remove damaged trees, plant younger and more diverse trees	5	Acre	\$2,000	\$10,000
High	Amenity	Improve physical access	Explore formalizing agreement or easement for public trail use with adjacent owner				N/A
High	Amenity	Provide dog walkers with pet waste disposal system at key access point	Install new pet waste disposal system	2	Each	\$600	\$1,200
Low	Amenity	Maintain existing trail systems	Repair and replace trail system as part of regular maintenance	0.5	Miles	\$10,000	\$5,000











General Mills Nature Preserve - Photographs

