

Finding 2

Land purchased by a Metropolitan Council grant recipient did not comply with legal requirements prohibiting the use of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund money for the purchase of residential structures.

Through its monitoring activities, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources questioned a May 2012 land purchase made by a regional park implementing agency with money from the trust fund (received through a grant from the Metropolitan Council.) The commission questioned the purchase (which used \$382,744 of trust fund money) because there were residential structures on the land. The regional park implementing agency allowed a portion of the grant to be used to pay for the removal of the residential structures after the purchase of the property. The appropriation law authorizing the use of trust fund money specifically stated, “This appropriation may not be used for the purchase of residential structures.”²⁷

In May 2014, commission staff sent a letter to the council requesting that it return the trust fund money used for the acquisition. In August 2014, the council sent a letter to the regional park implementing agency requesting the return of the money to comply with the commission staff’s request. When the agency did not return the money, the commission and the council asked the OLA to review whether the purchase was an allowable use of money from the trust fund.

We concluded that the purchase of the parcel containing the residential structures did not comply with the appropriation law and was a misuse of money from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Recommendation

- *The Metropolitan Council should work with the regional park implementing agency to return \$382,744 to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.*

²⁷ *Laws of Minnesota 2009, chapter 143, sec. 2, subd. 4(c).*