

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on September 16, 2026

M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2026

Project Title: Pollinator Habitat Creation Along The Urban Mississippi River

Project Manager: Alex Roth

Affiliation: Friends of the Mississippi River

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Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 08j

Appropriation Amount: \$129,000

Amount Spent: \$128,299

Amount Remaining: \$701

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

This project enhanced habitat for pollinators, wildlife, and water quality at three metro-area sites, as well as created a new non-herbicidal tool for managing common buckthorn: critical cutting. Overall, FMR exceeded our acreage, planting, and engagement goals, restoring 27.8 acres, planting 380 trees and shrubs, and engaging 1124 volunteers.

Summary of Project and Outcomes

Research shows that urban natural areas are important in providing habitat for wildlife and pollinators; however, urban open spaces are increasingly degraded by non-native invasive species and a lack of native vegetation. This project was a partnership between Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and the City of Inver Grove Heights to restore habitat in three urban natural areas - Ole Olson Park and Mississippi Gorge Regional Park in Minneapolis, and River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights. Restoration work focused on improving pollinator habitat through habitat management and volunteer engagement across 27.8 acres of habitat. In forested areas, invasives were replaced with native shrubs and trees in suitable locations, and native grass and wildflower seeding helped add structure and floral diversity to these sites. On grassland acres, prescribed fire was used to prep and maintain habitat, invasive species were removed, and native prairie seed was added to restore and enhance habitat. The

project also engaged 1124 volunteers from local communities who dedicated 2182 hours to invasive species removal, seed collection, and planting 380 native trees and shrubs. Habitat at these sites was vastly improved through this work, and longterm maintenance will continue with FMR's involvement. In addition, FMR trialed critical cutting for buckthorn removal, a non-herbicidal method that targets the removal of invasive vegetation based on plant physiology. This method proved effective and popular, and was disseminated both locally and regionally, resulting in new partnerships to implement and further study the technique. Importantly, this project also provides a model for local partnerships for urban habitat improvement and public engagement.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

This project resulted in the restoration and enhancement of 27.8 acres of habitat at three sites, and in the creation of a new non-herbicidal tool for buckthorn removal: critical cutting. FMR wrote about this tool and about our site restorations in FMR's monthly newsletter and website articles. In addition, our critical cutting work was shared with local conservation partners, written about in the MN Conservation Volunteer, and presented at regional conferences (UMISC, TPE, etc). The project has resulted in new partnerships to further study this method, both with UMN faculty and through a federally funded tri-state research project.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: October 9, 2026

ID Number: 2020-051

Staff Lead: Tiffany Schaufler

Project Title: Pollinator Habitat Creation Along The Urban Mississippi River

Project Budget: \$129,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Alex Roth

Organization: Friends of the Mississippi River

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Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 16, 2026

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: September 16, 2026

Project Completion: June 30, 2026

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 08j

Appropriation Language: \$129,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Friends of the Mississippi River to remove invasive plants and replace them with high-value native species at three urban sites along the Mississippi River to improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2026, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2026

Narrative

Project Summary: This project creates 26.5 acres of diverse pollinator and wildlife habitat at three sites within the Mississippi River corridor in the Twin Cities urban core.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

This is a re-submission of our 2020 proposal under the same name. Changes made to this from the pending tentative recommendation are changing the end-date by a year later, changing Milestones by a year, and rounding total request to nearest thousand (+\$703 to Supplies).

As pollinator and wildlife habitat is lost across the state and country, research increasingly indicates the value even small acres of native vegetation in urban areas can provide. These areas can be critical habitat for pollinators, birds and other wildlife when they contain native vegetation and are strategically located (Baldock et al. 2019; Narango et al. 2018). However, urban open spaces are increasingly degraded by non-native invasive species and a lack of native vegetation. Under these conditions, they cannot provide habitat for native pollinators whose populations are in decline. All the project sites in this proposal are located within two strategic corridors: The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and the Metro Conservation Corridors.

This project is a partnership between FMR, the City of Inver Grove Heights, Longfellow Community Council and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to restore habitat in three natural areas with a focus on using native plants that are important for pollinators.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

The entire 7-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights will be restored to native prairie and pollinator-friendly shrubs. In the Mississippi River Gorge, 17 new acres of forest adjacent to the river will be enhanced, adding to the 10 acres that were previously enhanced immediately to the south. At Ole Olson Park in north Minneapolis, 2 acres of new riverfront prairie will be added to 2 previously restored acres. By expanding upon previous restoration efforts and adding new sites, this project helps create contiguous, high-quality habitat for wildlife and limits further invasive encroachment.

FMR staff will manage and oversee all aspects of the project including adaptive management. Local ecotype native plant material will be used, including diverse seed mixes (minimum 35 species) and species for resiliency. Staff will evaluate restoration results using the LCCMR's restoration monitoring protocol. Previous three-year restoration projects have revealed that five years of initial funded efforts improve the chance of project success and help ensure that projects reach a maintenance stage that require only minimal effort going forward.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This project creates 26.5 acres of diverse habitat within the Mississippi River corridor in the Twin Cities urban core. This builds upon previous restoration work FMR has done within the Gorge and at Ole Olson Park by restoring additional contiguous acres. River Heights Park is a new restoration. Invasive plants will be removed at all sites and native vegetation planted and seeded. All sites are surrounded by a heavily populated urban area and offer the opportunity to inform people using these spaces about the value of restoring habitat, providing for pollinators, and creating climate change resilient natural areas.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Metro

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): Metro

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Minneapolis Prairie Restoration – Ole Olson Park; Minneapolis Forest Enhancement – Mississippi Gorge Regional Park - Sand Flats; Prairie Restoration – River Heights Park

Activity Budget: \$129,000

Activity Description:

At Ole Olson Park in north Minneapolis, 2 acres of new riverfront prairie will be added to 2 previously restored acres. This project helps create contiguous, high-quality habitats for wildlife and limits further invasive encroachment by expanding upon previous restoration efforts and adding new sites. Activities include: non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, silt fence installation for erosion-prone areas, seeding with 35+ native prairie species, mowing, and prescribed burning. Using in-kind support, FMR will organize community volunteers to assist with restoration efforts.

At the 17 acres in the Mississippi River Gorge, FMR will enhance 17 new acres of floodplain forest adjacent to the river, adding to the 10 acres that FMR previously enhanced immediately to the south. Activities include non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, seeding, planting native trees and shrubs. Using in-kind support, FMR will organize volunteer stewardship events to assist with enhancement activities.

FMR will restore the entire 7.5-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights to native prairie and pollinator-friendly shrubs. Activities include: removal of invasive woody plants, seeding to native prairie, prescribed burns, and mowing.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Removal of invasive woody vegetation on 7.5 acres 6/30/2022	June 30, 2022
Removal of invasive woody vegetation on 7.5 acres	June 30, 2022
Removal of invasive woody and herbaceous vegetation/seeding	October 31, 2022
Removal of invasive woody and herbaceous vegetation/seeding of native prairie mix	November 30, 2022
Establishment mows and spot spraying	June 30, 2024
Prescribed burn and seeding of native prairie mix/plant 20 pollinator shrubs	June 30, 2024
Prescribed burn on 2 acres and supplemental seeding	June 30, 2025
Mow grassland 4 times and conduct 2nd prescribed burn	June 30, 2025
Plant 300 native trees and shrubs	June 30, 2026
Removal of Siberian elm tree canopy at Ole Olson Park	June 30, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jeremy Barrick	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will support volunteer events with in-kind labor	No
Emily Green	Longfellow Community Council	The Longfellow Community Council (for Sand Flats) will support volunteer activities through match funding and volunteer recruitment	No
Brian Swboda	City of Inver Grove Heights	City of Inver Grove Heights will assist with invasive woody removal and support for volunteer activities	No
Neighborhood volunteers	Neighborhood volunteers	Local community of volunteers is highly engaged and will assist restoration and monitoring efforts	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

FMR will seek to promote and disseminate information about this project through earned media, FMR's website (www.FMR.org), electronic & printed newsletters, and volunteer stewardship events. FMR will acknowledge ENRTF in all publications and events that refer to these projects. FMR will work with landowners to erect signage where ENRTF grant funds are spent. See examples under optional attachments.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

FMR strategically focuses on areas within designated conservation corridors. We stay engaged with projects, landowners, partners and communities, ensuring continuous improvement and expansion of the habitat values at these sites, while protecting the public investment. FMR will continue to partner with the City of Inver Grove Heights, the Longfellow Community Council and the Minneapolis Park Board to maintain the restorations. FMR's stewardship program also engages local community members in the restoration process, creating community support for site maintenance.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Prairie, Forest, and Savanna Restoration in Greater Metropolitan Area	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 08e	\$276,000
Mississippi and Vermillion River Restoration of Prairie, Savanna, and Forest Habitat - Phase Ten	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$213,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Ecologists		Directing/Overseeing Project Implementation			16%	0.25		\$27,576	-	-
Accountant		Manages financial reports and invoices for the grant.			16%	0.25		\$245	-	-
Volunteer Coordinator		Oversees the work of volunteer stewards at project sites.			16%	0.25		\$750	-	-
							Sub Total	\$28,571	\$28,571	-
Contracts and Services										
Native Resource Preservation	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Restoration services include prescribed burns, soil preparation, seeding, woody invasive plant removal, herbicide application, etc.				0		\$13,740	\$13,740	-
Ed's Buckthorn Control	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Non-herbicidal critical cutting (4x) of buckthorn. Pile burning.				0		\$21,935	\$21,935	-
Landbridge Ecological, Inc	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Restoration services include prescribed burns, soil preparation, seeding, woody invasive plant removal, herbicide application, etc.				0		\$24,533	\$24,149	\$384
The Davey Tree Expert Company	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Large invasive Siberian elm and black locust tree removal and disposal from prairie acres at Ole Olson Park.				0		\$18,687	\$18,687	-
							Sub Total	\$78,895	\$78,511	\$384
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
	Tools and Supplies	Plant material (trees, shrubs, seed)	for seeding and planting on restored acres					\$20,642	\$20,325	\$317
							Sub Total	\$20,642	\$20,325	\$317

Capital Equipment										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage	Mileage (103 trips for 3 sites over 5 years)					\$892	\$892	-
							Sub Total	\$892	\$892	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
							Grand Total	\$129,000	\$128,299	\$701

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
			State Sub Total	-	-	-
Non-State						
Cash	Royal Bank of Canada Foundation	To support restoration at River Heights Park	Pending	\$10,819	\$10,819	-
In-Kind	FMR Stewardship Program staff	FMR staff organize and lead community volunteers in restoration activities at project sites	Pending	\$27,260	\$27,260	-
In-Kind	Longfellow Community Council	To support restoration in the Mississippi Gorge	Pending	\$4,000	\$4,000	-
In-Kind	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Support restoration at Ole Olson and Mississippi Gorge sites	Secured	\$4,000	\$4,000	-
In-Kind	City of Inver Grove Heights	Support restoration at River Heights Park	Secured	\$5,500	\$5,500	-
Cash	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Supplement contract with Davey Tree for Siberian elm removal at Ole Olson	Secured	\$19,000	\$19,000	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$70,579	\$70,579	-
			Funds Total	\$70,579	\$70,579	-

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park	Hennepin	When restored, it will add 17 acres of restored floodplain forest habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. It is located along the Mississippi River, within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Corridor and within identified Metro Conservation Corridors. There is a dedicated group of community members who actively steward the area and value it.	Restoration	17	0.47	\$44,115	Public		Completed
Ole Olson Park	Hennepin	When restored, it will add new prairie habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, and provide natural area enjoyment for the community near it. It will be a valued expansion of the restored prairie already adjacent to it. The site is located along the Mississippi River, within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Corridor and within identified Metro Conservation Corridors.	Restoration	2	0.2	\$41,465	Public		Completed
River Heights Park	Dakota	When restored, it will be new prairie habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. It is located 0.3 miles from the Mississippi River within the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Corridor and within identified Metro Conservation Corridors. It is highly valued and used by the community near it.	Restoration	7.5	0	\$43,420	Public		Completed
Totals				26.5	0.67	\$129,000			

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

Friends of the Mississippi River's (FMR) work for this project will take place on two sites that are permanently protected and in public ownership. Ole Olson Park is owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and is open to the public for wildlife-viewing activities. Mississippi River Gorge Regional Park Sand Flats is public land owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and is open to the public for wildlife-viewing activities. River Heights Park is owned by the City of Inver Grove Heights and is open to the public for wildlife-viewing activities.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

FMR proposes to create 26.5 acres of pollinator and wildlife habitat in three urban locations in the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area corridor. At Ole Olson Park in north Minneapolis, two acres of new riverfront prairie will be added to the two acres previously restored in Phase I at this site. Work at this site will remove herbaceous and woody invaders and seed the site to native prairie – the historical vegetation community present in the area. In the Mississippi River Gorge, 17 acres of forest adjacent to the river will be restored for pollinators and other wildlife through the removal of woody and herbaceous invasive plants, and native seeding and planting. At the seven-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights, we will remove invasive and non-native plants and establish native prairie and pollinator-friendly shrubs. At this site, we will also engage citizen scientists to survey pollinators and to track changes before and after restoration.

The project sites have resource management plans already written for them. These plans are stored on a shared server by our organization.

FMR has been strategically focused on specific areas within designated conservation corridors for over a decade. This has allowed us to stay engaged with projects, landowners, partners and communities, helping to ensure the continuous improvement and expansion of the habitat values at these sites, while protecting the public investment that has been made in them. FMR is committed to ongoing restoration and enhancement activities required at these sites over time.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

FMR will use and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement on our project sites. Our project incorporates these guidelines in numerous ways, including:

- Sites are selected to be strategic in providing ecological benefits for the landscape in which they are a part
- Sites are selected within identified conservation corridors in order to make landscape connections to decrease habitat fragmentation and create habitat linkages across the landscape
- Restoration efforts will incorporate plant communities appropriate to the sites to provide food and habitat for species in need, particularly pollinators
- Restoration efforts will include methods to restore and maintain species diversity, including incorporating prescribed fire and the removal of invasive plants that displace native vegetation
- Efforts are designed to restore habitat complexes and natural corridors and buffer natural areas
- The restoration of a former farm field to prairie will help retain water on the land, reduce runoff and improve adjacent Mississippi River water quality
- Efforts include removal of invasive species
- The project practices adaptive management with its focus on monitoring and assessing restoration methods and outcomes

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

FMR has been strategically focused on specific areas within designated conservation corridors for over a decade. This has allowed us to stay engaged with projects, landowners, partners and communities, helping to ensure the continuous improvement and expansion of the habitat values at these sites, while protecting the public investment that has been made in them. Starting with individual parcels, our project areas have grown by orders of magnitude to protect and restore large tracts of land, ultimately creating contiguous greenway corridors. The restoration and enhancement project presented in this work program are all part of larger projects both in the sense of time and area. Because of human induced changes in the landscape, natural areas require management. While it is often the case that initial restoration and enhancement require relatively large investments initially, the costs often decrease over time as the goals for a site are met and the project enters a more maintenance level of activity, such as conducting period burns on restored prairie. FMR is committed to conducting fundraising from both public and private sources, for the ongoing restoration and enhancement activities required at these sites over time.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

FMR's standard practice when contracting is to always provide the Conservation Corps of Minnesota with our Request for Proposals. We will continue this practice when contracting for restoration work for this project.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

This project incorporates monitoring and evaluation at these sites. Pollinator surveys before and following restoration will help assess if restoration activities improve habitat for these organisms. Restoration outcomes will be monitored annually for multiple years following completion of the project. FMR's tradition of staying engaged at sites where we do restoration work, results in our being able to assess outcomes for many years following treatments.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [452c4ca8-0ac.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

An aerial photo shows the Mississippi River as it flows through the Twin Cities with the 3 sites identified with stars. A photo of the restored portion of Ole Olson park illustrates how the additional acres will look after the project is completed. Another photo shows volunteers pulling garlic mustard in the Mississippi Gorge. A third photo shows River Heights Park and areas overgrown with invasive buckthorn....

Financial Capacity

File: [40555f04-abe.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
BoardResolut2020RFP	3410224d-e23.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
FMR 2020-051 Background Check Certification	65d1562d-576.pdf
Gorge_ENRTFsign	7b7538ef-57c.jpe
OleOlson_ENRTFsign	37dcf954-bf0.jpe
RiverHeights_ENRTFsign	f3e680a4-0bf.jpe
Gorge_CritCut_Planting	9bddd82c-3b6.jpe
Ole_ShrubPlanting_restoration	8ccb98f8-d9c.jpe
RiverHeights_Blooms	b67bb72d-5b3.jpe
RiverHeights_SeedCollection	0dacf4a1-658.jpe
OleOlson_Map	15108ce4-55a.pdf
MississippiRiverGorge_Map	4451750e-aed.pdf
RiverHeightsPark_Map	b63ce431-fbb.pdf

Media Links

Title	Link
A new tool in our toolbox for buckthorn control: Critical period cutting	https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/new-tool-our-toolbox-buckthorn-control-critical-period-cutting
MN Conservation Volunteer Article	https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2024/jan-feb/buckthorn.html

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

The key changes were related to adjusting our task completion timelines based on the loss of a year in the grant period. We also reduced staff time contributions by the Conservation Director, Bookkeeper, and Stewardship Coordinator to allow for more time for our ecologists and contractors to complete the work within the shortened timeline.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Justification For Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Amendment Request	- Budget - Personnel - Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts - Budget - Travel and Conferences	An amendment is requested to include the names of all three subcontractors selected to conduct restoration work at the three sites included in this grant. All contractors were selected through a competitive bidding process and have begun work at their respective sites.	February 24, 2023	Yes	February 28, 2023
2	Amendment Request	Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts	An amendment is requested to allocate \$3,000 in uncontracted funding to the existing subcontract with Ed's Buckthorn Control for restoration at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. This funding will cover additional pile burning and woody work. With bids for all three sites coming in lower than expected, we have a surplus of subcontractor funding that will be used to accomplish additional work at sites as needed, and will be added to existing contracts through amendments.	August 14, 2023	Yes	August 14, 2023
3	Amendment Request	- Other - Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts - Attachments	An amendment is requested to allocate an additional \$775 in uncontracted funding to the existing subcontract with Ed's Buckthorn Control for restoration at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. This funding will cover additional pile burning and woody work due to weather-related delays. With bids for all three sites coming in lower than expected, we have a surplus of subcontractor funding that will be used to accomplish additional work at sites as needed.	February 12, 2024	Yes	February 13, 2024
4	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 07/31/2025 New Completion Date: 06/30/2026	In order to spend all allocated funds and complete activities and milestones. The current completion date was predicated on	July 28, 2025	Yes	August 5, 2025

			receiving funding 7/1/2020, but funds were not approved until 8/20/21.			
5	Amendment Request	• Other • Activities and Milestones	An amendment is requested to align the remaining milestone (#5) to the new grant completion date and add an additional milestone to provide clarity on what work remains. All remaining milestones now have a completion date of 6/30/25, at which point we anticipate full and satisfactory completion and spend down of grant funds.	August 5, 2025	Yes	August 6, 2025
6	Amendment Request	• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed	Increase NRP's contract by \$200 to cover increased herbicide costs in response to changing MPRB policies. Increase Landbridge Ecological's contract by \$143 to expand final spring spot mows and spot treatments. Update contractor's name to The Davey Tree Expert Company for \$18,686.85, selected through a competitive bid process to complete invasive tree removal at Ole Olson Park. Add \$19,000 in non-ENTRF funds provided by MPRB as match for invasive tree removal.	January 26, 2026	Yes	January 30, 2026
7	Amendment Request	• Budget • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed • Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List	Move \$708 from mileage and \$448 from supplies (\$1,156 total) to Personnel in order to cover staff time required to manage the final restoration tasks at River Heights Park and to close out the overall project. This change allows FMR to better utilize contractor funds and oversee contracted tasks, and to more fully spend down existing budget categories.	July 14, 2026	Yes	July 28, 2026

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update August 14, 2026

Date Submitted: August 3, 2026

Date Approved: August 6, 2026

Overall Update

FMR has now fully completed activity one and reached all ten milestones associated with this grant. During this reporting period, follow-up enhancement work was carried out at all three sites. At River Heights, spot treatment of both the woodland and prairie continued. FMR also continued to enhance the additional 1.3 acres of right of way at River Heights Park, above and beyond our acreage goals. At Ole Olson and the Mississippi River Gorge, FMR hosted four public and group volunteer events in the winter and spring of 2026 to broadcast native seed, tend critical cutting plots, and pull garlic mustard. At River Heights Park, volunteers are reprising their monarch monitoring this year through FMR's PEP program. Overall, FMR exceeded our acreage, planting, and engagement goals, restoring 27.8 acres (26.5 planned), planting 380 trees and shrubs (320 planned), and engaging 1124 volunteers who contributed 2182 hours to the projects.

Activity 1

At River Heights Park, invasive species in the oak woodland, including buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle, were managed in early spring 2026. A final management visit to spot-treat invasive herbaceous species such as crown vetch and birdsfoot trefoil, and to mow dominant stands of Canada goldenrod, occurred in June 2026. In the Mississippi River Gorge, tree and shrub plantings from 2025 and previous years continue to be maintained by FMR volunteers, with supplemental water being given during dry spells and browse protection replaced as needed. Volunteers conducted additional critical cutting plot stripping and garlic mustard pulling in May 2026. At Ole Olson, the site remained active with trail construction into the spring of 2026. In late winter, two corporate and group volunteer groups distributed seed collected from the site prior to construction, returning the same species to areas disturbed by MPRB trail work.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Organizations continue to reach out to inquire about Critical Cutting or share that they are also implementing the critical cutting method. FMR staff presented to Great River Greening about the methodology, and GRG will be implementing it on select sites.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2026

Date Submitted: January 21, 2026

Date Approved: January 30, 2026

Overall Update

FMR made progress toward our remaining milestones (#5 and #10), and follow-up enhancement work occurred at all three sites during the fall 2025 reporting period. At River Heights, spot treatment of the prairie continued, with volunteers reprising their monarch monitoring of the site again this year. FMR also continued to enhance the additional 1.3 acres of right of way at River Heights Park, above and beyond our acres goals. Additional spot management of invasives will occur in spring 2026. FMR hosted two volunteer events in fall 2025 to plant native shrubs at both Ole Olson and the Mississippi River Gorge, bringing our totals under milestone #5 to 200 trees and 150 shrubs planted, exceeding our goals. FMR also contracted and completed the remaining Siberian elm removal at Ole Olson park (milestone #10), which was left out of original bidding due to delays in approvals from MPRB. The removal area will be seeded by volunteers in late winter.

Activity 1

River Heights Park: Spot treatment of invasive species including crown vetch, Canada thistle, burdock, and birdsfoot trefoil took place in late summer 2025. Spot-mowing of dense patches of Canada goldenrod occurred in early September 2025 and will occur again in spring 2026. Community volunteers continued to monitor pollinators throughout July and August 2025. This year, eleven volunteers monitored five plots weekly for monarch eggs, larvae, and adults, using protocols from the Monarch Joint Venture's Integrated Monarch Monitoring Program, and as part of FMR's Pollinator Evaluation Program.

Mississippi River Gorge: Fifty moisture-tolerant shrub species were planted by volunteers in the fall of 2025 as part of an event during which community members paddled the river and landed at the site to install the shrubs.

Ole Olson Park: Two volunteer groups planted 50 riparian shrubs in the riverbank in the fall to stabilize the bank. With remaining grant funding and additional match from MPRB, invasive tree removal work was bid and awarded to a contractor in November. This involved removing over 100 canopy-sized Siberian elm and black locust from the project area. Volunteers will seed the site in late winter and early spring.

Dissemination

FMR continues to field inquiries about and promote the successful critical cutting method used to remove buckthorn at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. In addition to our UMN partnership to study this method at four additional sites throughout the Twin Cities metro, FMR is now the Minnesota lead on a three-state Federal research grant that incorporates this method into a larger woody invasive removal experiment. This work will be communicated about and will continue to acknowledge ENRTF funding.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update September 14, 2025

Date Submitted: August 5, 2025

Date Approved: August 5, 2025

Overall Update

FMR has now completed milestones #1-4 and 6-9. For milestone #5, we have currently planted 200 trees and 50 shrubs. Follow-up work occurred at all three sites during the spring 2025 reporting period: 17 acres at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, 2 acres at Ole Olson Park, and 7.5 acres at River Heights Park. FMR also added enhancement of an additional 1.3 acres of right of way at River Heights Park. In order to spend remaining funding and meet remaining milestones, FMR requests an extension to align with the appropriation end date of 6/30/26. The original language stated that the project end date would be July 31, 2025 if funding was received in 2020, but the appropriation was not approved until August 2021, adding a year to our planned work schedule. FMR plans to host additional volunteer events in fall 2025 and spring 2026 to plant native shrubs and wildflowers (milestone #5), and to remove remaining invasive plants. FMR will also contract additional large woody tree removal at Ole Olson park, which was left out of original bidding due to delays in approvals from MPRB, and which will improve longterm prairie establishment outcomes.

Activity 1

The prescribed burning at River Heights Park was completed in spring 2025 after a year of weather delays (milestone #8). FMR volunteers continue to conduct pollinator monitoring at the site, helping us continue to assess the impact of our restoration work on pollinator communities. We seeded additional milkweed seeds and contracted Landbridge to plant 250 milkweed plugs June 2025. We also held a successful planting event on June 11, attended by 35 volunteers who planted 50 native shrubs in the woodlands and 180 milkweed plugs in the prairie.

FMR's post-buckthorn removal native seeding continues to establish well at the Mississippi River Gorge Regional Park. FMR partners and volunteers will continue to add match in fall 2025 and spring 2026, including planned FMR-led volunteer events to plant native shrubs and remove garlic mustard and Siberian squill.

Prairie establishment tasks continued in spring 2025 at Ole Olson Park. An adjustment to MPRB's pesticide policy now allows the use of herbicide to treat state-listed noxious weeds, and leafy spurge, spotted knapweed and absinth wormwood were spot-treated in June. Fall work will include a volunteer shrub planting, and winter work will include removal of large Siberian elms remaining from the initial woody removal.

Dissemination

After two public presentations in fall 2025, FMR continues to field inquiries about and promote the successful critical cutting method used to remove buckthorn at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. We are now partnering with UMN researchers to study this method at four additional sites throughout the Twin Cities metro. Early results continue to point to this method being a promising tool in the buckthorn management toolbox. This work will be communicated about and continue to acknowledge ENRTF funding.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2025

Date Submitted: January 29, 2025

Date Approved: February 6, 2025

Overall Update

In the current reporting period, follow-up work occurred at all three sites: 17 acres at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, 2 acres at Ole Olson Park, and 5 acres at River Heights Park. We remain on track to complete all milestones and outcomes in a timely manner, though delays in prescribed burning at River Heights Park have pushed back that work and the associated planting until spring 2025 (milestone #8). CCMI crews added in-kind match work by conducting additional follow-up at Mississippi Gorge Regional park. FMR volunteers also conducted pollinator monitoring throughout the summer at River Heights Park, helping us continue to assess the impact of our restoration work on pollinator communities. FMR Partners and volunteers will continue to add match spring 2025, including planned FMR-led volunteer events to remove garlic mustard and Siberian squill in the gorge.

Activity 1

Contractors spot-treated invasive woody and weedy species in the 5-acre prairie and 1.2-acre woodland at River Heights Park this fall. FMR staff trained volunteers to monitor pollinators following Xerces Society protocols throughout the summer in the restored prairie. The prescribed burn of the entire 7.5-acre site, followed by seeding and planting has been postponed until 2025 due to a lack of fall burn window.

FMR is thrilled by the results observed 18 months after the buckthorn critical cutting treatment was completed in the Gorge. Other species - Siberian elm and white mulberry - continued to resprout after repeated sprout removal, and additional stripping was conducted by CCMI crews in September. Removal areas were seeded with a native seed mix in spring 2024 to establish native ground cover, suppress new buckthorn germinants, and prevent erosion in the floodplain. Additional planting will occur in 2025.

Prairie establishment tasks continued in late 2024 at Ole Olson. An adjustment to MPRB's pesticide policy now allows the use of herbicide to treat state-listed noxious weeds. This allowed for treating leafy spurge and spotted knapweed on two acres. CCMI crews also worked to pull purple loosestrife from the riverbank at the park.

Dissemination

FMR continues to promote the successful critical cutting method used to remove buckthorn at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. FMR gave two presentations about this method at regional conferences, one at the Board of Water and Soil Resources Academy in October, and one at the 2024 Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in November. Both acknowledged funding from ENRTF as recommended by LCCMR.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2024

Date Submitted: July 29, 2024

Date Approved: August 28, 2024

Overall Update

For the current reporting period, follow-up work occurred on a subset of acres at all three sites: 17 acres at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, 2 acres at Ole Olson Park, and 5 acres at River Heights Park. All 2022-2024 milestones are now complete. We remain on track to complete all milestones and outcomes in a timely manner. Woody invasive removal is complete at all sites, and native vegetation has been seeded and planted at all but Mississippi Gorge Regional Park as it undergoes extensive follow-up as part of the critical cutting implementation. FMR Partners and volunteers will continue to add match in fall 2024 and spring 2025, including FMR-led volunteer events to remove garlic mustard and Siberian squill in the gorge, pollinator monitoring at River Heights Park, and additional public and group events at Ole Olson.

Activity 1

Contractors treated weedy species in the 5-acre prairie in June; two additional visits to spot-treat invasive species, including buckthorn in the woodland, are planned for later in 2024. FMR staff began year two of engaging volunteers in pollinator monitoring. Planting of 20 shrubs will now occur in fall 2025 to avoid complicating continued follow-up work.

In spring and early summer 2024, a CCMI crew and community volunteers stripped resprouts from buckthorn as part of our critical cutting experiment in the Mississippi River Gorge; these plants will continue to be monitored. Removal areas were seeded with a native seed mix in spring 2024 to establish native ground cover, suppress new buckthorn germinants, and prevent soil loss in the floodplain.

At Ole Olson, two establishment mows in May and June worked to suppress cool-season grasses and weedy forbs. Persistent perennial, invasive plants, including leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and absinthe wormwood, were spot-treated with herbicide. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board project managers are coordinating with FMR to ensure that construction of the new bike path north of FMR's restoration area does not impact our work.

Dissemination

FMR continues to write about its critical period cutting methodology implemented at the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. A spring "how to" piece reached FMR's roughly 10k person Mississippi Messages audience, and was shared widely by various outlets and social media accounts.

<https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/how-and-when-use-critical-period-cutting-method-remove-invasive-buckthorn>

Past articles recognized funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources:

<https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/new-tool-our-toolbox-buckthorn-control-critical-period-cutting>

This method was also featured as a promising new tool in the fight against buckthorn in a story in the January 2024 issue of the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2024/jan-feb/buckthorn.html>

FMR also presented about the method at the 2024 Prairie Enthusiasts conference in a talk entitled Eliminating Buckthorn Without the Use of Herbicide.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2024

Date Submitted: February 12, 2024

Date Approved: February 13, 2024

Overall Update

For the current reporting period, follow-up work occurred on a subset of acres at all three sites: 15 acres at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, 1 acre at Ole Olson Park, and 6 acres at River Heights Park. All 2022 and 2023 milestones are complete. We remain on track to complete all milestones and outcomes in a timely manner. Woody invasive removal is complete at all sites, and native vegetation has been seeded and planted at all but Mississippi Gorge Regional Park as it undergoes extensive follow-up as part of the critical cutting implementation. FMR Partners and volunteers will continue to add match in spring 2024 and beyond, including FMR-led volunteer events to remove garlic mustard and Siberian squill.

Activity 1

Contractors spot-treated weedy species in the prairie and woodland units at River Heights Park in July and August. FMR staff trained new volunteers in pollinator monitoring following Xerces Society protocols. Volunteers then monitored two prairie transects in July and August (16 volunteer hours). Planting of 20 shrubs will occur in spring 2025 due to more follow-up work than anticipated.

The final removal of resprouts from previously cut stems occurred in the late summer of 2023 at the Mississippi River Gorge. FMR is encouraged by the good results observed at this stage, and several organizations have written news articles about FMR's experience with the critical cutting method. Volunteers have planted 50 trees into removal areas in two events (one BIPOC group event). Remaining seeding and planting will occur in 2024 and beyond.

At Ole Olson, the area being restored to prairie received two establishment mows. These mows continue to reduce the cover of aggressive weedy species that suppress the growth of warm-season grasses and forbs. An MPRB trail project in another area of the park will disturb additional prairie. To prevent the loss of plants in this area, two volunteer events were held to transplant these plants to the current restoration.

Dissemination

FMR wrote about its critical period cutting methodology implemented at the Mississippi Gorge Regional Park. The piece reaches FMR's roughly 10k person Mississippi Messages audience, and was shared widely by various outlets and social media accounts. The piece also recognized funding from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources:

<https://fmr.org/updates/conservation/new-tool-our-toolbox-buckthorn-control-critical-period-cutting>

This method was also featured as a promising new tool in the fight against buckthorn in a story in the January 2024 issue of the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2024/jan-feb/buckthorn.html>

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2023

Date Submitted: August 14, 2023

Date Approved: August 14, 2023

Overall Update

In the current reporting period, work is in progress on all acres of the three sites: 17 acres at Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, 2 acres at Ole Olson Park, and 7.5 acres at River Heights Park: 26.5 acres in total. This puts us on track to complete all outcomes in a timely manner. Woody invasive removal is complete at all sites, native vegetation has been seeded and planted at all but Mississippi Gorge Regional Park as it undergoes extensive follow-up as part of the critical cutting implementation. Partners and volunteers have added additional match, including FMR-led volunteer events to remove garlic mustard and Siberian squill.

Activity 1

At Ole Olson Park, following initial woody removal, a prescribed burn was implemented in late spring to reduce weedy biomass. The burn was immediately followed by raked-in seeding. Seeded species were selected for somewhat aggressive establishment given the remaining woody cover within the site and the likelihood of a weedy seedbank. The site will be monitored, and perennial weedy species will be targeted for management.

At Mississippi Gorge, critical cutting continued in the early spring of 2023. This system removes the canopy of an invasive tree or shrub, leaving the “trunk” standing, and successive removals of resprouts exhaust the plants root reserves. At this time, two resprout removals have occurred on buckthorn, honeysuckle, white mulberry, and Siberian elm. FMR is encouraged by the good results observed at this early stage with some plants already expiring, and we have begun to share some of these results with the restoration community.

At River Heights, this was the second growing season after seeding. Contractors mowed the 5-acre prairie restoration in late May and spot-treated weedy species in late June. In the 1-acre woodland, invasive weeds were spot-treated in May. FMR volunteers surveyed pollinators at the site in June.

Dissemination

FMR has acknowledged LCCMR as a project funder in its 2021 and 2022 annual reports and will continue to do so in subsequent years. FMR has also acknowledged LCCMR funding in event page listings on FMR's website and in the following FMR newsletter and website articles:

<https://fmr.org/orvin-ole-olson-park>

<https://fmr.org/mississippi-river-gorge>

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2023

Date Submitted: February 24, 2023

Date Approved: February 28, 2023

Overall Update

In the past six months, MPRB (the landowner at the Gorge and at Ole Olson Park) has assisted with permits and approvals for work at their two sites, and contractors have completed the initial woody removal work on 17 acres at the Gorge. Work on the 2-acre expansion at Ole Olson is slated to begin in March 2023. The City of Inver Grove Heights has provided extensive in-kind work to assist with invasive vegetation removal prior to and during the reporting period. Native vegetation was planted and seeded at River Heights, and all 7.5 acres at the site have now undergone initial restoration steps. Total, 24.5 of the 26.5 acres, or 92% of our total acreage at the three sites, are in progress.

Activity 1

Work at Ole Olson Park, which includes invasive tree and shrub removal within a 2-acre expansion area of the existing restored prairie, will begin in March 2023. Similarly, woody invasive tree and shrub removal is also being conducted within the Sand Flats area of the Mississippi River Gorge in Minneapolis. A relatively novel method of managing woody invasives, critical period cutting, is being employed. The initial cutting of the plants' canopies was completed in the late summer, and the first follow-up of resprout removal was done in the late fall. Additional removal of resprouts will be conducted in spring, summer, and fall of 2023 on the same 17 acres. The target plants will perish after two seasons of this continual exhausting of root reserves and stress.

This was the first growing season after seeding at River Heights. Contractors mowed the prairie restoration in early July and late August. In the woodland, invasive weeds and woody plants were spot-treated. FMR held three volunteer events to survey soil invertebrates and to plant supplemental plants in the demonstration garden. All 7.5 acres at the site have received initial restoration steps and will continue to be managed in 2023.

Dissemination

FMR has acknowledged LCCMR as a project funder in its 2021 annual report and will continue to do so in subsequent years. Because the restoration at these sites is just beginning, FMR has yet to feature them as standalone newsletter pieces, but has plans to write newsletter updates later in 2023. These pieces will acknowledge funding from LCCMR.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2022

Date Submitted: July 29, 2022

Date Approved: August 19, 2022

Overall Update

All three projects have gone through a competitive bidding process and subcontractors have been hired to complete the restoration work of the 26.5 acres. MPRB (the landowner at the Gorge and at Ole Olson Park) has been supportive of this expansion of our previously restored acres, and will be assisting with some additional management at these sites. River Heights Park is a new restoration that has been assisted by the City of Inver Grove Heights. The city has provided extensive in-kind work to assist with invasive vegetation removal prior to the grant coming online (due to the delays at the legislature). Moving forward, invasive plants will be removed at all sites and native vegetation planted and seeded. All sites are surrounded by a heavily populated urban area and offer the opportunity to inform people using these spaces about the value of restoring habitat, providing for pollinators, and creating climate change resilient natural areas.

Activity 1

At Ole Olson Park in north Minneapolis, activities include: non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, silt fence installation for erosion-prone areas, seeding with 35+ native prairie species, mowing, and prescribed burning. Currently, we are behind our milestone goals due to delays in receiving MPRB approval to begin the project. Woody removal at the site should be complete later this summer.

At Mississippi River Gorge, activities include non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, seeding, planting native trees and shrubs. Due to grant delays, FMR began initial woody removal by engaging volunteers to employ the non-chemical "critical cutting" method of removal. Contracted crews will follow up this summer, but removal is not yet complete.

FMR will restore the entire 7.5-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights to native prairie and pollinator-friendly shrubs. FMR is ahead of schedule on the removal of invasive woody plants thanks to assistance from the City. We've also received far more City in-kind match than anticipated (\$9825 through June 2022), but are unable to list match over the planned amount. All additional milestones are on track.

Dissemination

FMR has acknowledged LCCMR as a project funder in its 2021 annual report and will continue to do so in subsequent years. Because the restoration at these sites is just beginning, FMR has yet to feature them as standalone newsletter pieces, but has plans to write newsletter updates later in 2022. These pieces will acknowledge funding from LCCMR.