

# Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on December 5, 2025

## M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2025

**Project Title:** Turning Back To Rivers: Environmental And Recreational Protection

**Project Manager:** Nick Bancks

**Affiliation:** The Trust for Public Land

**Mailing Address:** 2610 University Avenue West Suite 300

**City/State/Zip:** St. Paul, MN 55114

**Phone:** (651) 621-0789

**E-mail:** nick.bancks@tpl.org

**Website:** <https://www.tpl.org/>

**Funding Source:**

**Fiscal Year:**

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g

**Appropriation Amount:** \$1,000,000

**Amount Spent:** \$811,109

**Amount Remaining:** \$188,891

### Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Trust for Public Land acquired and permanently protected 86-acres of quality natural resource land directly abutting the Straight River in Owatonna and Faribault. These lands, now managed by the City of Owatonna and the River Bend Nature Center, will remain undeveloped and provide significant recreational value to their communities.

### Overall Project Outcome and Results

Our project addressed the Land Acquisition, Habitat and Recreation (G) category. The issue/opportunity is that thousands of Minnesotans live within mere miles of the state's iconic rivers and cannot access and enjoy them or the land adjacent. Specifically, our solution was to help communities acquire priority lands along the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota Rivers, and their tributaries, thus protecting the environment and water quality while creating much-needed recreational opportunities.

However, land acquisition is dynamic, and our original opportunities/parcels were not viable due to change in ownership and subsequent non-willing sellers, project timelines, or shift in public partner priorities. Thorough investigation of additional potential projects ensued, and two significant opportunities arose along the Straight River.

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. This property currently consists of a mix of forest/grassland habitat, and the cultivated orchard will be restored back to its natural habitat. It is now available to the public for recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, hiking and cross-county skiing, fishing, and outdoor education.

On June 6, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 41-acre property to the City of Owatonna as an addition to the adjacent North Straight River Parkway Trail and Cashman Park. This property consists of a mix of forest, wetland and grasslands, and lies directly adjacent to the Straight River, a designated state water trail. Historically, this area was a mosaic of savanna, prairie and wetlands, and its' protection will be a crucial step in creating a larger habitat block of protected lands connecting to and buffering with the City's park system.

In total, TPL has permanently protected 86-acres of quality natural resource land that will add significant access and recreational value to their communities.

### **Project Results Use and Dissemination**

After both properties were acquired and conveyed to their permanent public steward, TPL created and published websites discussing the projects:

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center>

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway>

Furthermore, TPL and the River Bend Nature Center hosted a land dedication event on April 22, 2025 for the new addition to the Nature Center. This included a tree planting event with community members, elected officials and the former landowners. Please see attached a few examples of the articles written about this land protection work.



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

### General Information

**Date:** December 5, 2025

**ID Number:** 2020-065

**Staff Lead:** Michael Varien

**Project Title:** Turning Back To Rivers: Environmental And Recreational Protection

**Project Budget:** \$1,000,000

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Nick Bancks

**Organization:** The Trust for Public Land

**Office Telephone:** (651) 621-0789

**Email:** nick.bancks@tpl.org

**Web Address:** <https://www.tpl.org/>

### Project Reporting

**Final Report Approved:** December 5, 2025

**Reporting Status:** Project Completed

**Date of Last Action:** December 5, 2025

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2025

### Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g

**Appropriation Language:** \$1,000,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Trust for Public Land to help local communities acquire priority land along the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota Rivers and their tributaries to protect natural resources, provide buffers for flooding, and improve access for recreation. A one year administrative extension of appropriation until June 30, 2025 approved June 28, 2024 due to binding agreement for acquisition of land per M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 12.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2025



## Narrative

**Project Summary:** This project will help communities acquire priority land along the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota Rivers, and their tributaries, protecting the environment and water quality while creating much-needed recreational opportunities.

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

Thousands of Minnesotans live within mere miles of the state's iconic Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota Rivers, and their major tributaries, and cannot access and enjoy the rivers or the land adjacent to them. In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, our rivers are under-valued and increasingly inaccessible natural assets. Historically, these rivers have been predominately used for industry and commerce, and then dumping and waste. Communities viewed these natural amenities as opportunities for commercial development rather than spaces for the public to enjoy. Reality has thankfully shifted. Communities throughout the state now understand the environmental and recreational benefits their rivers offer as nearby natural assets ripe for protection and public enjoyment. Communities are eager to partner to protect these dynamic riverside assets.

These communities have created plans and identified and prioritized opportunities for the protection of public open space, but they lack funding, capacity, and the real estate know-how to effectively achieve their goals. TPL brings expertise in complex real estate transactions, and we have the proficiencies needed to help communities efficiently solve their specific natural resource needs.

**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.**

Working hand in hand with river communities, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will protect land through fee title acquisition and increase access on and near Minnesota's great rivers. Our partnership is based on existing local area plans and we will protect approximately 100 acres of high priority, high quality natural resource land: lands with high recreational value, lands that address access gaps, lands that maximize scenic and habitat benefits, and lands that help to protect from high water and flooding.

By permanently protecting these lands, multiple benefits are achieved:

- Protection of high quality natural resource land for community enjoyment, wildlife habitat, and water quality
- Resilience due to improved ecosystem connectivity of native animal and plant populations (including "Species in Greatest Conservation Need") in the face of climate change and invasive species
- Increased access to various outdoor recreation opportunities along Minnesota's rivers, improving the connection between people and Minnesota's natural resources
- Additional buffers from high water and flooding

Protecting these parcels for resource based recreational needs, addressing access gaps areas, and inspiring river-oriented communities is a demand that can be uniquely met by ENRTF/LCCMR funding.

**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?**

In partnership with local and county government, we will protect approximately 100 acres through fee title acquisition of high priority, high quality natural resource land. These properties have been prioritized in state, regional, and local natural resource and recreation plans, reflecting strong community support. Our efforts will focus on river communities throughout the state by protecting land that they are excited to manage and that will provide multiple outdoor recreational opportunities. These lands are not eligible for other protection funding due in large part to hunting requirements.

## Project Location

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

Statewide

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

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Protect Strategic Lands: Fee-title acquisition of high priority lands along the Mississippi, St. Croix, and Minnesota Rivers, and their tributaries

**Activity Budget:** \$500,000

**Activity Description:**

Eligible parcels (see attached acquisition parcel list) have been identified by communities in local plans as priorities for recreational value, high quality natural resources, lands that address access gaps, scenic qualities, and/or water protection. Not all parcels can be protected at the same time. Prioritization factors include adjacency to already protected land; landowner willingness to sell for conservation purposes; final local decision making on protection; and other due diligence. TPL will conduct all due diligence activities including appraisals, environmental reviews, title investigations, and survey work. Acquired land will be conveyed to our public agency partner (local units of government, MN DNR, or non-profit organization with a joint powers agreement with a local unit of government) for long-term stewardship, maintenance, and if called for, park and trail development. A specific example is the River Bend Nature Center acquisition where a joint powers agreement with the City of Fairbault exists to ensure shared management and public access to any River Bend Nature Center lands.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Investigate potential projects, and negotiate with landowners	June 30, 2022
Complete due diligence, and reach agreement with permanent steward to accept land	June 30, 2023
Acquire land, convey to permanent steward, and land is open to public	June 30, 2024
Work with permanent steward on initial site development/restoration	June 30, 2024
Joint Powers Agreement Update	June 30, 2024

### Activity 2: Protect Strategic Lands: Fee-title acquisition of high priority lands adjacent to River Bend Nature Center along the Straight River

**Activity Budget:** \$500,000

**Activity Description:**

Eligible parcels (see attached acquisition parcel list) have been identified by communities in local plans as priorities for recreational value, high quality natural resources, lands that address access gaps, scenic qualities, and/or water protection. Not all parcels can be protected at the same time. Prioritization factors include adjacency to already protected land; landowner willingness to sell for conservation purposes; final local decision making on protection; and other due diligence. TPL will conduct all due diligence activities including appraisals, environmental reviews, title investigations, and survey work. Acquired land will be conveyed to our public agency partner (local units of government, MN DNR, or non-profit organization with a joint powers agreement with a local unit of government) for long-term stewardship, maintenance, and if called for, park and trail development. A specific example is the River Bend Nature Center acquisition where a joint powers agreement with the City of Fairbault exists to ensure shared management and public access to any River Bend Nature Center lands. Long-term use of the property will be guided by the Notice of Funding Restrictions and Management Plan.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Completion of DNR Attachment E requirements	June 30, 2024

Initial land acquisition report	June 30, 2024
Land Management Plan	June 30, 2024
Annual Land Acquisition Reporting	June 30, 2024

## 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.**

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines. Once the land is acquired and has been conveyed to the permanent steward, we will share the success of the land protection project through various methods to let people know this land is now publically accessible. Methods include, but are not limited too; creating a specific project page on The Trust for Public Land website, drafting and sharing a press release, and coordinating with the permanent steward on additional outreach opportunities.

## 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?**

Strengthening the connection between land and people is vital in ensuring the long-term stewardship of Minnesota's natural resources. We view this proposal as a long-term strategy, and will continue its work as long as critical habitat and natural resources based recreation opportunities remain unprotected and in danger of degradation and loss. Land protection is not the final step in helping communities turn back to rivers; however, it is a critical step needed before long-term restoration, stewardship, and programming of these riverfront areas can take place. These activities will be led and funded by the long-term steward of the resource.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Strategic Lands Protection	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f	\$750,000

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
<b>Personnel</b>										
Land Protection Staff		Land Protection staff lead all aspects of real estate transactions including initial research and outreach, property investigation, negotiating contracts, coordinating due diligence work, public partner relationship management, and project close-out. In addition, land protection staff will be responsible for the grant administration and reporting tasks.			32%	0.51		\$92,900	-	-
Legal Staff		Legal staff supports the land protection staff in all regards of real estate transactions and contractual obligations.			32%	0.06		\$9,500	-	-
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$102,400</b>	<b>\$102,318</b>	<b>\$82</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>										
TBD	Acquisition costs	Professional services for fee-title acquisition. For example, appraisals, environmental assessments, surveys, etc. Our professional services budget is based on the assumption that we will close 2 transactions and investigate 1 others.				0		\$67,600	\$57,603	\$9,997
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Site preparation costs; for example, signage, parking lots, fencing, initial restoration activities.				0		\$30,000	\$30,000	-
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$97,600</b>	<b>\$87,603</b>	<b>\$9,997</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>										

	Tools and Supplies	Initial Development Costs	Initial site preparation costs; for example, signage, parking lots, fencing, etc.					-	-	-
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>										
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 100 Parcels: 2						\$800,000	\$621,188	\$178,812
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$800,000</b>	<b>\$621,188</b>	<b>\$178,812</b>
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$811,109</b>	<b>\$188,891</b>

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
<b>State</b>						
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Non-State</b>						
Cash	The Trust for Public Land will fundraise private funds to cover the necessary indirect costs and travel costs related to this project.	The Trust for Public Land will fundraise private funds to cover the necessary indirect costs and travel costs related to this project.	Secured	\$57,376	\$10,160	\$47,216
In-Kind	Local Match	Includes land acquisition capital, initial development costs, operation and maintenance, and in-kind staff time.	Pending	\$250,000	-	\$250,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$307,376</b>	<b>\$10,160</b>	<b>\$297,216</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$307,376</b>	<b>\$10,160</b>	<b>\$297,216</b>

## Acquisition and Restoration

### Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Brainerd/Mississippi River	Crow Wing	Located within the heart of Brainerd, acquisition of these parcels would allow the City to create a park and access the river.	Fee Title	3.2	0.1	\$254,000	Private	City of Brainerd	No Longer Being Considered
Byllesby Park/Cannon River	Goodhue	Located between the main park area and the upper park area, acquisition of these parcels would provide additional riverside protection and access, and nearly double the size of this unique recreational area located on the Cannon River at Lake Byllesby. This is a high priority for Goodhue County.	Fee Title	117	1	\$600,000	Private	Goodhue County	No Longer Being Considered
Caron Park/Prairie Creek	Rice	Located along Prairie Creek and abutting Caron Park, the acquisition of these parcels will provide additional acreage and access to this important Rice County park.	Fee Title	70	0.1	\$400,000	Private	Rice County	No Longer Being Considered
Chippewa County/Minnesota River	Chippewa	Increases access to Minnesota River, adjacent to County Property.	Fee Title	40	1	\$140,000	Private	Chippewa County or MN DNR	No Longer Being Considered
City of Owatonna 1	Steele	Site contains floodplain and upland forest, grasslands, and 0.8 miles of undeveloped shoreline along the Straight River, a state-designated water trail. Site is identified as a conservation priority by State Wildlife Action Plan. Also identified as a priority parkland acquisition by the City of Owatonna's Parks and Trails Master Plan. Adjacent to two City of Owatonna parks, its protection and acquisition would link the two parks and protect an existing habitat corridor.	Fee Title	83.25	0.8	\$263,800	Private	City of Owatonna	Purchased
City of Owatonna 2	Steele	Site contains floodplain and upland forest, and grasslands. Site is identified as a conservation priority by	Fee Title	54.78	0.5	\$506,700	Private	City of Owatonna	No Longer Being Considered

		State Wildlife Action Plan and has several associated rare features identified by the Minnesota Biological Survey. Also identified as a priority parkland acquisition by the City of Owatonna's Parks and Trails Master Plan. Adjacent to two City of Owatonna parks, its protection and acquisition would link the two parks and protect an existing habitat corridor buffering the Straight River.							
Cottage Grove Kiln/Mississippi River	Washington	Adjacent to city-owned Settlers Island, Urmann Ries site, and Moores Park, the acquisition of this parcel would add to the river access trail vision planned by the National Park Service and the City of Cottage Grove. This site is proposed to provide community access to the river for educational and recreational opportunities, and includes the historic Grey Cloud Lime Kiln, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. This is a high priority for Cottage Grove.	Fee Title	7.4	0.2	\$320,000	Private	City of Cottage Grove	No Longer Being Considered
Nielson Memorial Preserve/Zumbro River	Goodhue	Directly abutting the recently created Nielson Memorial Preserve, the protection of these parcels will provide access and additional acreage for this Big Woods refuge located on the North Fork of the Zumbro River.	Fee Title	105	0	\$450,000	Private	Goodhue County	No Longer Being Considered
Point Douglas/St. Croix River	Washington	Located on the St. Croix River between Carpenter Nature Center to the north and Point Douglas County Park to the south, the acquisition of this parcel would provide fee-title to a trail corridor (addition to St. Croix Valley Regional Trail) and would preserve remnants of mesic oak forest and additional riparian and upland habitat for a variety of wildlife and bird species of greatest conservation need.	Fee Title	41	0.5	\$835,900	Private	Washington County	No Longer Being Considered

River Bend Nature Center 1	Rice	The property has ~800' of frontage along the Straight River, a state-designated water trail. The property contains a mix of habitats, including floodplain forest, upland mixed hardwood forest and grasslands. A portion of the property would be restored from cultivated land to native tallgrass prairie and oak woodland. This property is an acquisition priority for River Bend Nature Center and would provide access to the Straight River.	Fee Title	45	0.13	\$450,000	Private	River Bend Nature Center (w/City of Faribault)	Purchased
River Bend Nature Center 2	Rice	A portion of the property is located within a Site of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance and contains several native plant communities and rare features, including Dwarf Trout Lily which is the only known vascular plant endemic to Minnesota, and a federally endangered species. The property has ~500' of frontage along Falls Creek, a public watercourse. The property contains a mix of habitats, including upland mixed hardwood forest and grasslands. This property is an acquisition priority for River Bend Nature Center and would provide access to Falls Creek.	Fee Title	41	0.09	\$325,000	Private	River Bend Nature Center (w/City of Faribault)	No Longer Being Considered
St. Cloud/Mississippi River	Stearns	Directly abutting the Mississippi River and River Bluffs Regional Park within the City of St. Cloud, these four parcels provide an opportunity for residents to directly access the river.	Fee Title	133	0.75	\$766,000	Private	City of St. Cloud or Stearns County	No Longer Being Considered
Timms Creek/Minnesota River	Renville	Identified in the Minnesota River Valley Recreation and Conservation Master Plan, the protection of these parcels will conserve unique and sensitive natural resources while providing increased recreational opportunities.	Fee Title	190	0.75	\$1,000,000	Private	Renville County or MN DNR	No Longer Being Considered
<b>Totals</b>				<b>930.63</b>	<b>5.92</b>	<b>\$6,311,400</b>			

## Fee Acquisition

**1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.**

The proposed parcels have been identified and prioritized in state, regional and local natural resource and recreation plans, as well as through agency and community conversations. These parcels are regarded as priorities for recreational value, high quality natural resources, land that address access gaps, scenic value, and/or water protection. Other prioritization factors are presence of biodiversity significance on site, adjacency to already protected land, level of local support, immediacy of threats, whether we see a pathway to obtain full funding to successfully compete the acquisition, whether the permanent steward will be able to adequately manage the property and fund on-going maintenance, and landowner willingness and timing needs.

**2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.**

The parcels included in our proposal have been identified through state, county, and local plans as being priorities – plans include:

- o Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas Program Strategic Land Protection Plan
- o Minnesota DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda: 2015-2025
- o MN State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2018
- o Washington County's Land and Water Legacy Program
- o Mississippi River Partnership Plan for the City of Brainerd
- o Minnesota Great River Road Corridor Management Plan
- o LCCMR – Six-Year Strategic Plan for MN's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
- o Goodhue County Byllesby Park Master Plan
- o Goodhue County Nielsen Memorial Preserve Master Plan
- o Minnesota River Valley Recreation and Conservation Master Plan
- o Cannon River One Watershed One Plan
- o MN Statewide Wildlife Action Plan

**3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.**

Once parcels have been acquired and conveyed to the long-term steward, initial site development and restoration of the property will begin. The Trust for Public Land will work with the long-term steward to complete a restoration and management plan (including how these activities will be funded), and implementation of that plan will be completed in the years following acquisition. Estimated costs for initial development costs of parcels are included in this proposal.

**4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.**

The Trust for Public Land will work with local units of government on the acquisition of these parcels. If required, County Board approval will be obtained. Specifically with any River Bend Nature Center acquisition the Joint Powers Agreement with the LGU, the city of Fairbault, will be updated to include any lands acquired with ENRTF dollars.

**5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.**

Written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Map*

File: [bf500c09-c8d.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Map*

Parcel Overview Map...

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [71d420de-b8d.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
TPL Letter Authorizing LCCMR PROTECT Proposal	<a href="#">6b05e73b-3b7.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Background Check Certification	<a href="#">1c057005-e57.pdf</a>
River Bend Nature Center 1 Property Map	<a href="#">de66e331-719.pdf</a>
River Bend Nature Center 2 Property Map	<a href="#">b2f26e6b-aa4.pdf</a>
City of Owatonna 1 Property Map	<a href="#">f8040120-9a7.pdf</a>
City of Owatonna 2 Property Map	<a href="#">d591c390-ec0.pdf</a>
City of Fairbault Letter of Support	<a href="#">b73db83b-156.pdf</a>
RBNC 1 Acquisition Proposed Land Use Narrative	<a href="#">6b5f2189-9a0.pdf</a>
Southern Minn Article - River Bend_4.25.25	<a href="#">074845ff-b68.pdf</a>
Southern Minn Article - River Bend_12.18.24	<a href="#">a72c39b3-7a9.pdf</a>

#### *Media Links*

Title	Link
<a href="http://www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center">www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center</a>	<a href="https://www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center">https://www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center</a>
<a href="http://www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway">www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway</a>	<a href="https://www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway">https://www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway</a>

### Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

#### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

Addressed LCCMR staff comments.

## 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?**

N/A

**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	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Project Manager	Previous Manager: DJ Forbes (dj.forbes@tpl.org) New Manager: Nick Bancks (nick.bancks@tpl.org)	DJ has left TPL and Nick is his replacement	August 3, 2022	Yes	August 9, 2022
2	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info</li> <li>Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List</li> </ul>	TPL would like to add two new parcels to its approved parcel list for acquisition. These parcels would become additions to City of Owatonna parklands, helping to create and solidify a greenway linking several established city parks. All previous parcels on the approved parcel list have been thoroughly explored and unfortunately are no longer viable due to sale, change in ownership, or shift in public partner priorities.	March 14, 2023	Yes	April 13, 2023
3	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List</li> </ul>	TPL would like to add two new parcels to its approved parcel list for acquisition. A unique opportunity to acquire lands adjacent to River Bend Nature Center (RBNC) in the city of Fairbault has recently come forward. TPL is working with RBNC staff on outreach neighboring landowners; several adjacent landowners have expressed interest in conveying land to become part of the nature center and preliminary negotiation and exploration of those opportunities are in process.	October 23, 2023	Yes	November 17, 2023
4	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities and Milestones</li> <li>Attachments</li> <li>Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List</li> </ul>	Per a LCCMR staff request on 3.22.24 TPL has amended its work plan to reflect changes associated with the River Bend Nature Center 1 acquisition. This amendment request clarifies activities pertaining to the acquisition and long term management and land use of the property.	July 2, 2024	Yes	September 12, 2024

5	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 06/30/2024 New Completion Date: 06/30/2025	Two binding agreements have been secured for protection projects: the River Bend Nature Center 1 and City of Owatonna 1 parcels. Per our grant agreement with the State if two binding agreements are in place the appropriation may be extended for another fiscal year.	June 28, 2024	Yes	June 28, 2024
6	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>• Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</li> <li>• Budget - Acquisition</li> </ul>	TPL is requesting an amendment to adjust our budget to reflect the current site development needs on those lands. We request to shift \$30,000 to Professional Service Contracts from the DNR LAC category, the DNR IDP category, and the Acquisition category. This amount will cover parking area and trailhead installation, and coinciding, limited vegetation management for site development around these parking/trailhead areas to provide access to the property for the general public.	December 20, 2024	Yes	December 23, 2024
7	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>• Budget - Acquisition</li> <li>• Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List</li> </ul>	TPL is requesting an amendment to adjust our budget to reflect the current program needs. We request to shift \$30,000 to Professional Services from the Fee Acquisition category. This amount will cover anticipated costs that will be incurred for additional survey and ESA work on the City of Owatonna project as it nears closing.	March 13, 2025	Yes	March 26, 2025
8	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Budget - Personnel</li> <li>• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>• Budget - Acquisition</li> </ul>	TPL is requesting an amendment to adjust our budget for our final reimbursement request and final report. Specifically, we request to shift \$7,400 to Personnel from Professional Services. Due to the quarterly lag in TPL's budgeting/reimbursement process, our Personnel billing did not exactly match the current funds remaining. The \$7,400 needed is available in the	September 16, 2025	Yes	October 3, 2025

			Professional Services line as those expenses were not as high as we originally anticipated.			
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# Status Update Reporting

## Final Status Update August 14, 2025

**Date Submitted:** September 16, 2025

**Date Approved:** October 3, 2025

### Overall Update

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. Additionally, on June 6, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 41-acre property (City of Owatonna 1) to the City of Owatonna as an addition to the adjacent North Straight River Parkway Trail and Cashman Park. In total, we have permanently protected 86-acres of high quality natural resource land that will add significant access and recreational value to their communities. We have concluded our land acquisition activities with this grant.

### Activity 1

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. This property currently consists of a mix of forest and grassland habitat, and the cultivated orchard will be restored back to its natural habitat. It is now available to the public for recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, hiking and cross-county skiing, fishing, and outdoor education.

On June 6, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 41-acre property (City of Owatonna 1) to the City of Owatonna as an addition to the adjacent North Straight River Parkway Trail and Cashman Park. This property consists of a mix of forest, wetland and grassland, and lies directly adjacent to the Straight River, a designated state water trail. Historically, this area was a mosaic of savanna, prairie and wetlands, and its' protection will be a crucial step in creating a larger habitat block of protected lands connecting to and buffering with the City's park system.

In total with the Turning Back To Rivers LCCMR grant, TPL has permanently protected 86-acres of quality natural resource land that will add significant access and recreational value to their communities.

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

### Activity 2

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. This property currently consists of a mix of forest and grassland habitat, and the cultivated orchard will be restored back to its natural habitat. It is now available to the public for recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, hiking and cross-county skiing, fishing, and outdoor education.

In total with the Turning Back To Rivers LCCMR grant, TPL has permanently protected 86-acres of quality natural resource land that will add significant access and recreational value to their communities.

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

### Dissemination

After both properties were acquired and conveyed to their permanent public steward, TPL created and published websites discussing the projects:

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/river-bend-nature-center>

<https://www.tpl.org/our-work/north-straight-river-parkway>

Furthermore, TPL and the River Bend Nature Center hosted a land dedication event on April 22, 2025 for the new

addition to the Nature Center. This included a tree planting event with communities members, elected officials and the former landowners. Please see attached a few examples of the articles written about this land protection work.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2025

**Date Submitted:** March 13, 2025

**Date Approved:** March 26, 2025

### Overall Update

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. Additionally, we have the City of Owatonna 1 property under contract and are currently conducting due diligence activities. We expect to acquire this property prior to the June 30, 2025 grant deadline.

### Activity 1

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. This property currently consists of a mix of forest and grassland habitat, and the cultivated orchard will be restored back to its natural habitat. It is now available to the public for recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, hiking and cross-county skiing, fishing, and outdoor education. Additionally, we have the 43-acre City of Owatonna 1 property under contract and are currently conducting due diligence activities. Additional survey and ESA work on this project is necessary as it nears closing. We expect to acquire this property and convey it to the City of Owatonna prior to the June 30, 2025 grant deadline.

### Activity 2

On February 2, 2025, TPL acquired and conveyed a 46-acre property (River Bend Nature Center 1) to the River Bend Nature Center located in the City of Faribault. This property currently consists of a mix of forest and grassland habitat, and the cultivated orchard will be restored back to its natural habitat. It is now available to the public for recreational opportunities including wildlife viewing, hiking and cross-county skiing, fishing, and outdoor education. Additionally, we have the 43-acre City of Owatonna 1 property under contract and are currently conducting due diligence activities. Additional survey and ESA work on this project is necessary as it nears closing. We expect to acquire this property and convey it to the City of Owatonna prior to the June 30, 2025 grant deadline.

### Dissemination

No dissemination activities have taken place during this reporting period.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update October 1, 2024

**Date Submitted:** December 20, 2024

**Date Approved:** December 23, 2024

### **Overall Update**

We have two properties under contract (River Bend Nature Center 1 and City of Owatonna 1) and are currently conducting due diligence activities on both. We expect to acquire these properties prior to the June 30, 2025 deadline.

### **Activity 1**

Two separate properties, one in Owatonna and one in Faribault, are under contract and due diligence activities are ongoing. Appraisals are complete; title, survey, and environmental assessments are in process. These acquisitions are on track to meet the acreage deliverables for this activity. We expect to acquire these properties prior to the June 30, 2025 deadline.

### **Activity 2**

Two separate properties, one in Owatonna and one in Faribault, are under contract and due diligence activities are ongoing. Appraisals are complete; title, survey, and environmental assessments are in process. These acquisitions are on track to meet the acreage deliverables for this activity. We expect to acquire these properties prior to the June 30, 2025 deadline.

### **Dissemination**

No dissemination activities have taken place during this reporting period.

# Additional Status Update Reporting

## Additional Status Update August 14, 2024

**Date Submitted:** July 2, 2024

**Date Approved:** September 12, 2024

### **Overall Update**

N/A

### **Activity 1**

N/A

### **Dissemination**

N/A

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2024

**Date Submitted:** July 2, 2024

**Date Approved:** September 12, 2024

### Overall Update

Outreach to local communities and project development continues for several potential land acquisition projects. Negotiations have begun with three separate landowners for land acquisitions in, or near, the cities of Faribault and Owatonna, MN. Meetings to vet and garner support from local government units occurred in Owatonna in spring 2023 and with city officials in Faribault in fall 2023.

### Activity 1

Landowner negotiations continue on three separate properties, two in Owatonna and one in Faribault. These potential acquisitions would meet or exceed acreage deliverables for this activity. An appraisal has begun for one of the properties in Owatonna and will be completed by mid-April. An appraisal was recently completed on the River Bend Nature Center 1 property; negotiations to purchase are in progress. It is anticipated that TPL will have a purchase agreement in place prior to June 2024; we intend to extend the availability of our appropriation for an additional fiscal year per section 1.2 of our grant agreement with the MN DNR. TPL is also working with River Bend Nature Center staff on outreach to neighboring landowners; several adjacent landowners have expressed interest in conveying land to become part of the nature center. Preliminary negotiation and exploration of those opportunities is on-going.

### Dissemination

No dissemination activities have taken place during this reporting period.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update October 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** October 2, 2023

**Date Approved:** November 17, 2023

### Overall Update

Outreach to local communities and project development continues on several potential land acquisition projects. Negotiations have begun with three separate landowners for land acquisitions in, or near, the cities of Fairbault and Owatonna, MN. Meetings to vet and garner support from local government units have occurred in Owatonna last spring and will be taking place with city officials in Fairbault later this fall.

### Activity 1

Landowner negotiations have begun on three separate properties, two in Owatonna and one in Fairbault. An appraisal has begun for one of the properties in Owatonna and will be completed by mid-October. These potential acquisitions would meet or exceed acreage deliverables for this activity. A unique opportunity to acquire lands adjacent to River Bend Nature Center (RBNC) in the city of Fairbault has recently come forward. TPL is working with RBNC staff on outreach neighboring landowners; several adjacent landowners have expressed interest in conveying land to become part of the nature center and preliminary negotiation and exploration of those opportunities are in process.

### Dissemination

No dissemination activities have taken place during this reporting period.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** March 14, 2023

**Date Approved:** April 13, 2023

### Overall Update

Investigation of potential projects continued; this included communicating with potential public partners regarding current opportunities and public land priorities. All of the opportunities included on our parcel list are no longer being considered due to sale, change in ownership, or shift in public partner priorities. However, a significant opportunity to expand and create new parkland along the Straight River, a designated state water trail, has recently presented itself. TPL is seeking an amendment request in conjunction with this status update to add these parcels to our approved parcel list.

### Activity 1

Investigation of potential projects continued; exploration of project viability and ability to acquire within project timelines was confirmed during correspondence with all potential public partners. Unfortunately, all parcels on the approved parcel list were determined to no longer be viable acquisition projects due to change in ownership and subsequent non-willing seller, project timelines, or shift in public partner priorities and emphasis. However, additional potential parcels for acquisition have been brought to the attention of TPL; a tremendous opportunity to expand and create nearly 100 acres of parkland adjacent to the Straight River in Owatonna has recently presented itself. Several critical factors have aligned as these parcels are prioritized by the City of Owatonna's Parks and Trails System Master Plan for acquisition and the landowners are interested in conveying their land to become new and expanded parkland.

### Dissemination

No dissemination activities have occurred.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update October 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** October 3, 2022

**Date Approved:** October 28, 2022

### **Overall Update**

Investigation of potential projects continued; this included communicating with potential public partners regarding current opportunities and public land priorities. Several of the opportunities included on our parcel list are no longer being considered due to sale, change in ownership, or shift in public partner priorities.

### **Activity 1**

Investigation of potential projects continued; exploration of project viability and ability to acquire within project timelines was confirmed during correspondence with all potential public partners during summer 2022. Some parcels on the approved parcel list were determined to no longer be viable acquisition projects due to change in ownership and subsequent non-willing seller, project timelines, or shift in public partner priorities and emphasis. Several projects still determined to be viable continue to be developed, with landowner negotiations in beginning stages. Additional potential parcels for acquisition have been brought to the attention of TPL by various conservation partners, however these potential projects have not yet been explored due to the focus on remaining viable parcels.

### **Dissemination**

No dissemination activities have occurred.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** April 8, 2022

**Date Approved:** April 20, 2022

### **Overall Update**

We are currently investigating potential projects; this includes communicating with all of our potential public partners about the current opportunities, and their public land priorities. In addition, we are reaching out to parcel list landowners and beginning negotiations. A few of the opportunities included on our parcel list are no longer being considered; this is because they are no longer for sale, or a different entity is directly pursuing the opportunity instead.

### **Activity 1**

We are currently investigating potential projects; this includes communicating with all of our potential public partners about the current opportunities, and their public land priorities. In addition, we are reaching out to parcel list landowners and beginning negotiations. A few of the opportunities included on our parcel list are no longer being considered; this is because they are no longer for sale, or a different entity is directly pursuing the opportunity instead.

### **Dissemination**

No dissemination activities have occurred.