

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on June 8, 2023

M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2022

Project Title: Crow Wing County Community Natural Area Acquisition

Project Manager: Tom Strack

Affiliation: Crow Wing County

Mailing Address: 322 Laurel St

City/State/Zip: Brainerd, MN 56401

Phone: (218) 824-1138

E-mail: tom.strack@crowwing.us

Website: <https://crowwing.us/>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

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

Appropriation Amount: \$400,000

Amount Spent: \$400,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

We acquired nearly 70 acres of private land adjacent to our historic fire tower county park, protecting and buffering the park from nearby development as well as providing additional area for the park to be expanded and protecting the natural resources in the area.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

We acquired a historic fire tower and the 40 acres it sits on from the MN DNR in 2018. The property was surrounded by private land on three sides and a county road on one side. This project allowed us to acquire the private land on two sides creating more of a buffer and allowing us to expand the park and protect the natural resources. We acquired an additional three private parcels (67.5 acres) adjacent to the original 40 acre park boundary, making the total county park approximately 107.5 acres in size. This was a very straightforward land acquisition project. We purchased 40 acres from Carl Boberg, and another 27.5 acres from a family trust. County residents and visitors can now enjoy the 100+ acre park, year round, free of charge. It's conveniently located right off Highway 371 and it's our highest use park, averaging about 50 vehicles per day. The park includes interpretive signs about the area's natural resources to help educate folks on land management.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Now that we've completed the land purchase, we will create new trails on the property, and we'll update our maps to reflect the new trails as well as the new park boundary. These maps are available on our county website as well as in our office in a large recreation focused display, free for customers to grab anytime. We also provide maps to local chambers of commerce when requested.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: August 28, 2024

ID Number: 2020-011

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Project Title: Crow Wing County Community Natural Area Acquisition

Project Budget: \$400,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Tom Strack

Organization: Crow Wing County

Office Telephone: (218) 824-1138

Email: tom.strack@crowwing.us

Web Address: <https://crowwing.us/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: June 8, 2023

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: June 8, 2023

Project Completion: February 28, 2022

Legal Information

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

Appropriation Language: \$400,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Crow Wing County to acquire approximately 65 acres of land adjacent to the historic fire tower property to allow for diverse recreational opportunities while protecting wildlife habitat and preventing forest fragmentation. Any revenue generated from selling products or assets developed or acquired with this appropriation must be repaid to the trust fund unless a plan is approved for reinvestment of income in the project as provided under Minnesota Statutes, section 116P.10.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Acquire private land surrounding a historic fire tower to protect and provide a buffer to the tower itself while creating interpretive walking trails on the newly acquired property.

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

The main opportunity/problem here is the chance that someone may develop the land surrounding the fire tower with an incompatible use. Some of the land is zoned commercial. We would prefer to see the land surrounding the historic fire tower be preserved which will also provide a buffer to the fire tower.

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 proposed solution is for the County to acquire this property to ensure it stays protected in it's natural state in public ownership.

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?

With the addition of 69 surrounding acres of forested land this would become a larger complex to support educational, historic and recreational uses for the community. The timing of the county acquisition and the willingness of neighboring landowners to support this proposal, make this an important window of opportunity to develop on an excellent public asset.

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central

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

Region(s): Central, NE, NW,

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Acquire adjacent land

Activity Budget: \$399,998

Activity Description:

An appraisal of the approved parcels will be conducted and negotiations with the two private land owners will be conducted. The property will then be transferred to Crow Wing county and within 60 days of the transaction the county will provide a report to the LCCMR.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Appraise parcels	May 31, 2020
Purchase parcels	November 30, 2021
Report provided to LCCMR	July 31, 2022

Activity 2: Forest management

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

Crow Wing county will conduct a selective timber harvest on newly acquired lands surrounding the Pequot Lakes fire tower for forest management as well as invasive species control if identified.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Timber harvest	September 30, 2021

Activity 3: Develop public use amenities

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

Create interpretive walking trails and install a kiosk near the fire tower with information on the history of the site and post appropriate signage along trails.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Create trails	October 31, 2021
Post signage	October 31, 2021

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.

We will include ENTRF language on future maps we make for the property. The maps will be available in print and on our County website for advertisement to the public.

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?

This is a fee title acquisition and minimal work will be required after the project is complete. We will create interpretive walking trails on the property. We will also manage the timber resource on the property. Creating trails costs money, and managing the timber brings in revenue. We ask that we be allowed to retain any revenue from timber management to help offset the cost of trail development.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Contracts and Services										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 69 Parcels: 3						\$400,000	\$400,000	-
							Sub Total	\$400,000	\$400,000	-
Travel In Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-

Other Expenses										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
							Grand Total	\$400,000	\$400,000	-

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						
Cash	MN DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant	We received a grant from the MN DNR to create new trails and install signage and benches on this property. The grant is a 50% match (grant pays \$127,000 and County pays \$127,000).	Secured	\$127,000	-	\$127,000
			State Sub Total	\$127,000	-	\$127,000
Non-State						
Cash	County Resource Development fund (see MS 477A.14) and County Parks fund (see MS 282.08 (4) (ii).	The funds will be used to create new hiking trails, and install new signage and benches.	Secured	\$127,000	\$69,286	\$57,714
In-Kind	County Resource Development fund (see MS 477A.14) and County Parks fund (see MS 282.08 (4) (ii).	Staff time working with contractors to create new trails and install signs and benches.	Secured	\$1,500	\$1,500	-
Cash	County Resource Development fund (see MS 477A.14) and County Parks fund (see MS 282.08 (4) (ii).	Closing costs and other administrative costs related to the acquisition.	Secured	\$3,000	\$3,000	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$131,500	\$73,786	\$57,714
			Funds Total	\$258,500	\$73,786	\$184,714

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Parcel #: 29110512	Crow Wing	Forest habitat	Fee Title	41	-	\$185,000	Private	Crow Wing County	Purchased
Parcel #: 29110540/29110515	Crow Wing	Forest habitat	Fee Title	27.5	-	\$441,720	Private	Crow Wing County	Purchased
Totals				68.5	0	\$626,720			

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 three parcels on the list are adjacent to a historic fire tower that is owned by the county and listed on the national register of historic places. These three parcels are vacant private land and the hope is to protect them from development.

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.

Crow Wing County Forest Resources Plan

<https://www.crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/8899/Crow-Wing-Forest-Plan-2015-FINAL?bidId=>

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.

The acquired parcels will be managed the same as the other 105,000 acres of county managed tax forfeited lands, in accordance with the County Forest Resources Plan and the Minnesota Site Level Forest Management Guidelines developed by the MN Forest Resources Council.

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 County Board has approved acquiring this parcel.

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: [ffd23679-d30.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

The county owned fire tower property is outlined in white, and the 3 private parcels to be acquired are numbered 1, 2, and 3....

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
County Board Letter of Support	8e674b51-b01.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Background Check	b7b1f963-b37.pdf
Abstract	54979136-ef0.docx
Boberg Transaction Cost Report	02675103-2bd.docx
Canniff Transaction Cost Report	3d6651fb-fc2.docx
NOFR SKM_C30823011309061	97b4ac51-b6b.pdf
NOFR SKM_C30823011309060	c57558a6-030.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

There are no substantial changes from the proposal to the work plan. This is a fairly straightforward property acquisition and the landowners are still very interested in selling. If this project is successful we will use the ENRTF funds and purchase the property as soon as possible.

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 agree travel expenses must 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?

Yes

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

Yes

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF? If so, describe here (1) the source and estimated amounts of any revenue and (2) how you propose to use those revenues:

Yes, This property will be included as part of the Crow Wing County Paul M. Thiede Fire Tower Park, and the costs to maintain and improve this property will far outweigh any revenues generated from the property. For example, in 2022 we will be spending \$127,000 out of pocket to create new hiking trails and interpretive signage. We have no current plans for a timber harvest on the property, but even if we were to perform a harvest in the future, it would not come close to covering these costs. In addition, we will have ongoing costs related to the general maintenance and upkeep of the property. For these reasons we would prefer to reinvest any revenues generated back into the property. We ask that we be allowed to retain any revenue from timber management to help offset the cost of walking trail development and to ensure the land remains in a natural and conserved state.

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: Ryan Simonson (ryan.simonson@crowwing.us) New Manager: Jessica Shea (jessica.shea@crowwing.us)	Staffing changes	November 9, 2022	Yes	November 9, 2022
2	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info • Acquisition and Restoration - Parcel List • Attachments 	Staffing changes required us to update our project manager. The actual purchase price of two of the parcels of land were increased due to new appraisals so purchase amounts were updated accordingly on these parcels.	November 16, 2022	Yes	January 30, 2023
3	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 07/31/2023 New Completion Date: 02/28/2022	LCCMR Completion Date change to get projects that finished prior to final reporting functionality being available in the online. See Activity Log for notes on final report approval.	May 24, 2023	Yes	May 24, 2023
4	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Jessica Shea (jessica.shea@crowwing.us) New Manager: Tom Strack (tom.strack@crowwing.us)	Position Change	June 2, 2023	Yes	June 8, 2023

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update July 8, 2023

Date Submitted: June 8, 2023

Date Approved: June 8, 2023

Overall Update

This update is the final report. The County purchased all of the parcels involved in this grant, and the project is complete. We decided against the harvesting of timber, as originally planned, because we are managing this property as a park, more for recreation than forestry. We plan to construct new trails and install new interpretive signs on the property sometime in the fall of 2022 or spring/summer of 2023. This has not yet been completed and no LCCMR grant funds will be used for this item.

Activity 1

This activity was previously marked complete.

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

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

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

Activity 3

This is the final report. This activity is still in the works. It may be partially completed this fall, with full completion expected in the spring/summer of 2023. There are no LCCMR grant funds associated with this activity.

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

Dissemination

This is the final report. There is no change to the dissemination update as previously provided. We will create and provide new maps of the property which will be available in multiple locations.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2023

Date Submitted: April 5, 2023

Date Approved: May 15, 2023

Overall Update

Outcome was achieved and land is now in County ownership and trail improvements are currently being made.

Activity 1

This activity was previously marked complete.

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

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

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

Activity 3

Trail work and interpretive is 50% complete. Tentative completion date is 11/1/2023.

Dissemination

Signage is posted at site and it's posted on our website.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update October 3, 2022

Date Submitted: November 16, 2022

Date Approved: January 30, 2023

Overall Update

This update is the final report. The County purchased all of the parcels involved in this grant, and the project is complete. We decided against the harvesting of timber, as originally planned, because we are managing this property as a park, more for recreation than forestry. We plan to construct new trails and install new interpretive signs on the property sometime in the fall of 2022 or spring/summer of 2023. This has not yet been completed and no LCCMR grant funds will be used for this item.

Activity 1

This is final report. All parcels involved in this grant have been purchased by the County, and everything is complete.
(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

This is the final report. We decided against performing a timber harvest on the property as originally planned. After further discussions, we manage this property more for recreation purposes, and so aesthetics is a high priority. We will monitor the forest and perform a harvest if required in the future if there is ever a need (windstorm, blowdown, insect and disease, etc), otherwise we will leave the forest in its natural state.
(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 3

This is the final report. This activity is still in the works. It may be partially completed this fall, with full completion expected in the spring/summer of 2023. There are no LCCMR grant funds associated with this activity.

Dissemination

This is the final report. There is no change to the dissemination update as previously provided. We will create and provide new maps of the property which will be available in multiple locations.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update October 1, 2022

Date Submitted: October 3, 2022

Date Approved: October 3, 2022

Overall Update

The total project is now complete. We have purchased all 3 parcels involved in the grant. We first purchased the 40 acre Boberg parcel, and just recently closed on the two other Canniff parcels totaling 27.5 acres. The Canniff Trust is made up of about 10 siblings and there were some personal issues amongst the siblings throughout the process which caused delays, however they were able to work things out and we closed the deal.

Activity 1

The County has purchased all parcels involved in the grant. This is complete.

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

Activity 2

This activity was previously marked complete.

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

Activity 3

This activity is still in the works. It may be partially completed this fall, with full completion expected in the spring/summer of 2023. There are no LCCMR grant funds associated with this activity.

Dissemination

There is no change to the dissemination update as previously provided. We will create and provide new maps of the property which will be available in multiple locations.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2022

Date Submitted: May 5, 2022

Date Approved: May 9, 2022

Overall Update

We have a fully signed/executed purchase agreement for the 40 acre Boberg parcel for the appraised value of \$185,000 and we have a closing date set for May 20. I've been in touch with Monica Weber at the DNR to ensure we can get wired the \$185,000 several days in advance of the closing. This status update must be approved asap for this to happen.

For the two Canniff parcels, the County has signed a purchase agreement, and we are waiting on the Canniff's to sign. It's owned by a trust with 10 siblings involved. We have a verbal agreement from some of the siblings, and hope to have a signed agreement soon.

Once we acquire all of the parcels, then we will proceed with creating new trails. We decided not to proceed with a timber harvest.

Activity 1

The grant was based on a 2019 appraisal that totaled \$395,000 for all 3 parcels. A new appraisal was required in 2021 which came back at \$647,500. The county board approved spending the additional \$247,500 out of pocket, and so we still plan to purchase all parcels using the full grant amount plus county funds.

We have a fully signed/executed purchase agreement for the 40 acre Boberg parcel for the appraised value of \$185,000 and we have a closing date set for May 20. I've been in touch with Monica Weber at the DNR to ensure we can get wired the \$185,000 several days in advance of the closing. This status update must be approved asap for this to happen.

For the two Canniff parcels, the County has signed a purchase agreement, and we are waiting on the Canniff's to sign. It's owned by a trust with 10 siblings involved. We have a verbal agreement from some of the siblings, and hope to have a signed agreement soon.

Activity 2

We originally planned for a timber harvest because the property has mature timber. However, after giving this more thought, we have shifted our focus around managing our county parks and decided to manage them in a much different way than our other forest lands. Our parks are used by a large number of people on a daily basis, and people are looking for a "park like" experience when they go to a park, which is different from when they go to rural forestland parcels. A timber harvest usually is not aesthetically pleasing to most people immediately after it has been completed, and sometimes for many years afterwards. So, we are going to manage the property with a higher focus on park and recreation values as opposed to timber values.

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

Activity 3

The new trail construction plans rely on county ownership of all 3 parcels. We plan to close on the Boberg 40 acre parcel on May 20, but we may not close on the other 2 Canniff parcels for several more months. It's possible that we don't ever reach a deal on those parcels. So, we first need to either own all 3 parcels, or have a clear understanding that the deal will not work. Assuming the deal for everything works out, we will proceed as planned with the new trail construction, hopefully in the summer of 2023. If at the end of the day we only acquire the Boberg property, then we'll have to modify the planned trail routes, and this new trail construction would also likely occur in 2023.

Dissemination

I don't have any updates on the dissemination section because this project is a property acquisition, and if successful, we will acquire the property, build new trails on the property, install LCCMR signage at the property, and create maps showing the new trails with ENTRF language on the maps which will be displayed on our county website and in the lobby of our Land Services Building as hard copies for people to take. These dissemination plans will stay the same as long as we end up acquiring some or all of the property.