



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2023 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2023-148

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 6, 2023

Project Title: Acquisition of State Parks and Trails In-holdings

Project Budget: \$5,425,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Shelby Kok

Organization: MN DNR - State Parks and Trails Division

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 22, 2023

Reporting Schedule: April 1 / October 1 of each year.

Project Completion: July 31, 2026

Final Report Due Date: September 14, 2026

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2023, Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09i

Appropriation Language: \$5,425,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire high-priority inholdings from willing sellers within the legislatively authorized boundaries of state parks, recreation areas, and trails to protect Minnesota's natural heritage, enhance outdoor recreation, and improve the efficiency of public land management. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2027, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2027

Narrative

Project Summary: Acquire top priority in-holdings within legislatively established boundaries of Minnesota’s 75 State Parks and State Recreation Areas and 26 State Trails from willing sellers.

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

This proposal represents an investment in the future, fulfilling legislative direction to acquire parcels from willing sellers within the 66 legislatively authorized and defined state parks, 9 state recreation areas and 26 state trails and trail systems. Presently, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) does not own or manage approximately 15% of land located within the legislatively approved and statutorily described State Park and State Recreation Areas and only approximately 50% of the land needed to complete the 26 legislatively authorized State Trails. This project when complete will protect significant natural and cultural resources located within Minnesota’s State Parks and along the State Trail corridors, provide positive economic impacts and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities. Given the nature of the identified Minnesota state park and trails properties, they are infrequently available and purchase opportunities can be limited and time sensitive. Interested sellers often wish to include their family’s treasured property as a part of a State Park or Trail for the public to enjoy in perpetuity. If funding is unavailable to pursue an acquisition at the time the property owners decide to sell, the property is at risk to be subdivided, developed or taken off the market for decades.

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.

This project proposes the acquisition of up to 12 separate properties, located within 4 State Parks, 1 State Recreation Area and on 6 State Trails in an effort to fulfill the specific legislative authorization. The four State Parks represented include Crow Wing, Gooseberry, Lake Maria and William O’Brien. If successful these four acquisitions would result in the acquisition of a total of 59.5 acres within these parks. At the Minnesota Valley State recreation Area there is an opportunity to acquire up to 800 acres which would provide for a significant expansion of developed use areas. A total of 7 properties have been prioritized for acquisition on 7 separate State Trails, including the Blazing Star, Blazing Star, Casey Jones, Cuyuna Lakes, Mill Towns and Taconite. These acquisitions would result in the addition of approximately 9 miles of new state trail corridor, containing approximately 40 acres. These properties have been identified and ranked by the MnDNR Division of Parks and Trails. The MN DNR maintains, reviews and annually updates a general statewide priority list of willing sellers and potential projects that address investment criteria established in the DNR Parks and Trails System Plan. Non-ENRTF funding will fund all transaction costs.

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?

The successful acquisition of the 12 identified properties, 4 within State Parks, 1 in a State Recreation Area and 6 along State Trail corridors will result in expanded natural and cultural resources protection over more than 875 acres, as well as additional environmental educational programming, increased economic activity in surrounding areas, and enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities to engage generations of residents and visitors in Minnesota’s great outdoors. Within the exception of areas noted to contain significant and vulnerable natural and/or cultural resources, most properties would be immediately available for limited public use upon the State securing ownership.

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

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: State Park and Recreation Area Inholdings

Activity Budget: \$5,094,000

Activity Description:

This project proposes the acquisition of several high priority property in-holdings located entirely within the boundaries of state parks and State recreation areas. Each of the defined properties, reflect priority opportunities to conserve and protect substantial areas that contain rare, unique, or high-quality natural resource communities and areas of significant biodiversity while also expanding the potential for public recreational access to areas that are currently privately held. The priority properties to be considered for acquisition under this project are proposed in William O’Brien, Crow Wing, Lake Maria, Gooseberry Falls State Park and Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. The acquisition of each of the individual properties will require the completion of formal appraisals and/or property valuations, deed and title examinations and physical boundary surveys where necessary. In some cases, existing property improvements may require demolition, removal and cleanup need following the conclusion of the property acquisition. It is generally anticipated that each individual property acquisition will take between 18 and 24 months to complete. Should any of the identified acquisitions fail to proceed, the MN DNR may request an amendment to the Project Workplan that will identify a replacement property selected from the Parks and Trails statewide priority list

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Priority park inholdings identified, Acquisition Process Initiated, Initial Property Assessments completed, Property Owner Interest Secured	December 31, 2023
Other or secondary State Park and State Recreation Area inholdings identified if needed	June 30, 2024
MnDNR Lands and Minerals Division completes all acquisition services including appraisals, surveys, purchase and recording	June 30, 2024
Acquisition of Priority State Park and State Recreation Area Property inholdings complete	December 31, 2024
MnDNR Lands and Minerals Division completes all acquisition services including appraisals, surveys, purchase and recording.	December 31, 2024
Acquisition of Secondary State Park and State Recreation Area inholdings complete	June 30, 2026
Acquired Property Clean up, building demolition, refuse removal and stabilization of disturbed terrain as required.	June 30, 2026

Activity 2: Legislatively Authorized State Trails

Activity Budget: \$331,000

Activity Description:

Acquire high priority in-holdings along legislatively authorized state trails from willing sellers statewide to fulfill master plans throughout the State of Minnesota. The proposed state trail property acquisitions represent opportunities to secure properties which connect existing state trail segments, extend legislatively authorized state trail corridor consistent with approved Master Plans, to address user safety or remedy environmental conditions. Identified properties include potential parcels along the following State Trail corridors: Casey Jones, Cuyuna Lakes, Arrowhead, Taconite, Blazing Star and Mill Towns State Trails. Priorities corridor acquisition along the Casey Jones, Cuyuna Lakes and Mill Towns State Trails are focused on securing properties that addresses gaps in existing public ownership. The identified properties on the Arrowhead, Taconite and Blazing Star State Trails will address required revisions to existing developed trail corridor or trail use or to eliminate conflicts with non-public properties. Should an identified acquisition be unsuccessful, the MN DNR may request an amendment to the Project Workplan that will identify a replacement priority property that could be located on any one of the legislatively authorized State Trail corridors. In some cases,

existing property improvements may require demolition, removal and cleanup need following the conclusion of the property acquisition.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Priority State Trail properties identified, Acquisition Process Initiated, Property Assessments completed, Property Owner Interest Secured	December 31, 2023
Other State Trail or secondary properties identified if needed	June 30, 2024
MnDNR Lands and Minerals Division completes all acquisition services, appraisals, surveys, purchase and recording	June 30, 2024
Acquisition of State Trail Priority properties complete	December 31, 2024
MnDNR Lands and Minerals Division completes all acquisition services, appraisals, surveys, purchase and recording	December 31, 2024
Acquisition of Secondary State Trail properties complete	June 30, 2026
Acquired Property Clean up, building demolition, refuse removal and stabilization of disturbed terrain as required.	June 30, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Brett Feldman	Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota	The Parks and Trails Council provides support and advocacy for State Park Improvements and In-Holding Acquisition.	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.

Dissemination of the completed State Park and State Trail land acquisitions would primarily be through updating individual state park and state trail maps and MnDNR website announcing that the lands and/or new trail corridor are available for public use and enjoyment. All information released in association with these acquisition and/or new recreational opportunities will specifically acknowledge the participation of the ENRTF funding in the purchase. In association with State Trail corridor acquisitions, the participation of the LCCMR will be acknowledged at appropriate trailhead signs and the ENRTF logo attached to primary entrance signs.

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?

Each of the properties identified for potential acquisition are located within or along existing state park or state recreation area boundaries or along authorized state trail corridor that are currently administered, operated or maintained by the MnDNR. The operations of State Parks, State Recreation Areas and State Trails are funded through a variety of State Funding. The LCCMR and ENRTF funding has and continues to provide a significant source of support for State Trail development and rehabilitation. Other sources of operational state funding for these facilities include Legacy, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Capital Bonding and several dedicated sources.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Minnesota State Parks and State Trails Land Acquisition	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$1,500,000
Minnesota State Parks and State Trails	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 09k	\$2,500,000
Minnesota State Parks and State Trails In-Holdings	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$2,000,000
Minnesota State Parks And State Trails Inholdings	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$3,500,000
State Parks And State Trails In-Holdings	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09u	\$2,560,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
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: 876.5 Parcels: 17						\$5,142,500
	Trail Easement Acquisition	Parcels: 2 Miles: 6.5						\$232,500
							Sub Total	\$5,375,000
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Acquired Property Cleanup and Stabilization	The clean up and disposal of refuse and materials and stabilize disturbed areas present within acquired properties.					\$50,000
							Sub Total	\$50,000
							Grand Total	\$5,425,000

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
State				
Cash	Parks and Trails Legacy Funds	Parks and Trails Division Allocation specifically for State Parks and State Trail property acquisition related transaction expenses. Covered activities include but would not be limited to property appraisals, property survey, deed recording and associated activities.	Pending	\$500,000
			State Sub Total	\$500,000
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$500,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Arrowhead	St. Louis	Arrowhead State Trail	Easement - Other	3	0.5	\$2,500	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Blazing Star	Freeborn	Blazing Star State Trail	Fee Title	3	0.25	\$18,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Casey Jones	Redwood	Casey Jones State Trail	Fee Title	6	0.5	\$36,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Casey Jones	Pipestone	Casey Jones State Trail	Fee Title	6	0.5	\$36,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Crow Wing	Cass	Crow Wing State Park	Fee Title	5	-	\$500,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Cuyuna Lakes	Crow Wing	Cuyuna Lakes State Trail	Fee Title	1	0.1	\$6,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Gooseberry Falls State Park	Lake	Gooseberry Falls State Park	Fee Title	16.75	-	\$1,400,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Lake Maria	Wright	Lake Maria State Park	Fee Title	31.62	-	\$325,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Mill Towns	Rice	Mill Towns State Trail	Easement - Other	19	6	\$230,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun

Minnesota Valley	Scott	Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area	Fee Title	800	-	\$2,464,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Taconite	St. Louis	Taconite State Trail	Fee Title	1.5	0.25	\$2,500	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
William O'Brien	Washington	William O'Brien State Park	Fee Title	6	-	\$355,000	Private	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Has Not Begun
Totals				898.87	8.1	\$5,375,000			

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 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) has identified and ranked each parcel within legislatively defined boundaries and alignments for State Parks, State Recreation Areas, and State Trails. The MnDNR maintains, reviews and annually updates a general statewide priority list of willing sellers. Potential projects are analyzed using investment criteria established in the DNR Parks and Trails System Plan.

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.

MNDNR Parks and Trail Division Park and Trail Management Plans

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 scope and nature of restoration of acquire parcels will be based upon the nature of the potential use. Initial property refuse cleanup will be completed at the time of acquisition. All resource management plans for individual parks and trails facilities are maintained by the Division's Resource Management Program. Long term maintenance and management of the selected properties will be assumed by the existing Parks and Trails Division Facility Managers and Staff.

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.

For each property purchased will be subject to County Board Approval per DNR administrative direction.

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.

Confirmed.

Easement (Other) 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 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) has identified and ranked each parcel within legislatively defined boundaries and alignments for State Trails. The MnDNR maintains, reviews and annually updates a general statewide priority list of willing sellers. Potential projects are analyzed using investment criteria established in the DNR Parks and Trails System Plan.

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.

MNDNR Parks and Trail Division Park and Trail Management Plans

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 scope and nature of restoration of acquire parcels will be based upon the nature of the potential use. All resource management plans for individual parks and trails facilities are maintained by the Division's Resource Management Program. Long term maintenance and management of the selected properties will be assumed by the existing Parks and Trails Division Facility Managers and Staff.

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.

For each property purchased will be subject to County Board Approval per DNR administrative direction.

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.

Confirmed.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [ae93968d-46e.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Attached is a map of that contains the proposed acquisition projects statewide. There are zoomed in maps of the State Park and State Recreation Area boundaries with the proposed acquisition area. The trails map shows the location of where the State Trails projects would take place....

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Background Check Certification Form	1526044a-81a.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2023 Work Plan for the project titled "Minnesota State Parks and State Trails Acquisition" as submitted has been revised to conform to the funding recommendations of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. The principal revision is the reduction in level of LCCMR support for one proposed land acquisitions located within the Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area. Formal property restoration was revised to reflect limited property cleanup and a specific associated expense identified.

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, or sale of products and assets?

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