



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2024 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2024-113

Staff Lead: Tom Dietrich

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 7, 2024

Project Title: Spring Lake Park Reserve Restoration and River Access

Project Budget: \$2,925,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Niki Geisler

Organization: Dakota County

Office Telephone: (952) 891-7088

Email: niki.geisler@co.dakota.mn.us

Web Address: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx>

Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 20, 2024

Reporting Schedule: June 1 / December 1 of each year.

Project Completion: December 31, 2027

Final Report Due Date: February 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g

Appropriation Language: \$2,925,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota County to create a nonmotorized boat launch; complete a cultural resource management plan; construct hiking trails; and restore prairie, woodland, and savanna along the Mississippi River in Spring Lake Park Reserve. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2028, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: Development of Mississippi River access that includes improved access to the national Mississippi River Trail and hiking trails, natural resource restoration, and cultural resource management.

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

Spring Lake Park Reserve is singular among regional parks in the Twin Cities, with five miles of shoreline on a west-to-east flowing reach of the Mississippi River with north-facing bluffs and river terraces that support rare ecosystems and offer expansive views. A rich legacy of archaeological discovery and history is testimony to the power of this place to draw people over millennia. It is a destination with local, regional, state, and national significance. The park is within the National Park Service Mississippi River National River Recreation Area (MNRRA), along the All-American Great River Road and the Mississippi River State Water Trail, host to the national Mississippi River Trail, and home to a Minnesota Bison Conservation herd. The park reserve currently lacks safe Mississippi River access; trail access linking visitor areas in the western park; and a management plan for culturally sacred and historically important sites, including Indigenous burial mounds within the park boundary. The park's natural areas, essential habitat on the Mississippi River Flyway, are only partially restored. This project will address these issues as guided by the 2021 Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan and the 2021 Natural Resources Management Plan.

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 project will support a larger initiative to restore critical habitat; design, create river access and visitor area on the Mississippi River; and develop a natural resources and cultural management plan for Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites within the park. All recreation facilities will be open to the public and be handicap accessible. The proposed project will:

- Restore 175 acres of prairie, savanna, forest, and woodland in the Mississippi Flyway which is both a migratory corridor and year-round home to many wildlife species including the federally endangered rusty patch bumble bee.
- Develop a cultural landscape management plan for Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites within the park in collaboration with Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and Dakota County's Indigenous Liaison.
- Create improved river access for individuals and groups, including non-motorized boat launch, pedestrian access, and shore fishing access.
- Construct a Bison and Mississippi River Discovery trail loop linking the national Mississippi River Trail, Fisher Avenue Trailhead, bison range, and the Retreat Center/Y Camp Spring Lake.
- Complete a riverside hiking trail.

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 Mississippi River access project will enhance the outdoor experience for visitors from around the state and nation who visit Spring Lake Park Reserve and the MNRRA by providing safe river access and a riverside visitor destination. Restoring 175 acres of habitat will increase biodiversity along the Mississippi Flyway migratory corridor by providing essential habitat for migratory birds, mammals, amphibians, insects, and other pollinators. The cultural resources management plan will guide responsible stewardship of Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites as well as implement recommendations for landscape treatment (restoration, native gardens, plantings for foraging).

Project Location

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

County(s): Dakota

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

Region(s): Metro

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Improved River Access and Trail Construction – Design and Engineering, Construction, and Construction Administration

Activity Budget: \$1,755,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will hire a professional with engineering, landscape architecture, and other required qualifications through a competitive process and work with them to prepare construction plans. Construction will include mobilization, site demolition, site clearing and grubbing, trenching, site preparation, grading, hardscape construction (backfilling, compaction, pavement, site utilities), softscape installation (native trees, shrubs, ground cover), erosion control, and other construction items. This activity will also include construction administration, a service provided by the awarded consultant. The budget for construction, including ENTRTF funding and a 10% non-ENRFT match is \$1,930,500.

Construction will include the following recreation access features:

- Improve river access with a non-motorized boat launch and shore fishing.
- Construct a Bison and Mississippi River Discovery trail loop linking the national Mississippi River Trail, Fisher Avenue Trailhead, bison range, and the Retreat Center/Y Camp Spring Lake.
- Complete a riverside hiking trail.

Dakota County will obtain a building permit from the local jurisdiction. Based on high quality natural resources, Indigenous sites, and the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, it is likely that other state and federal permits will be required. Need for these permits will be determined through state and federal review processes which will occur during design.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Completion of Design and Engineering	June 30, 2025
Consultation with SHPO	June 30, 2025
Completion of Bidding and Award of Contract	December 31, 2025
All Permits Secured	March 31, 2026
Construction Begins	April 30, 2026
Construction Completion and Final Inspections	June 30, 2027
Facilities Open for Use	July 31, 2027

Activity 2: Restore 175 acres of prairie, woodland, and savanna

Activity Budget: \$720,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will restore seven acres of prairie, 65 acres of savanna, 103 acres of forest/woodland for a total of 175 acres. The goal is to restore conditions that promote natural regeneration of bur and white oaks and native ground and shrub layer species that are appropriate for each community. A contractor will be hired through a public bidding process. Tasks include removal of exotic woody shrubs, strategically thinning the canopy to stimulate native plant growth, and reinstating fire as an ecosystem process, essential to sustain community composition and structure. The budget for project implementation, including ENTRTF funding and a 10% non-ENRFT match is \$792,000. This includes personnel costs indicated in the budget section.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Completion of Restoration Plan for Bidding	December 31, 2024
Completion of Bidding and Contract Award	June 30, 2025
Major Tree Removals Complete	March 31, 2026
Seed Installation Completed in All Units	June 30, 2026
Restoration Completion	December 31, 2027

Activity 3: Cultural Landscape Management Plan

Activity Budget: \$450,000

Activity Description:

Throughout time there has been an integral relationship between humans and the landscape. This is powerfully evident at Spring Lake Park Reserve, where the landscape is associated with living Indigenous communities and have cultural significance to Dakota, Ojibwe, Iowa, Hochunk, and other Indigenous peoples who lived along the Mississippi River. Dakota County will prepare a cultural landscape management plan that addresses the stewardship of Indigenous sites within the context of recreation access and natural resource management.

Cultural landscape management is inseparable from the natural landscape. Plants that are native to southern and central Minnesota thrived alongside Dakota People and hold within them connections to food and foraging, medicine, and storytelling. Recommendations for culturally appropriate natural resource restoration and management will be addressed as part of the project.

This plan will address:

- Recommendations for landscape treatment (e.g. natural resource restoration, native gardens, plantings for foraging areas)
- Maintenance regimes (burning or invasive species removal)
- Approach to acknowledgement of the significance of each site while also protecting them from unwanted attention or vandalism
- Appropriate activities and access (and possibly those that are not appropriate)
- Existing park recreation features within culturally sensitive landscapes and recommendations for changes
- Changes to programming, activities, and recreation

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Request for Consultant Proposal and competitive bid process	June 30, 2025
Contract with project team and project start	July 31, 2025
Site context and significance memo/Indigenous consultation protocols	February 28, 2026
Indigenous Consultation Protocols	February 28, 2026
Cultural landscape sub management memo	February 28, 2026
Subarea cultural landscape management plans	December 31, 2026
Draft co-management policy for Spring Lake Park Reserve	December 31, 2026
Cultural landscape management plan document completion	June 30, 2027

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.

Information about this project and ENRTF funding will be presented on Dakota County's parks website using the ENRTF logo, during interpretive programs, with interested media and to natural resource and land management professionals. In addition, Dakota County will display ENRTF signs in several locations within Spring Lake Park Reserve.

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?

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Dakota County Parks and Facilities Departments as part of the existing management programs for park facilities, natural resources, and cultural resources. These activities include paid staff work. Maintenance and management activities are funded by Dakota County tax levy, external grant funding, and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. If additional capital work is needed it will be funded by Dakota County through the annual capital improvement budgeting process.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Reintroduction Of Bison To Spring Lake Park Reserve	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q	\$560,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Natural Resource Project Manager		A Dakota County Parks Natural Resource Department project manager will hire consultants through a competitive bid process and oversee the preparation of restoration plans and will administer the restoration process			50%	1		\$112,500
							Sub Total	\$112,500
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Park design and engineering contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will develop the site design, engineering, and construction specifications for all recreation features (non-motorized boat launch, trail access, shore fishing)				6		\$438,750
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Cultural resource professional services contractor will be selected by competitive bid process and will perform all cultural resource research and survey work needed. Contractor will work with County Staff, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Minnesota State Office of Archeology, and Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to prepare a cultural landscape management plan.				6		\$450,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Natural resources restoration contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will perform all restoration work. Contractor will provide site preparation, installation of native plantings, erosion control, and other restoration tasks.				6		\$607,500
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will prepare the site and construct all recreation and access features according to the construction plans and specifications. Contractor will provide site preparation, construction, erosion control, and other construction tasks.				10		\$1,316,250
							Sub Total	\$2,812,500

Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$2,925,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
---------------	---------------------	-------------	--

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Dakota County Parks Capital Improvement Program	10% cash match for all project elements	Secured	\$292,500
			Non State Sub Total	\$292,500
			Funds Total	\$292,500

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Spring Lake Park Reserve 175 Acres	Dakota	Dakota County will restore seven acres of prairie, 65 acres of savanna, 103 acres of forest/woodland for a total of 175 acres.	Restoration	175	-	\$720,000	Public	Dakota County	Has Not Begun
Totals				175	0	\$720,000			

Restoration

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

All restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land in public ownership.

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

This project will restore 175 acres of prairie, savanna, and woodland within Spring Lake Park Reserve. Restoration efforts will be guided by the Spring Lake Park Reserve Natural Resources Management Plan (2021), publicly available here: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks/About/ResourcePlans/Documents/SpringLakeParkNaturalResourcesManagementPlan.pdf>. This NRMP includes target Native Plant Communities, restoration methods, and long-term maintenance objectives for each of the proposed units.

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

Dakota County utilizes and follows the guidelines of BWSR’s “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in all of our restoration and enhancement efforts in the County parks, greenways, and conservation easements. We will continue to restore and enhance these proposed projects in accordance with these guidelines. For instance, we will be in keeping with the guidelines for seed and plant source, diversity levels, cultivar use, protecting plant communities, preventing the introduction of invasive species, and planting and management strategies for climate change.

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

For all our restoration and enhancement projects in Dakota County, we are dedicated to long-term maintenance and management. Completing a project within a grant period is just the beginning. In the years that follow, we focus on ensuring these sites continue to thrive and do not revert to their previous degraded state. The County engages professional ecological restoration firms with experienced crews to maintain these areas. Additionally, we enlist volunteers and Conservation Corps Minnesota crews to support these efforts. All funding for ongoing maintenance and management comes entirely from County resources. Over the past several years, Dakota County has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintaining our restored and enhanced sites, with the County Board committed to their perpetual upkeep. The sites proposed in this application will receive the same perpetual maintenance and care from the County.

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

Dakota County has an ongoing, multi-year partnership with Conservation Corps Minnesota. CCM availability-permitting, we host a crew full-time to perform project work within our parks. Our approach for these projects will be to include them where the required tasks align with their skills, mission, and equipment.

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

At Dakota County, we have a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program for all our restoration and enhancement projects. We monitor vegetation at these sites using established scientific methods such as relevés, transects, and timed meanders. The data collected is evaluated using the Floristic Quality Assessment method. We collect data annually during the project period. Post-completion, all restoration sites are added to our monitoring

rotation and revisited as needed, based on specific site conditions. On average, all monitoring sites are revisited every 4 years or more frequently. We meticulously document every aspect of site management, including preparation methods, seeding rates, seed mixes/lists, planting methods, watering techniques, establishment management efforts, prescribed burning, mowing, and more. We also assess what works well and what doesn't, making notes for future improvements. Our projects follow an Adaptive Management approach, guiding our implementation work. For these proposed projects, we will closely evaluate their success immediately after completion, noting any issues and addressing them as needed. We will continue to intentionally monitor and evaluate the sites annually for three years thereafter.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [bfb1237b-68e.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Spring Lake Park Reserve restoration and river access improvements, project overview graphic showing recreation, natural resource, and cultural resource areas and recreation improvements detail...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dakota County Board Resolution	b17d5e93-0a0.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Project Overview Graphic	31c83f35-68a.pdf
Hyperlinks to Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan	6fc3ea40-9eb.pdf
SLPR Cultural Landscape Scope	726d8afc-aab.docx

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Reduced the project scope to focus on the areas of most interest from the committee. Natural Resources restoration, restoration planning and vegetation management associated with cultural and historical sites, and improved river access projects are kept whole, including multi-use trail, hiking trail, and non-motorized boat access. The parts of the project that will be delayed to a future phase and likely funded elsewhere include picnic shelter, fishing dock, canoe-kayak rental kiosk, parking, and entry road to the improved river access area, as those items were of less interest from the committee discussions.

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?

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

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

Yes

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

No