



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2024 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2024-277

Staff Lead: Tom Dietrich

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 14, 2024

Project Title: Growing the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd

Project Budget: \$1,775,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Molly Tranel Nelson

Organization: MN DNR - State Parks and Trails Division

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 20, 2024

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

Project Completion: October 31, 2029

Final Report Due Date: December 15, 2029

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 08o

Appropriation Language: \$1,775,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources to reintroduce bison to Camden State Park as part of a statewide effort to preserve the American Plains bison genome. Reintroduction includes the design, construction, and installation of fencing, a handling facility, signage, exhibits, and other site improvements. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2030, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2030

Narrative

Project Summary: Design and construct fencing and handling facility needed to reintroduce bison to Camden State Park as part of preserving and interpreting the population and genome of American Plains bison.

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

This proposal seeks to aid in preserving the population and genome of American Plains bison. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature classifies bison as Near-Threatened and Critically Depleted due to the small number (< 32,000 in N. America) managed to preserve the species in the public interest. Existing threats include genetic manipulation of commercial herds for marketable traits, habitat loss, cattle gene introgression & small population effects. The Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd (MBCH) was established in 2012 and currently consists of four partners: MN Dept. of Natural Resources, the MN Zoo, Dakota County Parks and Olmsted County Parks. The current meta-population of the MBCH is 156 bison virtually free of cattle genes. A primary goal of the MBCH is to reach a sustaining population to ensure the genetic viability of the herd for the long term. Additional goals of the MBCH include improving prairie quality through bison reintroductions, providing opportunities for individuals to learn about bison, prairies and peoples and incorporating other entities like federal and tribal governments and private conservation organizations into this effort.

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.

We are seeking funding to establish the infrastructure needed to re-introduce bison to Camden State Park and educate the public about bison and prairies.

- We expect this site to provide for approximately 85 bison. The exact number, age, and sex will depend on the results of genetic testing. A small number of bison (5-10) will be initially released, and the herd will be allowed to grow to the desired size. Animals will be procured from partner herds and from Blue Mounds and Minneopa State Parks.
- Camden was selected as the next location during planning sessions in 2013-2015 based on 7 Ecological factors and 5 Operational factors. See Attachment
- Interest in the MBCH has grown substantially in recent years among tribal governments, counties, private conservation organizations, and others.
- As we move closer to our population goal of 500 animals, we will be able to play a role in assisting with North American and national bison conservation efforts such as the recently announced Dept. of Interior Restoration of American Bison and Prairie Grasslands order.
- Previous reintroductions have shown the need for a longer timeline (5 years) than typical for LCCMR projects in order to accomplish the review, design and construction of infrastructure.

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

- This project helps the Dept. of Natural Resources meet part of its statutory direction for state parks which is to reintroduce desirable species (MS 86A.05 subd. 2c).
- Design, site preparation and installation of the infrastructure necessary to provide a range and handling facility approximately 85 bison on > 500 acres of prairie landscape.
- Improve the quality of Camden's prairie, in part through bison actions such as grazing and wallowing.
- Help visitors and the public learn about bison, prairies and how we as people interact with them over time.

Project Location

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

Region(s): SW

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: Design, planning, review, and contractor selection for the infrastructure necessary to provide a range, handling facility, and interpretive exhibits.

Activity Budget: \$1,705,000

Activity Description:

Conduct the natural and cultural resource reviews needed to inform the location and placement of the fencing and handling facility. Complete designs for fencing, handling facility and other infrastructure. Conduct site preparation activities. Conduct first year of vegetation analysis to determine a sustainable herd size based on forage utilization metrics. Bid out and select contractors for fencing and facility installation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Conduct pre-development natural and cultural resource review.	December 31, 2024
Fence alignment and handling facility location identified based on reviews and operational, interpretive needs.	December 31, 2024
Conduct first season of vegetation forage analysis.	August 31, 2025
Develop plans for fencing and handling facility.	December 31, 2025
Prepare bid specifications, review proposals, select fencing contractor.	February 28, 2026
Prepare bid specifications, review proposals, select contractor for handling facility.	February 28, 2027

Activity 2: Installation and construction of infrastructure including fence, handling facility, and interpretive displays.

Activity Budget: \$60,000

Activity Description:

Install the fencing, handling facility, and other infrastructure. Re-route hiking trails to outside of new fence based on sustainable trail design. Design, construct and install interpretive and safety signage and exhibits. Conclude forage analysis to determine the number of animals the range can sustainably handle based on average amount of forage available over three seasons. Continue resource management activities to improve the prairie habitat including prescribed fire, tree removal, and interseeding.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete installation/construction of fence.	December 31, 2027
Re-route hiking trails after fence installation.	July 31, 2028
Implement start-up operational tasks like clearing fence alignment and monitoring, repair.	July 31, 2029
Implement resource management activities to prepare site and improve prairie habitat. Conclude forage analysis.	September 30, 2029
Complete construction of handling facility.	September 30, 2029

Activity 3: Reintroduction of bison and public opening and press release.

Activity Budget: \$10,000

Activity Description:

Reintroduce bison to the site and monitor health. When Minneopa and Blue Mounds state parks hold their bison

management days, animals will be selected and held for the Camden site. Additional animals may come from partners like the MN Zoo. In order to not hold animals in captivity for too long, animals may arrive over several days. After bison have acclimated to the new area, the park will host a public opening to introduce the herd and allow media to capture footage. DNR will provide a press release with talking points to the media. If the herd takes longer to acclimate, open house and would be held in Spring of 2030.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Interpretive Signage in place, media release prepared.	September 30, 2029
Minneopa and Blue Mounds animal management days where animals will be selected for Camden.	October 31, 2029
Work with partners on logistics of holding and transporting selected cows to Camden.	October 31, 2029
Reintroduce bison to Camden State Park.	October 31, 2029
Public open house celebration with partners and media	October 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Seth Stapleton, Dr. Annie Rivas	Minnesota Zoo	Facility design, program of veterinary care	No
Tom Lewanski	Dakota County Parks	Facility design	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.

Communication about this project will occur via the following methods:

- Interpretive signage on site- Interpretive signage will be installed prior to the reintroduction. All MBCH locations follow a style guide to coordinate interpretive themes and images among partners. ENRTF logo will be used on signage (see attached example photo from Minneopa).
- DNR webpages- specifically those for Camden State Park and the MN Bison Conservation herd and MBCH partners (currently MN Zoo, Dakota County Parks and Olmsted County Parks). DNR pages include a link to funding sources, including ENRTF.
- Press releases, open house, and media contacts- Previous experience has shown these bison reintroductions to be very popular with local media so we anticipate good coverage when the bison are reintroduced. Talking points will be created by interpretive and public information staff prior to the reintroduction of the herd. For the safety of animals and staff, we will use the “Soft Release” method that was used at Minneopa and Dakota County parks. The actual release will be closed to the public and DNR staff will film the release. That footage will then be provided to media outlets. Media will later be invited to capture additional footage, after a period of acclimation for the animals, and an Open House for the public will be held. DNR press releases will include funding sources with acknowledgement to ENRTF.

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?

Natural/cultural resource reviews will be conducted by DNR resource specialists and archaeologists from the MN Historical Society contracted to DNR. Design, site preparation and installation of necessary infrastructure will be accomplished by DNR development and engineering staff working with contractors knowledgeable in handling facility design. DNR interpretive staff will design interpretive exhibits and coordinate with exhibit firms to construct. On-going costs to maintain the Camden bison herd are expected to be like those necessary for the Blue Mounds and Minneopa state parks herds. Those will come from the General Fund, Legacy and other appropriate sources available.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Restoring Forests in Minnesota State Parks	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 08e	\$250,000
Saving Endangered Pollinators through Data-Driven Prairie Restoration	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08a	\$800,000
Enhancing Bat Recovery By Optimizing Artificial Roost Structures	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 03m	\$190,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
MNDNR Operations Services Division	Internal services or fees (uncommon)	Provide design and contract administration services for fencing, handling facility, well, waterer and storage building				1.9		\$400,000
Fence Contractor	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Install approximately 7.7 miles of fence, with multiple gates encircling the Camden bison range.				1		\$699,983
Contractor for Handling Facility	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construct a handling facility incorporating handler safety and the most current humane livestock handling principles and handler safety into all aspects of the facility. The facility will be sized to accommodate about 100 animals				1		\$442,525
Well Driller	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Drill a well and install the waterer and associated plumbing and electric components to provide water inside the handling facility				0.3		\$150,000
Exhibit Contractor	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Design and construct interpretive and safety signs and exhibits.				0.3		\$60,000
							Sub Total	\$1,752,508
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								
		Direct and Necessary Costs	Direct and necessary expenses: Financial Support (~\$19,333), Communications Support (~\$2,123), Planning Support (~1,036) necessary to accomplish funded project.					\$22,492
							Sub Total	\$22,492
							Grand Total	\$1,775,000

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				
In-Kind	General Fund and Parks & Trails Legacy	Resource Review and project planning, site preparation. This includes salary for Project Manager, on-site staff, and environmental review staff.	Secured	\$120,000
Cash	General Fund, Parks & Trails Legacy	Cover costs associated with MNHS cultural resource review and construction of building to house hydraulics for handling facility. Assist with costs of fencing and handling facility	Pending	\$640,000
In-Kind	General Fund and Parks & Trails Legacy	Travel, fleet, and DNR/MN Zoo staff time for site visits, field reviews, and moving bison from several locations to Camden. Veterinary care as needed. A private livestock hauler may be used. Donation of bison (estimated \$5,000) from other parks and MN Zoo.	Secured	\$15,000
			State Sub Total	\$775,000
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$775,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [c8c37358-318.docx](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The graphic shows the location of the reintroduction site, Camden state park in Minnesota, a Camden state park map and the approximate location of the bison range in the park....

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Support Letter from Minnesota Zoo	dd065278-35e.pdf
Camden State Park Selection Criteria	d4c1b336-495.docx
Photo of typical signage used at MBCH sites	2d6d1810-001.png

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Revisions to the budget were made to address the differences between proposed project amount and LCCMR recommended amount. Also provided information related to dissemination of the project. Additional revisions were made, as requested, to break out the project into three activities with associated milestones. Additional background on why Camden State Park was selected was also provided. Added the cost of the bison that will be donated, which increased the in-kind funds by \$5,000

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