



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2025 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2025-055

Staff Lead: Tom Dietrich

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 5, 2025

Project Title: Cannon River Preservation and Access

Project Budget: \$2,717,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Lisa West

Organization: Dakota County

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 24, 2025

Reporting Schedule: March 1 / September 1 of each year.

Project Completion: June 30, 2028

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a

Appropriation Language: \$2,717,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Dakota County to rehabilitate the historic Waterford Bridge for the Mill Towns State Trail; restore and enhance upland shoreline, forest, and prairie habitats; and develop a trailhead and recreational access to the Cannon River.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: The project includes rehabilitating the historic Waterford Bridge for the Mill Towns State Trail, restoring land for habitat, and improving recreational access to the Cannon River.

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

Designated as a state Wild and Scenic River in 1980, the Cannon River is bounded by rolling hills, bluffs, farmland and woods, providing scenic, recreational, and historic value to the surrounding area. Constructed in 1909, the Waterford Bridge was open for crossing the Cannon River in rural Waterford Township until it was closed in 2018 due to need for structural improvements. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010, the bridge has been recognized as a significant community landmark, a critical link in the planned Mill Towns State Trail from Faribault to Cannon Falls, and a place for wildlife viewing and fishing.

Currently, there is no public river access on the twelve-mile stretch of the Cannon River Water Trail between the City of Northfield and Lake Byllesby. Approximately 83.5 acres of land adjacent to the Cannon River and the Waterford Bridge has become available for conservation and recreational improvements. This collaboration between Waterford Township, Dakota County and the Department of Natural Resources will allow the historic Waterford Bridge to be rehabilitated and opened to the public as a future section of the Mill Towns State Trail, restore habitat, and provide public access to the Cannon River.

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:

- a) Rehabilitate an historic and culturally significant bridge to provide a pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the Cannon River. Structural repairs will include gusset plate strengthening, deck removal and replacement, and installation of a temporary railing, allowing the re-opening of the historic Waterford Bridge for the Mill Towns State Trail.
- b) Stabilize riverbanks and restore cropland to prairie, upland and floodplain forest to support habitat for migratory birds, wood and Blanding's turtles, and other wildlife.
- c) Develop a new trailhead and public water access to support the Mill Towns State Trail and Cannon River Water Trail. A small parking lot, spur trail connection, carry-in access to the river, shore fishing area, and interpretive kiosk will be constructed. Interpretive elements will celebrate the history of the Waterford Bridge, tell the story of the surrounding land, which has been farmed continuously for five generations, and provide information on the significant wildlife habitat of the river corridor.

Note: Fee title land donation and conservation easement acquisitions are a part of this comprehensive project; however, no ENRTF grant funds are being requested for these acquisitions.

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 will have three primary outcomes:

- a) Rehabilitation of the historic Waterford Bridge, a state and national landmark, will provide a critical access and connection for the Mill Towns State Trail across the Cannon River.
- b) Restoration of shoreline (approx. 3,600 LF), floodplain forest (18.3ac), cropland-to-prairie (24.1ac), and upland forest (17.5ac) will be restored to provide improved wildlife habitat. Restoration will occur on permanently protected land.
- c) Development of the trailhead and public river access will enhance the state-designated Wild and Scenic River, Cannon River State Water Trail and the future Mill Towns State

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Rehabilitation of Waterford Bridge for Public Use - Capital Construction Project

Activity Budget: \$2,295,000

Activity Description:

This activity is focused on completing Phases II and III of the full rehabilitation of the historic Waterford Bridge, with the completion of Phase I (repair and reconstruction of abutments and replacement of truss bearings) completed in 2021. Phase II will include repairs to strengthen the gusset plates of the bridge structure. Phase III will include removal and subsequent replacement of the bridge deck, as well as installation of a temporary railing so the bridge will be safe for pedestrians and bicyclists using the Mill Towns State Trail, as well as wildlife enthusiasts visiting the area. This activity includes completion of updated engineering documents required for Phase II and III construction, permitting, project bidding, awarding of contract to specialized bridge rehabilitation contractor, construction administration, staking, mobilization, erosion and site control, punch list completion, and final inspections. Closeout activities (Milestone 5) will include Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded, Certificate of Occupancy (or equivalent) obtained, Signage installed with ENRTF Language, and the bridge will be open for full intended use.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construction documents, project bidding and contract award for Phases II and III	October 31, 2025
SHPO consultation, permitting review, ESA, Title Review, Survey, Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded, Funds Secured	October 31, 2025
Completion of Phase III bridge deck removal and replacement	December 31, 2026
Completion of Phase II gusset plate strengthening repairs	April 30, 2027
Bridge open to full public use by pedestrians and bicyclists	July 31, 2027

Activity 2: Restoration

Activity Budget: \$251,999

Activity Description:

This activity will be based on the initial development of preliminary Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs) for the 1.5-acre donated land and 83.5 acres protected by permanent conservation easements. These NRMPs, signed by the property owner and County, include natural resource assessments, development of management units, recommended plant communities, restoration priorities, schedule, and estimated costs. Requests for Proposals for implementing the NRMPs will be distributed to contractors, with the winning bid(s) becoming the basis for finalizing the NRMPs and developing Management Agreements between the landowner and the County that describe restoration activities, responsibilities, attributed costs, and schedule. Expected restoration activities will include conversion of former cropland to wet and mesic prairie, riverbank stabilization and shoreline restoration, invasive species removal from floodplain and upland forests, seeding, installing vegetative plugs, and planting trees and shrubs of native species. An evaluation of the restoration activities will be completed with adaptive management recommendations.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete Natural Resource Management Plan for Restoration	December 31, 2025
Comply with State CCM, Historic/Archeological, and Contracting Requirements	March 31, 2026
Restoration of cropland, floodplain, and upland forest, and shoreland stabilization	June 30, 2028
Evaluation of restoration activities completed	June 30, 2028

Activity 3: Cannon River Trailhead and Access Development - Capital Construction Project

Activity Budget: \$170,000

Activity Description:

This activity is focused on the development of the Cannon River Trailhead and Water Access. The 1.5-acre public area, adjacent to two local roads, the Cannon River and the historic Waterford Bridge, will be owned and developed in partnership with the Minnesota DNR. The planned improvements include a small parking lot, spur trails to the State Trail, carry-in access to a watercraft landing, shore fishing area, interpretive kiosk, seating and native landscaping. Interpretive elements will celebrate the history of the Waterford Bridge, tell the story of the surrounding land (which has been farmed continuously for five generations), and provide information on the significant wildlife habitat of the river corridor. This activity will include completion of the final design and construction documents for the site design, project bidding and award of the construction contract, oversight and construction administration during construction, all necessary permits and inspections, and native landscaping. The final milestone will include Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded, Certificate of Occupancy (or equivalent) obtained, signage installed with ENRTF language, and an open and publicly accessible trailhead that supports passive outdoor recreation in the Cannon River Valley.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete design and construction documents, ESA, Title Review, Survey, Notice of Funding Restriction, SHPO Consultation	October 31, 2025
Project bidding and award of contract, construction funds legally secured	March 31, 2026
Construction of trailhead and access improvements	November 30, 2026
Trailhead and access open to the public, including signage installed with ENRTF language and logo	April 30, 2027

Activity 4: Acquisition

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

This activity focuses on acquiring two permanent natural area conservation easements totaling 34.93 acres, acquiring 3.12 acres of fee title from the Dudley Trust and Shawn and John Dudley, and acquiring a 32.9-acre permanent natural area conservation easement on the adjacent Gary Nelson property.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Acquisition of easements and fee title from Dudley Trust, and Shawn and John Dudley	October 31, 2025
Acquisition of easement from Gary Nelson	November 30, 2025

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jody Rader	HKGi	Project Collaborator	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.

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 the project area.

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?

The Dakota County Transportation Department will administer bridge restoration contracts. The Dakota County Parks Department Natural Resource Unit will coordinate initial and on-going restoration. Construction of the Trailhead and Access will be through a cooperative agreement between the DNR and Dakota County, with future operational management and maintenance becoming the responsibility of the DNR. Waterford Township will own the bridge and complete the final phase of bridge restoration (painting) through additional fundraising and grant seeking efforts. Land donation for access and easement acquisitions, not being funded by this grant, will be conducted by the Dakota County Real Estate Office.

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								
Construction and Grant Administration		Staff to provide construction and grant administration, and oversight for bridge rehabilitation, and trailhead and access construction.			25%	1.5		\$75,000
Natural Resources 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.			25%	0.5		\$45,000
							Sub Total	\$120,000
Contracts and Services								
Bridge Rehabilitation Contractor Phase II	Service Contract	Contractor to be competitively awarded to perform construction related to the bridge rehabilitation for Phase II. Contractor will have demonstrated experience and proper insurance to work with concrete and steel, and perform historic bridge construction per the plans and specifications.				0		\$620,000
Bridge Engineer	Service Contract	Professional Engineer licensed in the state of Minnesota will have experience with historic bridge rehabilitation. Will provide updated construction documents and will coordinate and provide oversight for bridge rehabilitation work.				0		\$17,000
Trailhead Contractor	Service Contract	Contractor to be competitively awarded to perform construction related to the trailhead and river access improvements. Contractor to have demonstrated experience and proper insurance to perform grading, installation of design elements and restoration to complete the project.				0		\$170,000
Bridge Rehabilitation Contractor Phase III	Service Contract	Contractor to be competitively awarded to perform construction related to the bridge rehabilitation for Phase III. Contractor will have demonstrated experience and proper insurance to work with concrete and steel, and perform historic bridge construction per the plans and specifications.				0		\$1,538,000

Natural Resource Restoration	Service Contract	Riverbank restoration, prairie establishment, and woodland forest restoration.				0		\$252,000
							Sub Total	\$2,597,000
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	\$2,717,000

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	Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant (MHS)	Funds used to complete Phase 1 of the Waterford Bridge rehabilitation, which was completed in 2021.	Secured	\$639,000
In-Kind	MN DNR	MN DNR has committed funds to be used toward the design and engineering of the Cannon River Trailhead and Access.	Secured	\$30,000
Cash	ML22 Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant	Partial payment of easement acquisition costs - Dudley property	Secured	\$275,625
Cash	ML22 Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant	Partial payment of easement acquisition costs - Nelson property	Secured	\$151,875
			State Sub Total	\$1,096,500
Non-State				
Cash	Waterford Township	Waterford Township has committed funds to be used for the rehabilitation of the Waterford Bridge, as described in Activity 1 (gusset strengthening, deck removal and replacement).	Secured	\$30,000
In-Kind	Land Donation	Private landowner has committed to donating 1.5 acres of land to be used for the Cannon River Trailhead and Access.	Pending	\$13,000
Cash	County Grant-Match for OHF ML22	Partial payment of easement acquisitions costs - Nelson property	Secured	\$50,625
Cash	County Grant-Match for OHF ML22 Grant	Partial payment of easement acquisition costs - Dudley property	Secured	\$91,875
			Non State Sub Total	\$185,500
			Funds Total	\$1,282,000

Total Project Cost: \$3,999,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Conservation Easement Central	Dakota	Riverbank restoration, floodplain restoration, cropland conversion to restored prairie, upland forest restoration	Restoration	24.5	0.41	\$125,300	Private	Dakota County	Negotiations In Progress
Conservation Easement East	Dakota	Riverbank restoration, floodplain forest restoration, cropland conversion to restored prairie, upland forest restoration	Restoration	20	0.2	\$102,400	Private	Dakota County	Negotiations In Progress
Conservation Easement West	Dakota	Riverbank restoration, floodplain forest restoration, cropland conversion to restored prairie	Restoration	15.4	0.2	\$24,300	Private	Dakota County	Negotiations In Progress
Totals				59.9	0.81	\$252,000			

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 protected by a permanent conservation easement or publicly owned.

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.

A Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) is created for each conservation easement, acquired as part of this project with non-ENRTF funding. The NRMP will define management units, tasks, priorities, estimated costs, and a schedule of work. A five-year Management Agreement (MA) that includes restoration activities, responsibilities and cost-sharing between the County and the landowner is then finalized to begin implementing the NRMP. NRMPs and MAs are kept on file by the County Parks Department and NRMPs are updated every five years or as needed based on annual or seasonal monitoring and progress reporting (adaptive management).

The initial NRMP implementation will be more intensive and will establish the foundation for overall restoration. Based on the results of the initial restoration and required maintenance by the landowner, additional implementation will be discussed and determined by the landowner and the County. Future MAs would be developed to achieve additional natural resource improvements based on mutual landowner and County interest and resources.

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 uses and follows the guidelines of BWSR’s “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” for all of our restoration and enhancement efforts in County parks, greenways and conservation easements. We will continue to restore and enhance these proposed projects in accordance with these guidelines for seed and plant sources, 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 restoration and enhancement projects implemented by the County on County-owned property or County-held conservation easements, we are committed to long-term maintenance and management. The initial completion of the project with the grant period is just the beginning of the process and commitment. In subsequent years, we ensure that these sites continue to become well-established and do not revert to their former degraded condition. The County hires and contracts with professional ecological restoration firms that provide experienced crews to maintain these sites. We also use volunteers and Conservation Corps of Minnesota/Iowa crews to assist with these efforts. The County has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars maintaining these restored and enhanced sites in the County over many years, and the Dakota County Board of Commissioners continues to be committed to maintaining these sites in perpetuity. For conservation easements acquired by the County on private property, our practice has been to continue to partner with the landowner to maintain the easement area when the restoration process transitions to maintenance within restored easement areas to protect the public investment made on private property.

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/Iowa. We host a full-time crew 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.

Dakota County has a robust monitoring and evaluation program for restoration and enhancement project sites. Vegetation is monitored at these sites by established scientific methods, including Releve` method surveying, transects and timed-meanders. Staff collect data each year for at least ten years following project completion and evaluate it by the Floristic Quality Assessment method. In addition, restoration activities such as site preparation methods, seeding rates, seed mixes/lists, planting methods, watering methods, establishment management efforts during the project, prescribed burning, mowing, etc. are documented. The restoration process is evaluated, discussed and documented and we use the Adaptive Management approach to guide and improve our future implementation efforts. Animals of various classes are also surveyed to determine impacts on animal assemblages of the habitat type associated with the restoration efforts.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [e29cd431-53c.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map of regional context showing the project location within Dakota County, a local context map showing the project area in relation to recreational destinations, and a project area map showing the conservation easement, trailhead, bridge and trail route included in the project proposal....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Dakota County Financial Capacity Document	148cb0f5-3ec.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dakota County Board Resolution	4f575227-fd8.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Waterford Township Resolution of Support	3dccd3da-06b.pdf
Capital Project Questionnaire	7370af25-67c.pdf
Waterford Bridge Informational Brochure	624c5124-36c.pdf
Waterford Bridge Photos	d9bef3b9-1c6.pdf
Capital Construction Budget Addendum	522e3fe1-4f8.xlsx
Full Project Budget Summary	1c6860ac-5f3.pdf
Cannon River Access and Restoration Map	187fabd2-e5c.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Land/easement acquisition was removed from the grant proposal and will be funded by other sources. The amount of land proposed to be restored was reduced, due to higher restoration cost estimates.

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

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

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this project:

Jody Rader, HKGi; Al Singer, Dakota County Real Estate Office Manager, and Lil Leatham, Senior Planner

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand