



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Approved Work Plan

## General Information

**ID Number:** 2026-116

**Staff Lead:** Tiffany Schaufler

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** May 20, 2026

**Project Title:** Studying Dam Removal Feasibility for the Mississippi Gorge

**Project Budget:** \$923,000

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Colleen O'Connor Toberman

**Organization:** Friends of the Mississippi River

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## Project Reporting

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** June 17, 2026

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

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2029

## Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2026, Chp. 104, Sec. 2, Subd. 04e

**Appropriation Language:** \$923,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Friends of the Mississippi River to assess the feasibility, environmental benefits, river restoration potential, and costs of dam removal for the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1 in the Mississippi River gorge.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2029

## Narrative

**Project Summary:** Assessing the feasibility, environmental benefits, river restoration potential, and costs of dam removal for two locks and dams in the Mississippi River gorge.

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

Minnesota is facing a generational decision about two major dams, but we don't have enough information to make it.

The Army Corps of Engineers is conducting disposition studies of two Mississippi River locks and dams in the heart of the Twin Cities: the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1.

These structures have drastically altered the river. Dam removal would restore rare habitat, improve water quality, and enhance river recreation. But it's not clear whether dam removal is the right choice once all tradeoffs and costs are considered. Yet no comprehensive study of dam removal is currently planned.

The Corps' disposition study is a high-level review that will not include in-depth assessment of water quality, habitat changes, etc. The Corps has said its study will likely recommend transferring the dams to any willing owner. This could foreclose the potential for dam removal before the question is even fully studied.

Elected officials at the local, state, federal, and tribal levels will all have authority over aspects of this decision. The Rapidan Dam failure shows the high cost of delaying decisions about aging dams. We need actionable information as soon as possible.

**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 propose a dam removal feasibility study for the Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1. This study would address questions important to elected leaders and community members, including:

- 1) What are the ecological and recreational benefits of dam removal? Which species would benefit, how many acres of habitat would be restored, etc.
- 2) How might dam removal impact surrounding infrastructure such as bridges, stormwater systems, and utilities? What adaptations would be needed and at what cost?
- 3) Are there any geologically fragile areas that might be destabilized by a change in river water levels, and how can those be protected?

Study findings will be disseminated to the public and policymakers in several ways.

This study builds upon the University of Minnesota St. Anthony Falls Lab's 2024 proposal (recommended for 2025 funding) for a physical model assessing sediment transport in the river gorge. We have designed these two projects together. This proposed study would digitally model sediment transport further downstream, including analyzing possible impacts to Pool 2 and Lake Pepin. Both forms of sediment transport analysis are essential to decision-making, and the project teams are collaborating to ensure information-sharing and no duplication of work.

**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 support scientifically sound decision-making to improve the health of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities and downstream. We will examine habitat restoration opportunities, water quality impacts, endangered species

impacts, sediment transport, and recreational changes. The study is large because it is designed to provide comprehensive information that policymakers can act on immediately without waiting for additional future studies.

Quantifying the costs and benefits of dam removal, and disseminating that information swiftly, will enable our leaders to make the best decision about these structures before they deteriorate to the point of requiring major reinvestment—or fail.

## 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?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Technical study of dam removal feasibility

**Activity Budget:** \$834,000

**Activity Description:**

An engineering consulting firm will be selected via a competitive bidding process to conduct a dam removal feasibility study. The study scope will include:

- Habitat assessment and preliminary ecological restoration planning
- Sediment surveys, samples, and modeling to assess transport scenarios, impacts, contamination, and remediation needs
- Assessment of geomorphic and hydrologic response to various dam removal scenarios
- Assessment of affected infrastructure (bridges, culverts, etc.) and potential modifications
- Hydropower generation impact analysis
- Preliminary permitting coordination
- Title review of affected properties and easements
- Feasibility report, including dam removal cost estimates
- Report summary for public use

This study scope has been developed through prior engagement led by FMR and community partners. We hosted researcher forums to engage over 50 technical experts in determining study needs and existing data. Additional engagement has included Dakota tribal councils, state and local elected officials, river recreation users, and the general public. Since 2022, over 1,000 stakeholders have participated in forums, tours and presentations led by FMR and partners about the future of these dams.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description                        | Approximate Completion Date |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bidding and contracting complete   | November 30, 2026           |
| Fieldwork complete                 | November 30, 2027           |
| Technical study drafted for review | March 31, 2028              |
| Technical study complete           | December 31, 2028           |

### Activity 2: Stakeholder engagement during study

**Activity Budget:** \$68,000

**Activity Description:**

FMR and the contracted engineering firm will lead a Technical Advisory Committee to guide the study. Key representatives from government agencies (city, state, federal, and tribal) that could be affected by dam removal will be invited, many of whom have been informally engaged in the study design. The TAC will meet four times throughout the project and will have individual meetings with project team members as well. Additional technical experts will be engaged by the project team for specific information gathering as needed.

Ongoing public communication throughout the project, including quarterly e-newsletters and a webpage, will be maintained through in-kind contributions and are not included in this workplan. FMR’s current annual communications reach totals over 35,000 subscribers and followers.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description  | Approximate Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Technical Advisory Committee formed                              | December 31, 2026           |
| Technical Advisory Committee first meeting                       | March 31, 2027              |
| Technical Advisory Committee second meeting                      | August 31, 2027             |
| Technical Advisory Committee third meeting (review draft report) | April 30, 2028              |
| Technical Advisory Committee final meeting                       | November 30, 2028           |

### Activity 3: Public dissemination of study findings

**Activity Budget:** \$21,000

**Activity Description:**

Our project is designed to be put into action swiftly. This large, complex study will need to be disseminated to policymakers and the public to inform decision-making about the future of the dams.

Public engagement will focus on dissemination of study findings. Activities included in this workplan include two public-facing community meetings with the technical consulting team, as well as a public-facing summary report.

In-kind supplemental funds will support additional public engagement not included in this workplan. Anticipated additional activities include presentations for targeted stakeholder groups, a video about the study findings, and briefings with elected officials at all levels of government.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description                                    | Approximate Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Public-facing study summary drafted for review | May 31, 2028                |
| Public-facing summary complete                 | August 31, 2028             |
| Public meetings scheduled and announced        | September 30, 2028          |
| Public meetings complete                       | November 30, 2028           |

## Project Partners and Collaborators

| Name               | Organization                            | Role          | Receiving Funds |
|--------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|
| Christine Goepfert | National Parks Conservation Association | Study advisor | No              |
| Serena McClain     | American Rivers                         | Study advisor | 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.**

Our project is designed to be put into action swiftly. This large, complex study will need to be disseminated to policymakers and the public to inform decision-making about the future of the dams.

FMR and the contracted engineering firm will lead a Technical Advisory Committee to guide the study. Key representatives from government agencies (city, state, federal, and tribal) that could be affected by dam removal will be invited, many of whom have been informally engaged in the study design. The TAC will meet four times throughout the project or more, as needed.

Public engagement will focus on dissemination of study findings. Ongoing public communication throughout the project, including quarterly e-newsletters and a webpage, will be maintained. Readership of these specific communications will be measured; FMR's current annual communications reach totals over 35,000 subscribers and followers. At the end of the study, activities will include two open houses for the broader public as well as presentations targeted for river user groups, neighborhood associations, etc. In-kind supplemental funds will support this effort.

FMR will also lead briefings with elected officials at all levels of government. The engineering team's technical staff will participate in some public and policymaker briefings.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund's funding for the technical study will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines. This will include acknowledgment in newsletter articles, the project webpage, social media communications, and at all public events and presentations.

We also aim to raise additional in-kind funds for a video to make study findings available and understandable to a wide audience in a lasting way. (This was part of the original project proposal but was eliminated due to not receiving full funding. We are optimistic about supplemental funding to restore the video component.)

## 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?**

Local, state, federal, and tribal governments will gain necessary information to make decisions. Dam removal or ownership transfer would require Congressional authorization and funding, but all levels of government hold permitting authority.

We will contract with an engineering firm experienced in working for the Army Corps so that study findings can be accepted by the Corps and incorporated into any future processes. Close coordination with the Corps will ensure that this study expands upon the agency’s disposition study without duplication.

A separate study about the economic impacts of Twin Cities dam removal is already underway to provide additional context.

### Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

| Name   | Appropriation   | Amount Awarded |
|--|---|----------------|
| Pollinator Habitat Creation Along The Urban Mississippi River        | M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 08j | \$129,000      |
| Urban Pollinator And Native American Cultural Site Restoration       | M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08l | \$213,000      |
| Assessing Restorations for Rusty-Patched and Other Bumblebee Habitat | M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 03a                     | \$75,000       |

## Budget Summary

| Category / Name  | Subcategory or Type | Description  | Purpose | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount        |
|--|---------------------|--|---------|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| <b>Personnel</b>   |                     |  |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
| Program director   |                     | Project manager and engagement lead                      |         |                 | 40%        | 0.18  |                   | \$25,652         |
| Accounting manager   |                     | Accounting manager for budgets, contracts, and reporting |         |                 | 56%        | 0.03  |                   | \$2,348          |
|  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>\$28,000</b>  |
| <b>Contracts and Services</b>  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
| TBD pending required bidding process. Anticipated respondents include Inter-Fluve, Barr Engineering, RES, and other river engineering firms. | Service Contract    | Technical study of dam removal feasibility               |         |                 |            | 1.84  |                   | \$895,000        |
|  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>\$895,000</b> |
| <b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>-</b>         |
| <b>Capital Equipment</b>   |                     |  |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>-</b>         |
| <b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>  |                     |  |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |

|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--------------------|------------------|
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | -                |
| <b>Travel In Minnesota</b>      |  |  |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | -                |
| <b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | -                |
| <b>Printing and Publication</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | -                |
| <b>Other Expenses</b>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | -                |
|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>\$923,000</b> |

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        |
|------------------|--|--|----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>State</b>     |  |  |                            |                  |
|                  |  |  | <b>State Sub Total</b>     | -                |
| <b>Non-State</b> |  |  |                            |                  |
| In-Kind          | Private donations from individual and foundation sources contributed to FMR's general fund | Friends of the Mississippi River in-kind contributions to applicant organizational costs, leadership participation, and overhead | Secured                    | \$56,000         |
| Cash             | Charitable foundation  | Supplement awarded funds to expand dissemination efforts including video, community events, etc.                                 | Potential                  | \$50,000         |
|                  |  |  | <b>Non State Sub Total</b> | <b>\$106,000</b> |
|                  |  |  | <b>Funds Total</b>         | <b>\$106,000</b> |

**Total Project Cost: \$1,029,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [82a93a4e-70c.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Satellite map showing location of Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam and Lock and Dam 1 in the Mississippi River. Dams are located in Minneapolis and St. Paul between the two downtowns. Project sediment analysis will continue as far as Lake Pepin (approx. 100 miles total)....

#### *Financial Capacity*

| Title                        | File                             |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| IRS Form 990                 | <a href="#">7418b68d-7c0.pdf</a> |
| Audit Report                 | <a href="#">c9225b1e-abd.pdf</a> |
| Certificate of Good Standing | <a href="#">8c49d6a6-8fd.pdf</a> |

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

| Title                             | File                             |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| FMR Board of Directors Resolution | <a href="#">de68042a-a28.pdf</a> |

### Supplemental Attachments

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

| Title   | File                             |
|---|----------------------------------|
| NPCA Letter of Support                            | <a href="#">3031df62-adb.pdf</a> |
| American Rivers Letter of Support                 | <a href="#">ae1bd1c2-b23.pdf</a> |
| Hamline CGEE Letter of Support                    | <a href="#">f02b983c-def.pdf</a> |
| St. Anthony Falls Lab Letter of Support           | <a href="#">1f9ba23f-d43.pdf</a> |
| Great River Passage Conservancy Letter of Support | <a href="#">e6f765b4-282.pdf</a> |

### Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

#### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

Budget was reduced by 16%. This was accomplished by removing some public engagement and dissemination expenses from the LCCMR workplan (these are now proposed as in-kind contributions). Remaining budget was reallocated between activities to better reflect anticipated consultant firm involvement in each task.

## 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?**

No

**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:**

Whitney Clark, Friends of the Mississippi River

Marty Melchior, Inter-Fluve (cost estimates)

**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