



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-166

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: May 27, 2026

Project Title: Updating Land Cover Maps for Enhanced Natural Systems

Project Budget: \$298,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Bryan Runck

Organization: U of MN - College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences

Office Telephone: (507) 381-699

Email: runck014@umn.edu

Web Address: <https://cfans.umn.edu/>

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. 08e

Appropriation Language: \$298,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota to produce high-resolution land cover maps using new LiDAR and aerial imagery to support conservation, water management, climate resilience, and planning in Minnesota's largest population centers.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2029

Narrative

Project Summary: Land cover information for Minnesota’s most populous counties is outdated. These were last updated in 2016. We will update land cover data using new LiDAR and aerial imagery.

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

The first step in conservation and management of natural systems in Minnesota is accurate quantification of land use and cover. Local, county, regional, and state governments rely on publicly available land cover maps, but our maps are now out-of-date. The most recent comprehensive land cover dataset for Minnesota does not capture significant land use changes driven by urban expansion, agricultural shifts, and climate-related disturbances. Additionally, alternative datasets, such as the National Land Cover Database (NLCD), lack the spatial and temporal resolution required for local and regional planning efforts.

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.

Our proposal addresses this gap by leveraging recent high-resolution aerial imagery (NAIP 2023) and new LiDAR acquisitions to produce a next-generation land cover dataset for Minnesota. By integrating Near-Infrared (NIR), RGB, and 3D elevation data, this project will enhance the accuracy and usability of land classification outputs. Utilizing advanced geospatial processing with Trimble eCognition, we will implement a robust workflow for segmentation, classification, and validation.

The updated land cover data will support conservation planning, water management, and climate resilience efforts across the state. It will provide a critical foundation for watershed modeling, habitat assessments, and policy development, ensuring that Minnesota’s landscapes are managed sustainably and effectively.

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?

- 1) Updated land cover maps for the seven county metropolitan region, Mankato, St. Cloud, Duluth, and Rochester.
- 2) A database and web app to provide easy access and downloading of the data.
- 3) Online trainings that will support planners and managers in using the data for climate, land and water purposes.

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?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Create data product – 1-meter resolution land cover maps for the Metropolitan Council region, Mankato, St. Cloud, Rochester, and Duluth

Activity Budget: \$104,623

Activity Description:

This project will produce high-resolution land cover maps for the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area and key regional centers, including Mankato, St. Cloud, Duluth, and Rochester. Using 2023 NAIP imagery (60 cm resolution) and newly acquired LiDAR data, we will generate detailed land cover classifications that improve upon existing datasets. By incorporating Near-Infrared (NIR), RGB, and 3D elevation data, we will enhance the precision of land use delineation, particularly for urban, agricultural, and forested areas.

The methodology will utilize Trimble eCognition’s object-based image analysis, enabling segmentation and classification of real-world features such as impervious surfaces, tree canopy, and water bodies. Approximately 6,000 image tiles will be processed in a high-capacity computational environment, leveraging two dedicated servers with 340 TB of storage. Quality control and validation will be conducted through manual checks, automated accuracy assessments, and integration with existing ground-truth data sources.

The final land cover maps will be distributed in GIS-compatible formats and made accessible through online platforms. These datasets will support municipal planning, stormwater management, and climate resilience initiatives, providing local governments and resource managers with up-to-date, actionable information for sustainable land use decision-making across Minnesota’s most densely populated and rapidly changing regions.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Compile datasets on lab servers	December 31, 2026
Complete updating eCognition batch jobs and pilot for Hennepin County	May 31, 2027
Complete final land cover maps with accuracy assessments and post for public access	January 31, 2028

Activity 2: Build backend tile service and front-end user interfaces for data products from Activity 1

Activity Budget: \$120,559

Activity Description:

To ensure broad accessibility and usability of the updated land cover data, this project will establish a scalable backend tile service and intuitive front-end interfaces using ArcGIS Online. The backend infrastructure will process and serve high-resolution land cover data as tiled map services, optimizing performance for web-based visualization and analysis. These tiles will be derived from the classified land cover datasets produced in Activity 1, ensuring efficient delivery of large geospatial datasets to end users.

The front-end user interface will be designed as an interactive web application, allowing stakeholders—including municipal planners, conservationists, and researchers—to explore, query, and download data easily. The ArcGIS Online platform will support feature services, dynamic styling, and interactive filtering, enabling users to visualize land cover changes, overlay additional datasets, and extract statistics relevant to their areas of interest.

Integration with Minnesota’s existing geospatial data infrastructure, such as Minnesota Geospatial Commons and local government GIS portals, will ensure interoperability and long-term accessibility. By leveraging cloud-based capabilities,

this system will provide a user-friendly, low-maintenance solution that supports real-time decision-making for urban planning, environmental monitoring, and water resource management across the project’s targeted regions.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete wireframe of online app	July 31, 2027
Perform feedback sessions with stakeholders	September 30, 2027
Complete alpha version of web application	January 31, 2028
Complete user reviews of alpha app version	May 31, 2028
Release final version of web application	November 30, 2028

Activity 3: Create workshop materials to train practitioners in data download, processing, and use for climate, natural resources, and water applications

Activity Budget: \$72,818

Activity Description:

This activity will develop comprehensive training materials to equip practitioners with the skills needed to access, process, and apply the updated land cover data for climate, natural resource, and water management applications. The workshops will target municipal planners, conservation professionals, watershed managers, and GIS specialists who rely on accurate land use and cover data for decision-making.

Training materials will include step-by-step guides, video tutorials, and hands-on exercises that cover essential workflows such as data access via ArcGIS Online, processing in desktop GIS environments, and integration with hydrological and climate models. Special emphasis will be placed on using the data for applications like stormwater management, habitat conservation, and climate resilience planning.

Workshops will be delivered both in-person and online to maximize accessibility. Interactive case studies will demonstrate real-world applications, reinforcing how the data can inform policy and resource management decisions. By providing structured training, this activity ensures that stakeholders can effectively utilize the high-resolution land cover datasets, ultimately enhancing their capacity to make data-driven decisions that support Minnesota’s environmental and climate goals.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete first draft of curriculum and deliver one workshop	September 30, 2028
Revise workshop materials	January 31, 2029
Complete delivery of two more workshops	April 30, 2029
Workshop materials available online with a video recording with online user interface	June 30, 2029

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.

All updated land cover datasets will be made freely accessible via ArcGIS Online, the Minnesota Geospatial Commons, and the University of Minnesota's DRUM repository. These platforms allow for public data access. The online web app will allow for interactive querying, visualization, and extract downloading. Dissemination activities will include in-person and online workshops, instructional videos, and downloadable curriculum to train planners, conservation professionals, and water managers in applying the data. All products will acknowledge ENRTF support and include branding consistent with ENRTF guidelines.

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?

Project results will be shared through ArcGIS Online, Minnesota Geospatial Commons, and the University of Minnesota's data repository (DRUM), ensuring free long-term access. Local and state agencies can integrate data into existing GIS workflows. Future updates and expansions may be funded through agency partnerships, competitive grants, and Minnesota's ongoing geospatial data initiatives.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Sustainable Irrigation Management: Expanding an Irrigation Web Application	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 04e	\$1,139,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Bryan Runck-Principal Investigator		Project Manager - Runck will oversee the entire project and guide the technical and education aspects of the project.			27%	0.15		\$33,959
Keith Pelletier -		Remote Sensing Specialist -- Will adapt his previously developed workflow for AIM 1 to fit new data sources. Run models and perform evaluation. Lead the development of curriculum.			27%	1.2		\$129,056
Data Scientist/Engineer		Develop infrastructure for hosting and user interfaces. Engage in listening sessions with stakeholders to understand their requirements and fit application to their needs. Work with Pelletier and Runck to implement automated data science workflows.			27%	0.48		\$88,994
							Sub Total	\$252,009
Contracts and Services								
Google Cloud Storage	Service Contract	Used to host imagery tile server, batch processing jobs, and web application.				-		\$30,591
MSI Tier 1 Data Storage	Internal services or fees (uncommon)	Storage for raw imagery during testing and model preparation				-		\$4,200
Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Laboratory - Lab Services	Internal services or fees (uncommon)	Covers lab costs associated with local GIS and remote sensing workflows of Pelletier.				-		\$4,200
							Sub Total	\$38,991
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-

Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Publication	Open access publication costs	This project will generate two publications. For them to be open access and available, we need to pay for open access fees.					\$7,000
							Sub Total	\$7,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$298,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$298,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [f8d4f634-57c.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The visual summarizes the application and describes how an updated high resolution land cover map will be created to support natural resources planning and management in developed areas....

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
MET Council Letter of Support	60fd6287-802.pdf
Three Rivers Letter of Support	2ab8a4bc-05e.pdf
Knight Letter of Support	fddf56a0-593.pdf
Minnehaha Creek Letter of Support	9aaab722-b99.pdf
UMN Fiscal Agent/Board Resolution Letter	d907c1dd-268.pdf
UMN_SPA_approval	fa1f240a-76f.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

I have added the dissemination plan as requested. No other changes were made. I shifted expenses (Google Cloud Storage, MSI Tier 1 Data Storage, Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Laboratory - Lab Services) from Other to Services and Sub-Awards. Workshops will not incur any expenses beyond staff effort to deliver, so no changes were made there.

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:

Kari Lamp, University of Minnesota

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