



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Draft Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-070

Staff Lead: Tom Dietrich

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: December 16, 2025

Project Title: Vadnais Lake: Nature-Based Recreation and Drinking Water Protection

Project Budget: \$2,842,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Jim Hauth

Organization: City of Vadnais Heights

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Project Reporting

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

Project Completion: July 31, 2029

Final Report Due Date: September 14, 2029

Legal Information

Legal Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2030

Narrative

Project Summary: Project will combine creation of critical water quality improvement ponds with educational and recreational elements, connecting underserved community members with natural resources, protecting drinking water, and promoting water stewardship.

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

Since at least the 1930s, farming activities, wetland ditching, residential and commercial development, and other land use trends in Vadnais Heights have resulted in a lack of accessible green spaces and inadequate water quality treatment and retention. Frequent flooding has been documented in the City and is expected to worsen with increased extreme precipitation events.

This project is proposed on 21 acres of public land owned by the City of Vadnais Heights. It is located 0.5 miles from East Vadnais Lake, the primary drinking water reservoir for Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS), which serves approximately 450,000 people across 14 cities in the northeast metro and metro areas. The project location is an unmanaged lot with mature trees and wetlands, and is the only space available to both serve as a potential water quality treatment and retention location and a local nature-based recreation space.

The City maintains active partnerships with VLAWMO, SPRWS, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Ramsey County, which can be leveraged along with new collaborations to create needed water quality treatment and water retention practices as well as educational and recreational assets for the community.

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.

This proposal aims to construct a series of ponds that will provide water quality treatment and slow water before it reaches East Vadnais Lake. In 2024, about 42% of the SPRWS drinking water supply came from the surrounding watershed. The proposed project is a nature-based solution designed to improve water quality by capturing pollutants before they enter SPRWS' primary drinking water reservoir.

New outdoor recreational opportunities will be created through the installation of a looped trail system with gathering places, seating, and other community-selected amenities. The project will improve accessibility and encourage recreation in a natural space for populations currently underserved by City parks and programs.

Various interactive educational features in multiple languages and locally and culturally connected artwork will be added along the new trail system to encourage public engagement with the natural space. Education will be provided on how the project connects to East Vadnais Lake and drinking water, actions people can take to further protect and enhance the quality of the lake and other water resources, and information about the natural area.

Without ENRTF funding, the City and its partners will not be able to complete all project components within the next five years.

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 enhance water quality and drinking water protection through a reduction of water runoff and contaminants entering East Vadnais Lake. Preliminary estimates indicate the series of ponds could collect water from 39 acres, reduce annual contributions of total suspended solids by 11,000 pounds, and total phosphorus by 39 pounds, which could reduce up to 19,500 pounds of algae growth in East Vadnais Lake. This project will also enhance outdoor recreational opportunities in an urban area by the addition of a trail system, resulting in more connectivity and engagement with the green space.

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: Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features

Activity Budget: \$85,000

Activity Description:

The City of Vadnais Heights will collaborate with partners to develop interactive educational and recreational features and artwork. A community engagement campaign, with in-person and online participation opportunities, will be conducted to determine the surrounding communities' desired amenities. The City anticipates soliciting proposals from artists, webmap consultants, signage contractors, recreational amenity contractors, and language interpreters to perform work at the project location after completion of the community feedback phase of the project.

The artwork and art installations will be permanent features integrated into the educational area and trail network. These will be sculptures, murals, viewfinders or other installations created by local artists that reflect themes of water quality, source water protection, and the environment. The artwork will draw people into the area and make the site more engaging and accessible for residents and visitors; and reinforce the broader goals of environmental awareness and stewardship. By connecting artistic expression with clean water, flood mitigation, and habitat improvement, we will encourage people to think about their own relationship to these resources and the importance of protecting them. Each art piece will tie back to the educational signage and programming that explains how the ponds and restored areas function to improve water quality.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Partnership Development Meetings & Community Engagement Campaign	April 30, 2027
Public Bidding Process for Requests for Proposals/Services	August 31, 2027
Pre-Construction	November 30, 2027
Construction & Installation	July 31, 2029
Interactive StoryMap Creation, Progress Updates	July 31, 2029

Activity 2: Feasibility, Design, and Pre-Construction

Activity Budget: \$492,000

Activity Description:

The City and its partners will work with its consultant engineer to complete feasibility work, pre-design activities, preliminary and final construction designs and specs, and provide assistance with pre-construction activities for the trail system and water quality improvement and retention ponds.

Feasibility will include: data collection and site investigation, model development and refinement, and further analysis to understand groundwater elevations and subsurface conditions. Feasibility analysis of the trails will include review of the pond design against initial trail network design options to ensure compatibility, updating existing hydraulic and hydrologic models if necessary, and meetings with stakeholders on the feasibility of proposed trail locations.

Feasibility, preliminary and final construction designs, and specs for the ponds will be partially completed through a non-ENRTF match from the MPCA's OSG Grant of \$150,000. The remainder of the pond and recreational system design work will be completed with ENRTF and local match funds.

Pre-design, design, and pre-construction activities will include: survey, SHPO consultation, design and specifications

preparation and approval, obtaining necessary permits from state and federal agencies, completing a public competitive bidding process, hosting pre-construction meetings, staking, mobilization, clearing and grubbing, traffic control, and installing erosion control.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pond & Trail Feasibility Design Analysis	February 28, 2027
ESA / Phase 1	March 31, 2027
Preliminary Design Preparation and Consultation with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	April 30, 2027
Permitting and Approval of Final Designs	July 31, 2027
Public Bidding and Award of Contract	August 31, 2027
Site Preparation	November 30, 2027

Activity 3: Construction and Closeout

Activity Budget: \$2,265,000

Activity Description:

The City of Vadnais Heights and its partners will work with its consultant engineer to provide oversight, administration, and management of the construction and closeout activities for the project. Construction activities include pond excavation and grading, material hauling and disposal, infrastructure and boardwalk installation, trail tread material installation, and other construction items.

Construction will include the following features:

- Water quality improvement and retention ponds
- Soft surface and bituminous looped recreational trail system
- Gathering spaces and observation platforms
- Boardwalk sections if needed for wetland trail and/or platform areas

Closeout activities include final review and payment to the construction contractor, as-built plans, updating City GIS files, temporary stabilization, and permanent stabilization with native plant seeding and plug planting.

The scope of pond construction within this activity is subject to change dependent on the availability of additional non-ENRTF matching funds.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
All Construction Funds Legally Secured	October 31, 2027
Begin Construction	March 31, 2028
Construction Completion and Closeout	June 30, 2029
Signage with ENRTF logo installed at all features	June 30, 2029
Recreational Trail System Open	July 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lauren Sampedro	Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)	Lauren serves as Watershed Technician & Program Coordinator. Lauren will work with the City of Vadnais Heights as a project partner.	No
Erin Spry	City of Vadnais Heights	Erin serves as Natural Resource Specialist. She will help to facilitate community engagement and feedback, consult on water quality goals, and consult on native planting plans.	No
Nick Ousky	City of Vadnais Heights	Nick serves as Senior Engineer Technician. He will provide inspection services for compliance with erosion control requirements during construction and provide technical reviews of structural features.	No
Phil Belfiori	VLAWMO	Phil serves as VLAWMO Administrator. VLAWMO will provide a cash match in addition to staff time to support the project if selected for funding. Phil will work with the City as a project partner.	No
Katie Everett	City of Vadnais Heights	Katie serves as Recreation & Facilities Manager. She will help to facilitate community engagement and feedback and consult on recreation amenities.	No
Justine Roe	Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS)	Justine serves as Water Quality Supervisor. Justine will work with the City of Vadnais Heights as a project partner.	No
Molly Churchich	Ramsey County Public Works	Molly serves as Environmental Services Supervisor. Molly will work with the City of Vadnais Heights as a project partner.	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.

This project will improve accessibility and encourage recreation in a natural space for populations currently underserved by City parks and programs, increasing engagement with nature.

Interactive educational materials throughout the site will discuss the natural features of the land as well as the benefits of the project for improving water quality, protecting wildlife and pollinator habitat, and more. Materials will be translated into multiple languages that are commonly spoken in the local community. Permanent signage installed throughout the project area will feature partnerships and funding sources that helped make the project successful including ENRTF. The educational materials will encourage visitors to take action in their communities to protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and its water resources, especially surface water and drinking water.

A webpage on the City's website will discuss the purpose, process, and benefits of the project and name relevant partners, including the ENRTF as a major source of funding. Future communications on the project could include press releases, media interactions, publications, event advertisements & invitations, newsletters, printed materials, presentations, and social media.

Acknowledgement of the ENRTF will be included in all project communications and outreach and will follow the guidance provided in the ENRTF Acknowledgement 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?

The City of Vadnais Heights and its partners will oversee the implementation of the project and provide matching funds. Long-term maintenance of the ponds, trail system, and amenities will be performed by the City of Vadnais Heights as part of its maintenance programs for parks and infrastructure. VLAWMO will collaborate with the City on management expenses through its annual capital improvement budget process. The project will be developed and designed such that City funds will be sufficient for management of the space; no outside funding will be required for maintenance.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Bene fits	# FTE	Class ified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Webmap services; contractor will create a Storymap on the project during project development under Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features activity.			0			\$19,000
Short, Elliot, and Hendrickson, Inc.	Service Contract	Engineering consultant to perform engineering and administrative oversight for Feasibility, Design, and Pre-construction, and Construction and Closeout activities.			0			\$252,000
TBD	Service Contract	Artwork; contractor will create artwork under Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features activity.			0			\$25,000
TBD	Service Contract	Signage; contractor will create signage under Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features activity.			0			\$9,000
TBD	Service Contract	Contractor completing pre-construction, construction, and closeout work under Feasibility, Design, and Pre-Construction, and Construction and Closeout activities.			0			\$2,505,000
TBD	Service Contract	Language translation; contractor will provide translation services for engagement and educational signage and materials under Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features activity.			0			\$2,000
TBD	Service Contract	Recreation features; contractor will install recreational features under Recreation, Interactive Education, and Art Features activity.			0			\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$2,842,000
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	\$2,842,000

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	33 U.S.C §1301 Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant (OSG)	To partially complete feasibility work, preliminary and final construction designs, and specifications for the water quality improvement and retention ponds. Work to be completed under Feasibility and Pre-Design/Design project stages.	Secured	\$150,000
			State Sub Total	\$150,000
Non-State				
Cash	Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)	For Construction, Closeout, and Contingency project stages in 2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029. Future budgets are approved by VLAWMO Board yearly. Funds beyond 2025 are pending.	Pending	\$507,500
Cash	City of Vadnais Heights	For Construction, Closeout, and Contingency project stages in 2027, 2028, and 2029. Future budgets are approved by City Council yearly. Funds beyond 2026 are pending.	Pending	\$302,500
Cash	City of Vadnais Heights	For Feasibility, Design, and Pre-Construction project stages in 2026.	Secured	\$228,000
Cash	Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)	For feasibility work under the Feasibility, Design, and Pre-Construction project stages.	Secured	\$23,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$1,061,000
			Funds Total	\$1,211,000

Total Project Cost: \$4,053,000

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
Nature-Based Recreation and Drinking Water Protection Project	Ramsey	The site includes upland, wetland, and floodplain forest ecosystems. The tree canopy is predominantly cottonwood, aspen, black walnut, and boxelder trees which grew in after the former farm was sold to the City. The tree canopy has not been managed. The site presents a significant opportunity to restore a large natural area of mixed ecotypes in an impervious surface dominated landscape. The understory of the site was predominantly buckthorn although efforts to remove some of the buckthorn have occurred annually since 2022. Although buckthorn is still present at the site much of the mature buckthorn has been removed and native woodland species such as big-leaved aster, goldenrod, and joe pye weed are now present. The site is located in a densely populated area with low tree cover and shade. Although the land is publicly owned, there is no access to the site currently. This project will result in access to a forested nature area, a throughway for residents biking or walking to a nearby shopping area, and public art access.	Restoration	21	0.44	-	Public	City of Vadnais Heights	In Progress
Totals				21	0.44	-			

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.

The restoration activities completed with the funds will entirely occur on land permanently protected by public ownership through the City of Vadnais Heights.

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.

The project will include permanent stabilization through native plant seeding and native plug planting. Plugs will be limited to the water quality improvement pond areas of the project. Permanent stabilization will occur after construction of the new ponds and trails. Native plant seeding will be applied over the disturbed areas and around the trails. The project's planting plans are retained permanently and shared with all staff or partners which require information on the original planting. Maintenance plans for the seeded areas will also be retained permanently and shared with those involved in the project.

The plan will be referred to during maintenance stages by city staff, partner organizations, and contractors to ensure successful long-term establishment.

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.

Prior to moving forward with restoration activities, as part of the planning process the City will select seed mixes and design planting plans in accordance with the BWSR "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines". This will include ensuring both the seed mixes and plants are sourced from native plant nurseries that do not utilize neonicotinoid insecticides and that prioritize truly native species over cultivars and other varieties. The City will make a reasonable attempt to follow the recommended sequence for sourcing seed and plants per seed and plant availability, especially locating sources that have similar site conditions as the project. The City will ensure seed and plant selection prioritizes providing a high diversity of plant species that improves the project site's ecological function and habitat for pollinators, provides habitat connectivity, and reduces competition with invasive species. It is the City's goal to also protect the existing native plant communities that are present at the project site as much as possible before and during construction of the project and consider adding species that are more resilient to climate change impacts.

The City will also ensure BWSR guidelines are followed during site preparation and installation activities that are appropriate to site conditions. Temporary cover crops will be used for erosion control until permanent stabilization activities can begin. The City is motivated to ensure restoration activities associated with permanent stabilization of the project are successful and maintained after the project is complete.

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.

Once the project is completed the site will be managed by the City of Vadnais Heights Public Works Department. City staff will maintain trails and gathering spaces, and contractors will maintain the restored areas. Public Works department funds will be used to manage the space.

Local community partners and community groups working to improve pollinator populations, improve water quality, restore habitat, and maintain natural areas may help to maintain the site in the future.

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

The City will consider hosting a Conservation Corps crew for the project stabilization activities of seeding and planting depending on crew availability and capacity.

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.

Evaluations of the establishment of installed species will be implemented immediately after activity completion to ensure that stabilization, planting, and seeding are sufficient to ensure success.

Evaluations of the site will occur three years later to monitor whether site establishment goals are 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.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [d83c09e2-ae7.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Aerial view of proposed project area south of Vadnais Heights City Hall. Three ponds are outlined within the southeast portion of the project area. Hard surface trails, soft surface trails, and boardwalks loop through green space. Viewing platforms, gathering space, educational signage, nature-based play features, and art are also present....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Current Financial Position Statement	2de31a71-855.pdf
Current Budget Position_August2025	4ba9c508-ddd.pdf
Audit Documents	b7b971a9-c85.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution (2nd copy)	441b57b2-e20.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Resolution Authorizing Submission; 2026-070	13c8895b-05d.pdf
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire; 2026-070	717720b4-6bf.pdf
Capital Construction Project Budget Addendum; 2026-070	422960b1-46b.xlsx
VLAWMO Letter of Support; 2026-070	2bd0e352-4a6.pdf
SPRWS Letter of Support; 2026-07	92e43563-cee.pdf
Ramsey County Letter of Support; 2026-070	1b68d763-20c.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

The scope of pond construction within activity 3 is subject to change dependent on the availability of additional non-ENRTF matching funds.

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:

Erin Spry, City of Vadnais Heights; Lauren Sampedro, VLAWMO; Phil Belfiori, VLAWMO

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