



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Draft Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-141

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: October 29, 2025

Project Title: Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Extension

Project Budget: \$1,244,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Andrea Rehm

Organization: Washington County

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Web Address: <https://www.co.washington.mn.us/>

Project Reporting

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

Project Completion: June 30, 2028

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation:

Appropriation Language:

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: Develop final design and construct the final mile of Washington County's Hardwood Creek Regional Trail, opening up 40+ continuous miles of regional trail network across three counties.

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

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail is a north-south multiuse trail in northwestern Washington County. The trail connects to the Central Anoka County Regional Trail to the west, Chisago County's Sunrise Prairie Regional Trail to the north, and when complete, will link with Ramsey County's Bruce Vento Regional Trail to the south – meaning trail users will one day be able to travel 40+ miles between Downtown Saint Paul and Downtown North Branch on continuous, dedicated trail.

Within Washington County, the existing Hardwood Creek Regional trail runs on 11-miles of former railroad right-of-way, extending from the Washington/Chisago County Line in Forest Lake to 130th St in Hugo. Today, a one-mile trail gap exists between 130th St and 120th St due to the rail-line remaining active. This gap means no connection is made to Ramsey County parks and trails.

The gap prevents trail access to Bald Eagle - Otter Lakes Regional Park, a major natural resource. The park is an 862-acre natural area in a developing suburban neighborhood. Its extensive woods, wetlands and grasslands provide habitat for many species of wildlife, including deer, fox, beaver, bluebirds, and owls. Rare species of wildlife, osprey and otters have also been sighted in this park.

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.

Per a feasibility study conducted in partnership with the City of Hugo, Washington County's proposed project extends the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail to close the gap from 130th St to 120th St. The project scope includes:

Final Design – Washington County will contract a design engineering firm to complete final design.

Acquisition – County right-of-way specialists will lead acquisition of permanent easements. Affected property owners were first engaged during the feasibility study. The predominant property owner supports the proposed alignment through their property and has provided a letter of support (attached).

Construction – Washington County will contract a construction firm to construct the one-mile trail segment in accordance with required permitting, utilities, and other coordination. A portion of the trail will run parallel to railroad right of way and may require temporary access during construction. Railroad representatives were engaged during the feasibility study and they provided a letter (attached) acknowledging their involvement and general concurrence with the proposed design.

Close-Out - Washington County will close out the project by acknowledging the contribution of ENRTF award in trail signage and opening the new trail segment to the public.

ENRTF funds are being requested to complete final design, acquisition, and construction.

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?

Constructing the one-mile gap completes a critical link in 40+ miles of continuous trail and positively impacts the larger trail network. The future network offers seamless and safe bike and pedestrian access to the Mississippi River, Phalen Regional Park, Keller Regional Park, White Bear Lake, Tamarack Nature Center, Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park,

Forest Lake, and numerous city parks and green spaces.

This regional trail connects key destinations and draws visitors to engage with the area's plentiful green spaces. This trail will be accessible to users of all-abilities, expanding the number of people who can enjoy this recreational opportunity.

Project Location

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

County(s): Washington

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: Final Design

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

Washington County will contract a design engineering firm via an RFP process to complete final design. Objectives include permitting / agency review, approval of draft plans, and approval of final plans. This activity will be funded by local contributions/non-ENRTF funds but was included here to document the minimum required milestones outlined in the capital construction project questionnaire.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Selection of a Consultant	February 28, 2026
Consultation with SHPO	April 30, 2026
Draft Plans Complete	October 31, 2026
Final Plans Approved	December 31, 2026

Activity 2: Acquisition

Activity Budget: \$250,000

Activity Description:

Washington County right-of-way specialists will lead easement acquisition necessary to construct the trail as specified in final design. Scope of work includes title review/appraisal, securing purchase agreements, and recording a Notice of Funding Restriction.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Title Review / Appraisals	February 28, 2026
Survey/ESA	June 30, 2026
Purchase Agreements Complete	February 28, 2027
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded	February 28, 2027

Activity 3: Construction

Activity Budget: \$993,998

Activity Description:

Washington County will contract a construction firm to construct the one-mile trail segment in accordance with required permitting, utilities, and other coordination.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
All Construction Funds Legally Secured	January 31, 2027
Construction Contractor Selected	April 30, 2027
Required Permits Secured	April 30, 2027
Construction Begins	June 30, 2027

Activity 4: Close-Out

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

Washington County project manager will lead close out of the project. Objectives include acknowledging contribution of ENRTF award and opening the new trail segment to the public. This activity will be funded by local contributions/non-ENRTF funds but was included here to document the minimum required milestones outlined in the capital construction project questionnaire.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Signage Installed with ENRTF Language or Logo	June 30, 2028
Open for Intended Use	June 30, 2028
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded	June 30, 2028
Certificate of Occupancy or Equivalent Obtained	June 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
City of Hugo	City of Hugo	Project Partner / Cost Participant per Washington County Cost-Share Policy	Yes

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. The final design phase of the project will include public engagement, including online opportunities and in-person open house(s) to share project information. Construction updates will be available on the County website and via an email subscription. The opening of the trail will be advertised on County social media and via a press release. Communications during each of these phases will acknowledge the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through attribution language.

Signage for this section of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail will be designed to acknowledge the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through use of the trust fund logo.

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 costs beyond what is be covered by an ENRTF award will be funded by Washington County and the City of Hugo. Future maintenance to keep the trail in good condition will be a shared responsibility between Washington County and the City of Hugo. The County will be responsible for waste/recycling collection, seasonal mowing and eventual replacement or repaving projects, while the City is responsible for day-to-day maintenance--such as snow removal and more frequent mowing.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Bene fits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Construction firm to prepare site, coordinate construction, and construct trail segment as specified in final design.				12		\$994,000
							Sub Total	\$994,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Trail Easement Acquisition	Parcels: 4 Miles: 0.4						\$250,000
							Sub Total	\$250,000
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,244,000

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				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Local contribution - Washington County and City of Hugo	Contribute to all project stages (Design, Acquisitions, Construction, & Close Out). Contribute entirety of budgeted Contingency and Inflation.	Potential	\$1,390,000
In-Kind	Local contribution - Washington County	Completed Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Extension Feasibility Study (2022)	Secured	\$49,000
In-Kind	Staff time	Right of Way Specialist (.3 FTE for 1 year) to lead easement acquisitions	Potential	\$30,000
In-Kind	Staff time	Washington County Civil Engineer (.5 FTE for 1 year) to manage final design contract and close out project.	Potential	\$54,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$1,523,000
			Funds Total	\$1,523,000

Total Project Cost: \$2,767,000

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
Trail Segment 1A	Washington	Critical to proposed trail route and making connection to Ramsey County parks and trails.	Easement - Other	0.62	0.26	\$321,000	Private	Washington County	Has Not Begun
Trail Segment 1B	Washington	Critical to proposed trail route and making connection to Ramsey County parks and trails.	Easement - Other	0.23	0.11	\$119,000	Private	Washington County	Has Not Begun
Totals				0.85	0.37	\$440,000			

Easement (Other) Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail's original route recommendation was developed and adopted through a master planning process in 2013. While the plan identified continuing along the rail line as the preferred long-term alternative, it also acknowledged that the rail line will remain active indefinitely south of 140th Street and highlighted the need for an alternate route to provide trail connectivity. Washington County retained Alliant Engineering in April 2021 to complete a feasibility study to identify a trail alignment to close the gap caused by continued rail operations. Alliant collected background information and developed concept alternatives for a paved trail that meets Washington County and MnDOT regional trail design standards. Multiple design meetings were held with City of Hugo and BNSF railroad staff to discuss project needs, goals, and design considerations. The County also led a public engagement campaign and conducted individual meetings with residents and affected property owners along the trail corridor. Input from these meetings was incorporated into the design and recommendations.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Lands included in the parcel list were identified in the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Master Plan.

<https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/50751/Hardwood-Creek-Regional-Trail-Master-Plan>

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Master Plan includes a Natural Resources Stewardship Plan pertaining to the entire trail corridor. In alignment with natural resources goals and policies laid out in Washington County's Comprehensive Plan and in coordination with other area stewardship activities, the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail stewardship program is focused on four priorities:

- Minimizing potential for erosion during construction
- Buffering adjacent ecological systems
- Enhancing the quality of natural resources within the corridor to the extent possible consistent with ecological prototypes for healthy systems that are suitable to the conditions found along the corridor
- Enhancing the natural scenic qualities of the corridor through native planting in select locations as the trail is developed

Long-term maintenance will be covered under the County's parks and trails operations budget, and management will be supervised by a Washington County Natural Resources Coordinator.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

N/A

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

Washington County will obtain written approval from the DNR Commissioner 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [f67ad85d-ca4.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

The maps show the proposed trail extension layout over aerial imagery. The first segment map displays permanent easements needed for the trail. The easements are between 15 to 20 feet and affect four (4) parcels....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Washington County Annual Comprehensive Financial Report_2023	1860c714-723.pdf
Financial Statements Pending - Placeholder	13d6a876-18b.pdf
Washington County Annual Comprehensive Financial Report_2024	a4e00acf-580.pdf
Financial Statement_09-29-2025	48725137-3de.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Washington County Board Resolution_ENRTF	c33bdc00-edf.pdf
Updated Resolution Pending - Placeholder	95fed04e-52e.pdf
2026-141 ENRTF Grant_revised resolution received 9-16-25	c5d3c75f-c54.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Capital Project Budget Addendum	68a533fb-5d3.xlsx
City of Hugo - Letter of Support	83ed184f-fd4.pdf
Wilson Tool - Letter of Support	4fb48f3e-374.pdf
BNSF - Letter of Acknowledgement	dd0204e6-8c5.pdf
Capital Project Questionnaire	b44d3dee-58a.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

- The budget was updated to match the recommended funding amount.
- The project timeline was advanced to begin construction in 2027 -- ENRTF funds previously budgeted in Activity 1: Final Design have been moved to Activity 3: Construction. The County will leverage other funding sources to complete final design.
- A description of planned dissemination efforts was added.
- Comments and Revisions regarding "Attachments"
 - A) Financial Statements – The latest Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (2024) was uploaded. Washington County sought clarification from LCCMR Staff Lead on what additional financial statements are required. (UPDATE 09/30/2025: new financial statement is attached.)
 - B) Resolution of Support – An updated resolution of support including the required clauses was submitted.

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

Is the purpose of the acquisition for construction of a building(s), trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large- scale stream or wetland restoration, either now or in the future?

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:

N/A

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