



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Final 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

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
Personnel								
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
							Sub Total	\$28,000
Contracts and Services								
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
							Sub Total	\$895,000
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								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$923,000

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				
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
			Non State Sub Total	\$106,000
			Funds Total	\$106,000

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	7418b68d-7c0.pdf
Audit Report	c9225b1e-abd.pdf
Certificate of Good Standing	8c49d6a6-8fd.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
FMR Board of Directors Resolution	de68042a-a28.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
NPCA Letter of Support	3031df62-adb.pdf
American Rivers Letter of Support	ae1bd1c2-b23.pdf
Hamline CGEE Letter of Support	f02b983c-def.pdf
St. Anthony Falls Lab Letter of Support	1f9ba23f-d43.pdf
Great River Passage Conservancy Letter of Support	e6f765b4-282.pdf

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