

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2010 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**LCCMR ID: 192-F**

**Project Title:**

Benson Park

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**LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:**

F. Environmental Education

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**Total Project Budget: \$** \$447,500

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 3 years, 2010 - 2013

**Other Non-State Funds: \$** \$447,500

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**Summary:**

Development of woodland, prairie and oak savanna habitats including a wildflower demonstration area, fishing pier and interpretive learning areas in an undeveloped regional park.

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**Location:**

**Region:** Central

**County Name:** Nicollet

**City / Township:** North Mankato

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_____ Knowledge Base	_____ Broad App.	_____ Innovation
_____ Leverage	_____ Outcomes	
_____ Partnerships	_____ Urgency	_____ TOTAL

# MAIN PROPOSAL

**PROJECT TITLE: Benson Park**

## I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The City of North Mankato has acquired 69 acres of land at the developing edge of the City known as Benson Park. Currently, the park is an open space asset oriented to passive uses such as walking, informal picnicking and bird watching. Much of the park, once used as agricultural land, is undeveloped and therefore has yet to realize its potential as a community and regional destination. In 2008, the North Mankato City Council appointed a citizen based Benson park committee and hired a professional consultant to define a vision and master plan for Benson Park. As a result, a Benson Park Master Plan focusing on natural resources was adopted by the City in February 2009. The natural resources theme was chosen to allow visitors the opportunity to develop personal relationships with the natural environment by introducing interactive and interpretive activities within restored natural habitats. In developing the 69 acres as a natural resources park, the goal is to create a high quality destination to experience nature and a place for open-ended visitor-driven discovery. At full development, Benson Park will not only serve the community, but draw visitors from the larger region.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

**Result 1: Woodland Habitat Budget: \$ 50,000**

The woodland habitat area calls for the forestation of pine and maple trees with the opportunity to incorporate a tree house / maple sugaring demonstration area and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Promote the establishment of forestation.
2. Promote the establishment of wildlife habitat.
3. Create educational opportunities.

November 2011

**Result 2: Rolling Hills Prairie Habitat Budget: \$ 60,000**

The prairie habitat includes extensive earthwork, prairie seeding, an outdoor classroom and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Promote the establishment of wildlife habitat.
2. Serve as an educational area of the prairie ecosystem.

November 2012

**Result 3: Oak Savanna Habitat Budget: \$ 30,000**

The oak savanna habitat includes seeding, tree plantings and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Promote the establishment of forestation.
2. Promote the establishment of wildlife.
3. Provide beautiful views from the walking trails.

November 2011

**Result 4: Wildflower Demonstration Area Budget: \$ 15,000**

The wildflower demonstration area includes plantings, crushed stone trails and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Act as a showcase for native wildflowers.
2. Invite users to learn about the benefits of using native plantings.

November 2011

**Result 5: Woodland Play Area Budget: \$ 100,000**

This natural play area includes boulders, logs, stumps and vegetation to provide a natural play and learning area including interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Provides children with an opportunity to explore nature with freedom in a safe area. November 2012
2. Encourages children to learn about the woodland habitat.
3. Allows small groups to gather for informal presentations.

**Result 6: Water Play Area / Little Bug Bay Budget: \$ 440,000**

This project includes the construction of Little Bug Bay, to complement Ladybug Lake, and an interactive water play area involving a meandering stream with natural elements and educational features. The water play area includes a recirculation pump and filter, a boulder lined water course and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Little Bug Bay will serve as a recreational skating pond in the winter. November 2012
2. Water play area will promote the learning of water resources.

**Result 7: Ladybug Lake Improvements Budget: \$ 200,000**

This project includes a fishing pier, floating fountain, shoreline boulders, trails, benches and interpretive signage.

**Deliverable**

**Completion Date**

1. Fishing pier will allow users to get direct access to lake for urban fishing July 2012
2. Provide views of the lake.

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

The City of North Mankato will use its own personnel to carry out the proposed activities. The City has the talent and equipment to implement the Benson Park improvements. City personnel have developed other local parks including Caswell Park, a premier softball complex. The use of City personnel will significantly reduce the cost of the overall projects and the use of City personnel has been factored into the proposed project costs. Additionally, the City will work with the citizen based Benson Park committee and local master gardeners on the habitat restorations.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

1. Woodland Habitat: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2011
2. Rolling Hills Prairie Habitat: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2012
3. Oak Savanna Habitat: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2011
4. Wildflower Demonstration Area: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2011
5. Woodland Play Area: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2012
6. Water Play Area / Little Bug Bay: Begin Fall 2010 / End Fall 2012
7. Ladybug Lake Improvements: Begin Spring 2011 / End Summer 2012

**C. Long-Term Strategy**

In terms of the development of Benson Park so far, the City has acquired the 69 acres of land, coordinated the construction of two water features, created off-street parking and trails, installed benches and planted trees. The Benson Park Master Plan includes future shelters, trails, parking lots and playgrounds. While these amenities were not included in this proposal, they will be constructed in phases over the course of many years. As the proposed project cost for this application is \$895,000, the total estimated cost within the Benson Park Master Plan is \$2,500,000. The City expects to use local option sales tax revenues to finance the remaining project over the course of several years.

## Project Budget

### IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (three years)

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Contracts:	
Landscaping Contractor - Trees, Shrubs, Seeds, Plugs	\$ 97,500
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	
Interpretive Signage	\$ 31,950
Fountains, Pumps and Aerators	\$ 65,000
Seeds and Plugs	\$ 28,000
Materials and Equipment to Construct Maple Syrup Tree House Structure	\$ 12,500
Fencing	\$ 10,250
Materials for Water Course	\$ 75,000
Water Control Device	\$ 10,000
Boulders and Crushed Rock for Landscaping	\$ 29,800
Material for Pedestrian Bridge and Pond Access	\$ 42,500
Material for Construction of Fishing Pier	\$ 40,000
Material for Wayfinding Node	\$ 5,000
<b>TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR</b>	<b>\$ 447,500</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Proceeds from One-Half Percent Local Option Sales Tax (Collection began October 1, 2008)	\$ 447,500	Secured
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b>	\$ -	
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b>	\$ -	
<b>Remaining \$ from Current Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):</b>	\$ -	
<b>Funding History:</b>	\$ -	

# Concept Overview:

## Overall Park Theme

- The Natural Resources Park theme focuses on teaching users the natural environment of various ecosystems as well as the importance of preserving natural habitats.
- Interpretive areas will encourage learning of the Woodland, Wetland, Oak Savanna, and Prairie habitats and other natural resource opportunities.
- Trails will direct users to the various restored natural habitats.
- Active play include interpretive destinations designed to set the scene for open-ended, visitor-driven discovery and to put users in high quality places to experience nature.

## Parking/Circulation

- Proposed parking located at edges of park. Main parking lot is located at the north of the park and provides a safe circulation between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Southeast parking lot provides an alternate access to the park
- Users are encouraged to experience the park through trails.
- Southwest parking and picnic area to remain.

## Stormwater/Wetland

- Use of rainwater gardens to treat stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces.
- Naturalize edges of stormwater ponds to minimize maintenance.
- Restore wetland area to establish wildlife habitat.
- Minimize access to ponds.

## Park features

- Outdoor classrooms/ demonstration areas
- Formal and Informal park shelters
- Formal fishing pier
- Interpretive play and signage
- Natural play area
- Playground equipment
- Natural amphitheater
- Picnic areas/informal lawn
- Interpretive boardwalk
- Bridge crossing
- Bird watching
- Year-round activities



**Benson Park  
Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description**

North Mankato Public Works Director, Rich Peterson will be the Project Manager and oversee the implementation of the Benson Park Master Plan.

Mr. Peterson has worked for the City for the past 37 years, primarily in supervisory positions. As the majority of the development of Benson Park will be carried out by City personnel, Mr. Peterson will coordinate the project schedule and all proposed improvements utilizing his existing staff. Mr. Peterson has previous experience in local park development. Specifically, he managed the development of Caswell Park beginning in 1986. Caswell Park is the State's premier softball complex consisting of 6 softball fields and a playing field for disabled persons. Caswell Park was constructed and is maintained entirely by North Mankato City Staff under the direction of Mr. Peterson.

The Benson Park Master Plan was prepared by the Hosington Koegler Group. The plan includes specific cost estimates and a park design which Mr. Peterson will use to make the proposed park improvements.