

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2018 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 093-B

A Landscape Conservation Design for the Lower St. Louis River

Category: B. Water Resources

Total Project Budget: \$ 397,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2018 to June 2021

Summary:

This project develops a watershed-scale conservation plan to guide continued recovery of fish and wildlife habitat and populations of the lower St. Louis River, western Lake Superior's most important river

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Location

Region: Northeast

County Name: St. Louis

City / Township: Duluth

Alternate Text for Visual:

Location of lower St. Louis River near Duluth, MN

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL	_____ %



PROJECT TITLE: A Landscape Conservation Design for the Lower St. Louis River

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) is a nationally recognized process developed to address complex environmental issues by systematically developing robust decision support tools and direct actions to protect and restore natural resources. The Minnesota Land Trust, City of Duluth, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and other partners need to update our vision, strategies and tools to protect and restore Minnesota’s fish and wildlife populations crucial to the Lake Superior ecosystem. The structured approach of LCD makes it an ideal process for the complex challenges facing the lower St. Louis River ecosystem.

The goal of this Landscape Conservation Design project is to protect, restore and enhance water resources and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) of the lower St. Louis River. The LCD process will create the framework in which State and Federal agencies responsible for managing these resources can develop a shared vision, coordinated implementation strategies and common metrics for success. We are asking the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to support the development of this Landscape Conservation Design, which will influence the ecological health of Western Lake Superior for the next several decades.

The lower St. Louis River includes its freshwater estuary, the largest coastal wetland on Lake Superior and one of Minnesota’s most important water resources. The Estuary covers more than 12,000 acres and is an Audubon Important Bird Area, designated critical spawning areas for many Lake Superior fish species and was once the single largest source of wild rice in the western Lake Superior region. It also faced extreme degradation and was listed as an Area of Concern by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1974.

Since 2002, management of the lower St. Louis River has largely been informed by the Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan, which was developed with participation of 15 management agencies to guide habitat restoration and protection within the Area of Concern. This Habitat Plan has guided more than \$20 million of habitat restoration work in the Estuary over the past 15 years.

However, the strategies and objectives of the Habitat Plan are now dated and the path forward for management of this ecosystem is more complicated. New strategies are needed that are responsive to emerging threats such as climate change, invasive species and shifting development pressures. The Landscape Conservation Design process will be instrumental in charting future improvements in water quality, species diversity, and ecological health of the Estuary.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Establish a Landscape Conservation Design Process for the Lower St. Louis River **Budget: \$397,000**

The Land Trust will:

- **FORM WORKGROUP:** convene a multi-sector agency workgroup and facilitate regular workshops throughout the project. Workshops will articulate a collective vision, identify and develop strategies to address key natural resource needs. The workgroup will serve as the first iteration of a long-term standing committee that serves as the core of the Landscape Conservation Design approach.
- **COLLECT DATA:** collect existing maps, and data from fish, wildlife, water quality and zoning management plans into an integrated GIS for the lower St. Louis River watershed to identify gaps and opportunities.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2018 Main Proposal

Project Title: Landscape Conservation Design for the Lower St. Louis River

- **DEVELOP STRATEGIES:** work directly with agencies responsible for natural resources management to develop realistic strategies to accelerate protection, recovery and management of priority natural resources of the lower St. Louis River and Western Lake Superior.
- **APPLY METRICS:** develop meaningful biophysical metrics and models to measure wildlife populations, habitat and water resources condition working with researchers, agency staff and technical experts.

Outcomes	Completion Date
1. Organized standing Landscape Conservation Design Workgroup for improved coordination among agencies and local government units to benefit habitat restoration and protection.	June 30, 2021
2. Landscape Conservation Design GIS tools for identifying and protecting SGCN and restoring fish & wildlife habitat	June 30, 2021
3. Comprehensive multi-metric data collection plan to systematically update decision support tools to measure progress and inform long range decision making	June 30, 2021
4. Next generation “Habitat Plan” with a vision statement and specific strategies to improve St. Louis River’s fish and wildlife resources that can be incorporated into agency planning	June 30, 2021

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) is a comprehensive strategy for natural resource management. It is more than a static plan; it starts by forming a consensus of the management agencies on the vision and goals for important natural resources, then it uses existing plans to establish initial management strategies, develops metrics to measure progress and finally has mechanisms to trigger adaptive redirection of the management strategies to make them more successful. Thus, the LCD is a dynamic management tool and the time is now to set up the system for one of the most unique natural resource management challenges in the state.

A. Project Team/Partners

Project Partners Receiving Funds:

- Minnesota Land Trust, a 501 c(3) organization: The Minnesota Land Trust will manage this project, providing project administration and management, workgroup facilitation, plan development, oversight of competitively bid contracts for GIS services, data collection and analysis, and natural resources technical expertise. The Land Trust has played a unique facilitator and coordinator role in the recovery of the St. Louis River and as such has been asked to continue this role in the development of the LCD process.

Project Partners Not Receiving Funds:

- The following agencies have expressed interest in the project workgroup: City of Duluth, Minnesota DNR Lake Superior unit, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Fond du Lac Natural Resources, 1854 Treaty Authority, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Wisconsin DNR, and City of Superior.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

The goal of this project is to develop a roadmap to improve fish and wildlife resources of the lower St. Louis River. This framework is intended to be dynamic and evolving as resource managers adapt to new information and/or changing circumstances. The LCD process will ensure our natural resource management plans for the Estuary will continue to be relevant for years to come.

C. Timeline Requirements

A new management framework is needed by 2021 to assist updating existing agency natural resource management plans.

2018 Detailed Project Budget

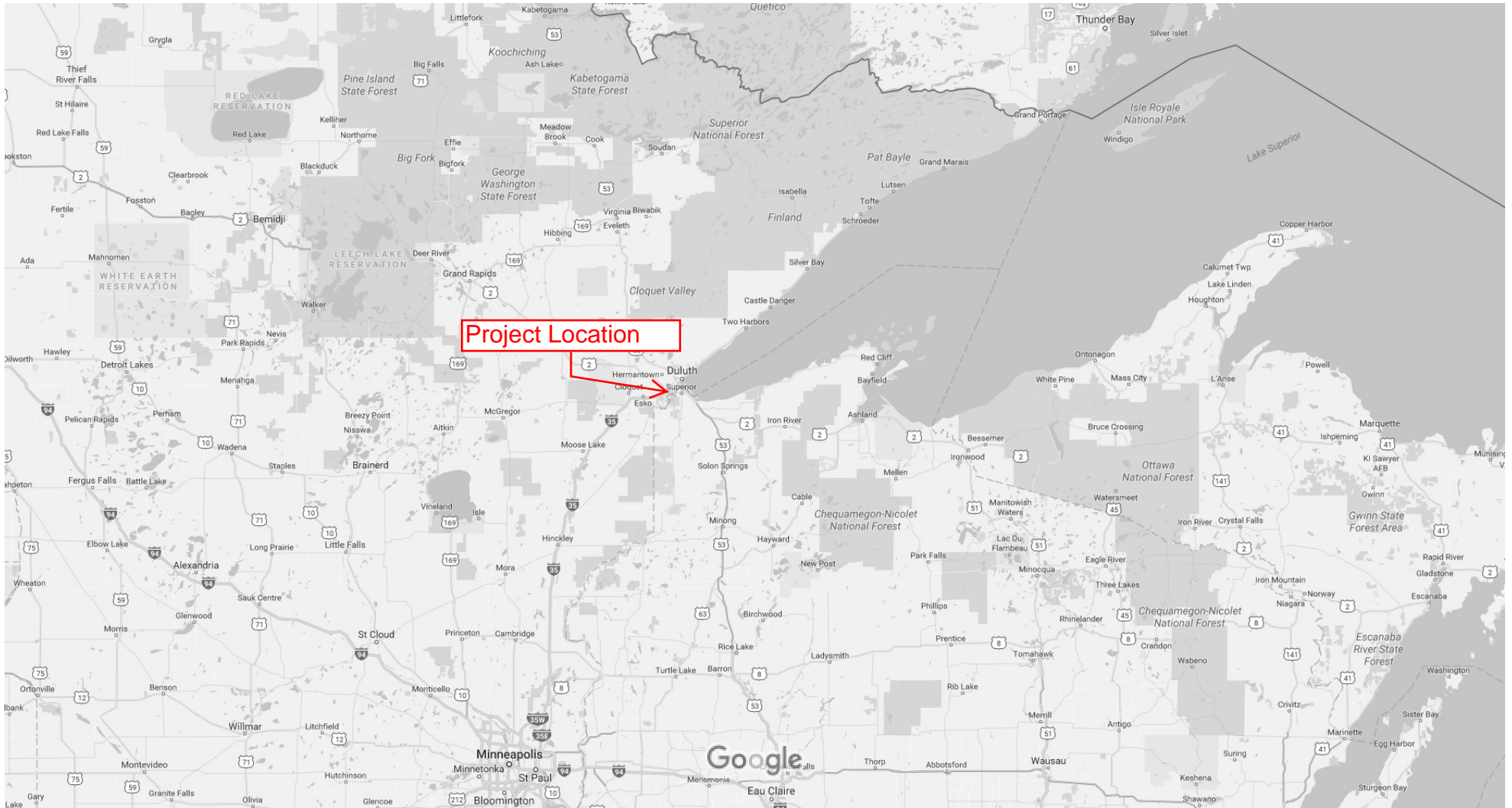
Project Title: Next Generation Management for St. Louis River Estuary

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET: 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel:	
Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) Principal Investigator, 20% FTE for each of 3 years	\$ 57,000
MLT Conservation Project Manager, 75% FTE for each of 3 years	\$ 158,000
MLT Conservation Associate, 5% FTE for each of 3 years	\$ 10,000
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	
GIS Services Firm (TBD): professional services for development of project GIS	\$ 20,000
Natural Resources Technical Consultant or Firm (TBD): professional services for development of biological metric and associated decision support tool; RFP to be issued	\$ 150,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	
Workgroup workshop supplies	\$ 1,000
Printing services for final LCD report	\$ 1,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 397,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Coastal Program Grant	\$ 89,097	<i>pending</i>
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	N/A	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Minnesota Land Trust Direct Support Services	\$ 68,026	<i>pending</i>
Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation: Not related Metro Conservation Corridors Phase 8 Avon Hills Landscape Phase 3	515,000 1,249,500	<i>Current</i>
Other Funding History:	N/A	



Map data ©2017 Google 20 mi

Project Title: Next Generation Management for St. Louis River Estuary

Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) is an accredited 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization that preserves Minnesota's natural and scenic heritage through public and private partnerships. MLT works to protect and enhance Minnesota's threatened lands and waters by providing agencies, communities and organizations with assistance in planning and delivering on-the-ground conservation in order to expand the State's overall capacity. The Land Trust plays a crucial role in St. Louis River recovery by enhancing communication among state and federal agencies, developing and implementing priority on-the-ground restoration projects.

Daryl Peterson has more than 20 years of experience planning, managing, and implementing ecological restoration projects in river environments and has been working on the St. Louis River since 2005. Daryl has managed many natural resource management projects in both California's Sacramento River bay-delta and Minnesota's St. Louis River Estuary. He holds a bachelor's degree in Biology from Whittier College in California and a master's degree in Plant Ecology from California State, Chico. Daryl works out of MLT's Duluth office where he leads the Land Trust's work on Lake Superior and its tributaries.