

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2019 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 222-F

Woodland Restoration Project

Category: F. Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 227,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: June 30, 2022 (3 yrs)

Summary:

Belwin Conservancy will restore 72 acres of Belwin's nearly 1400 acres. This woodland restoration project is in a beautiful area that will be open to the public in the future.

Name: Justin Sykora

Sponsoring Organization: The Belwin Conservancy

Title: Operations Director

Department: _____

Address: 1553 Stagecoach Trail S
Afton MN 55001

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Web Address belwin.org

Location

Region: Metro

County Name: Washington

City / Township: Afton

Alternate Text for Visual:

The map shows a parcel of Belwin land of about 300 acres with white hatching that shows the 72 acre woodland restoration.

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity	_____ Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL _____%
_____ If under \$200,000, waive presentation?			

PROJECT TITLE: Woodland Restoration Project

PROJECT STATEMENT

Belwin Conservancy will restore 72 acres of Belwin's nearly 1400 acres. This woodland restoration project is in a beautiful area that will be open to the public in the future.

Goal: The overall goal of the project is to restore the woodland in this area to a near native state, to protect the wetlands, stream, and enhance habitat for birds, pollinators and all wildlife.

How: The restoration project will occur on steep slopes and wetland edges and achieve the goal by removing invasive species and restoring the existing remnants of Dry Prairie, Oak Savanna, and Mixed Hardwood Forest. Contractors and staff will remove invasive species using extra care to avoid soil disturbance on these slopes as well as along the edges of the wetlands and streambeds. To restore the woodlands on this acreage we will:

- Remove all non-native trees and shrubs along with undesirable native species. Bur oak should be the dominant canopy tree in the savanna areas, Mixed hardwoods will be dominant in other areas
- Maintain less than 25% cover of woody invasive species and 10% herbaceous invasive species.
- Promote an understory composed of appropriate native species specific to the ecology of the area

Why: By restoring the habitat to native species, we will enhance the health of the wetlands, stream, and native habitat, benefiting native fish species, pollinators, native plants, shrubs and trees, and overall water quality in the watershed. It will create a place where the public can experience the beauty of a restored woodland and all the native plants and wildlife that it supports.

The vegetation on the parcel in this request is severely degraded. Historically these parcels have not been managed and the shrub layer of the woodlands is dominated mostly by invasive species. The parcels include steep slopes and the soils are described as excessively drained, and rapidly permeable on glacial ground moraine making it important to manage for erosion and run off. By restoring these acres to a savanna or mixed hardwood forest with a healthy understory of native shrubs and plants, we can manage run-off and create a good habitat for birds, pollinators and wildlife. The density of the invasive plants impairs any herbaceous regeneration on the site creating little or no filtering as water run-off enters the wetlands and stream.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Site Preparation and on-going management

We will remove 100% of non-desirable species to make it possible for native and desirable species to thrive. We will manage the land to keep invasive species from returning and to make the woodland restoration successful. We will evaluate with "before" and "after" photos taken annually. **ENRTF BUDGET: \$180,000**

Activity 2: Restoration

At least 2000 plants consisting of 10 different species will be reintroduced along with inter-seeding when and where needed. Seed will be collected from Belwin lands, or purchased with as local a genotype in origin as possible. The objective is to reintroduce native species to restore the woodlands in this area. Plantings will be evaluated with "before" and "after" photos taken annually.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$ 47,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 100% reduction in buckthorn/undesirable trees and woody shrubs	May 2020
2. 85% reduction in invasive regrowth – maintain less than 25% cover of woody invasive species and 10% herbaceous invasive species	Fall 2022
3. Reintroduction of 10 different native species totaling 2000 plants in overall project, seeding of native grasses and flowers to enhance the over all diversity of the area	Oct 2021

III. PROJECT PARTNERS:

A. Partners receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
NA			

B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
NA			

IV. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

The restored parcels will continue to be managed to maintain 85% reduction in invasive growth and less than 25% cover of woody invasive species and 10% herbaceous invasive species. Knowledge gained from this project will be applied to further restoration projects. Evaluation will be done annually as described above. In the future the land will be open to public hiking and there are plans to have educational programming on this land. The funding for maintenance and programming will be matched from a combination of membership dollars, foundation dollars, fee income, and general operating support provided by Belwin Conservancy.

V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS:

Aug 2019 – March 2020: Removal of invasive species

Aug 2020 – Nov 2020 – Foliar herbicide treatment of invasive species

Growing Season 2021 - Seeding and planting

Growing Season 2022 - Seeding and planting

2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet		
Project Title:Belwin Conservancy Lake Edith Managemnt Area Woodland Restoration.		
IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years		
BUDGET ITEM (See "Guidance on Allowable Expenses")	AMOUNT	
Personnel:		
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: Professional Restoration Contractor that specializes in woodland restoration for buckthorn and undesirable tree removal and active management. An RFP will be sent out after the Grant is awarded.	\$	180,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Plant Materials (Seed and Plants for Restoration)	\$	47,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	\$	-
Travel:	\$	-
Additional Budget Items:	\$	-
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =		\$ 227,000
V. OTHER FUNDS (This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)		
SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:		
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	N/A	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Eric Palmen - Facility and equipment specialist at Belwin/ Planting and seeding/ 2% of full time/ 12% for benefits/ 88% for salary	\$ 1,162	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Martin McGough - land specialist at Belwin/ Planting and seeding/ 4% of full time/ 14% for benefits/ 86% for salary	\$1,920.80	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Lynette Anderson - Interpretive Naturalist and Restoration Assistant at Belwin/ Planting and seeding/ 4% of full time / 8% for benefits/ 82% for salary	\$2,013.60	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Justin Sykora - Operations Director and Facilities and Land Manager at Belwin/ Project mangement; Planting and seeding/ 7% of full time/ 8%for benefits/ 82% for salary	\$5,245.52	
Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:	N/A	
Other Funding History:	N/A	

Belwin Conservancy Request to LCCMR

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.*

All restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement. Belwin has many permanently protected areas. The areas we are requesting funds for are protected under the Minnesota Land Trust.

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 components of the management plan include removal of woody and herbaceous invasive species, maintenance through mowing, burning, and continued management of invasive species, and planting and inter-seeding the understory of the restored woodland with native plant species. The outcome is to restore these parcels in the Valley Creek watershed to a more native state, to protect the wetlands, stream, and enhance habitat for birds, pollinators and all wildlife.

Prior to initiating restoration, Belwin will contact the neighbors to let them know about the work and to determine if they have interest in doing restoration on their properties. If there is interest, Belwin is willing to provide guidance. This would be done with Belwin operating funds.

Management plans exist for all of Belwin Conservancy's parcels and these are kept both electronically and in physical binders. Parcels for restoration are prioritized and the management plan is updated as needed. The 72.5 acres in this request are some of the final parcels to be restored in this area of Belwin.

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.*

- Belwin Staff has read and follows the guide in all its restoration projects.
- Cutting will occur on frozen ground to limit soil disturbance
- Non-chemical methods of long term management will be utilized where possible
- When needed, herbicide treatments will be timed to limit the non-target damage to native plants and pollinators
- Site-specific planting plans will include the highest level of diversity possible
- All plant material being used in the restoration processes will be yellow tag seed and plants sourced as close to the area as possible

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.*

Monitoring the site is crucial to ensure that progress has been made in meeting the restoration objectives. This also allows the management activities to be evaluated and adapted accordingly. At this point in time, monitoring of this site will be done qualitatively. Each management unit will be checked at a minimum of twice during the growing season for species presence/absence, the percent cover and change in invasive species populations, the efficacy of management activities, and, if applicable, the presence of oak wilt. Every few years, the density of oaks saplings should be assessed to ensure that oak

regeneration is occurring. After prescribed burning every 3 – 5 years, the unit should be monitored during the following growing season to determine if the management objectives of the fire were achieved.

A photo monitoring program will be developed on the parcels that is similar to photo monitoring that has occurred at other locations at Belwin. At least one permanent point within each management unit will be selected and marked with a wooden post and its location recorded in Belwin's GIS system. Photos will be taken in the same direction with the same camera (if possible) at the same time of year. Because spotted knapweed and European buckthorn are two of the most problematic species at the site, it is recommended to take the photos in June when the spotted knapweed is in flower, and again in October when the density of buckthorn in the understory is readily apparent.

A large part of the management funding in the future will come from Belwin's operating funds, fee income, and money raised to support the Conservancy's work from memberships and other funders.

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

The Conservation Corps will be notified upon receipt of the grant and included on any RFP. Belwin has done this regularly in the past. It is highly likely that Belwin will use the Conservation Corp in the planting portion of the project.


5. 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.

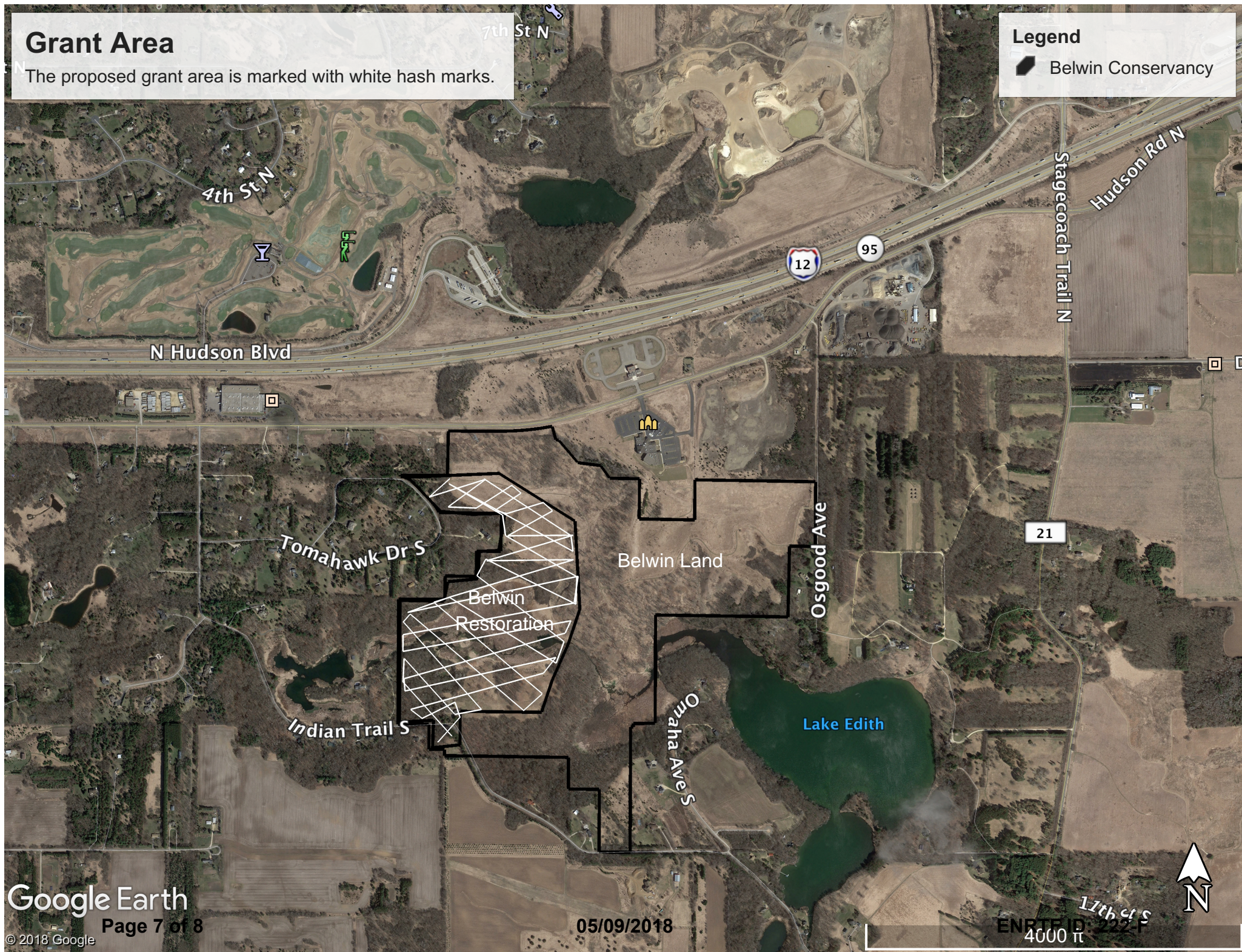
Evaluations will be completed on each of the parcels initially upon completion of each activity and this will be done each year as described above.

Grant Area

The proposed grant area is marked with white hash marks.

Legend

 Belwin Conservancy



Belwin Conservancy Request to LCCMR

F. Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Justin Sykora is the Operations Director and Land and Facilities Manager at Belwin and has been an employee since November 2015. He comes to Belwin with 13 years of land management services with Prairie Restorations, Inc. The role of the land and facilities manager is to plan and coordinate Belwin's on-going land management operations. Land responsibilities include developing detailed annual work plans and budget, developing partnerships with other agencies and organizations around land management, overseeing staff and all land activities including invasive plant control, prescribed burning, mowing, and buckthorn removal. Justin has a B.S. degree in Conservation from the University of WI at River Falls.

The Belwin Conservancy (501 (c) 3) is located in the St. Croix River Valley in the towns of West Lakeland and Afton and encompasses almost 1400 acres. For more than 40 years, Belwin has been inspiring connection to the natural world through hands-on environmental education, land preservation and restoration, and programs that bring people into the outdoors to learn about the natural world. One of the largest and most diverse assemblages of restored land in close proximity to a metropolitan area, Belwin models best practices in the restoration of oak savannah and prairie, and conservation of land in the water shed of the Valley Creek trout stream. Most of this acreage can be considered contiguous except a 300-acre restored Oak Savanna located approximately ¾'s of a mile west which is where the parcels in this request are located. Valley Creek is a high quality trout stream with naturally reproducing populations of brook, brown, and rainbow trout. Trout depend on both local aspects of in-stream habitat as well as qualities of the larger watershed. Belwin Conservancy has worked to protect the area in the watershed through restoration on its permanent easements, encouraging private landowners to create easements, and educating private landowners about best practices in managing land that abuts the wetlands, Lake Edith, and Valley Creek itself.

The St. Paul School system runs an environmental science education program out of the Education Center at Belwin. Approximately 10,000 3rd and 5th grade students attend this program for one day of hands-on science each year. Belwin maintains the Education Center and the land that is used for the teaching. The school system is wholly responsible for the program both financially and programmatically. In addition, Belwin opens up its acreage to researchers and their students from a number of local colleges and universities to use for ongoing research projects, makes many acres and many miles of hiking trails available to the public 365 days a year, and in 2010, opened an observatory in partnership with the Minnesota Astronomical Society (MAS). Belwin's education programs for the public include: Introduction to Fly Fishing, Nature Hikes, Bird Watching, Owl Hikes, Frog Hikes, Art in Nature, etc. Its financial support comes from a combination of funding from memberships, foundations, fee income, partnerships, government, and an endowment.