**PROJECT TITLE: Pollinator Habitat Creation Along the Urban Mississippi River**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

This project will create 26.5 acres of diverse pollinator and wildlife habitat within the Mississippi River corridor in the Twin Cities urban core. This builds upon previous restoration and enhancement work Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) has done at 2 sites by restoring additional contiguous acres. The third is a new restoration. Invasive herbaceous and woody plants will be removed at all sites and native vegetation planted and seeded in their place. As pollinator and wildlife habitat is lost across the state and country, research increasingly indicates the value that even small acres of native vegetation in urban areas can provide. These areas can be critical habitat for pollinators, birds and other wildlife when they contain native vegetation and are strategically located (Baldock et al. 2019; Narango et al. 2018). All the project sites are located within two such strategic corridors: The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, and the Metro Conservation Corridors.

The entire 7-acre River Heights Park in Inver Grove Heights will be restored to native prairie and pollinator-friendly shrubs. In the Minneapolis River Gorge, 17 new acres of forest adjacent to the river will be enhanced, adding to the 10 acres that were previously enhanced immediately to the south. At Ole Olson Park in north Minneapolis, 2 acres of new riverfront prairie will be added to 2 previously restored acres. By expanding upon previous restoration efforts and adding new sites, this project helps create contiguous, high-quality habitat for wildlife and limits further invasive encroachment.

FMR staff will manage and oversee all aspects of the project including adaptive management. Local ecotype native plant material will be used, including diverse seed mixes (minimum 35 species) and species for resiliency. Staff will evaluate restoration results using the LCCMR’s restoration monitoring protocol. Previous three-year restoration projects have revealed that five years of initial funded efforts improve the chance of project success and help ensure that projects reach a maintenance stage that require only minimal effort going forward.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1 Title: Minneapolis Prairie Restoration – Ole Olson Park**

**Description:**On 2 acres of riverfront natural area in North Minneapolis, activities include: non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, silt fence installation for erosion prone areas, seeding with 35+ native prairie species, mowing, and prescribed burning. Using in-kind support, community volunteers will be organized to assist with restoration efforts.

**ENRTF BUDGET: $39,785**

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1.* Removal of invasive woody and herbaceous vegetation/seeding of native prairie mix | November 2021 |
| *2.* Establishment mows and spot spraying  | July 2024 |
| *3.* Prescribed burn on 2 acres and supplemental seeding | June 2025 |

**Activity 2 Title: Minneapolis Forest Enhancement – Minneapolis Gorge Regional Park - Sand Flats**

**Description** At the 17 acres of river-adjacent floodplain forest, activities include: non-native/invasive herbaceous and woody plant removal and treatment, seeding, planting native trees and shrubs. Using in-kind support, FMR will organize volunteer stewardship events to assist with enhancement activities.

**ENRTF BUDGET: $42,872**

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Removal of invasive woody and herbaceous vegetation/seeding  | October 2021 |
| *2.* Plant 300 native trees and shrubs | June 2023 |

**Activity 3 Title: Prairie Restoration – River Heights Park**

**Description** At this 7.5-acre park, activities include: removal of invasive woody plants, seeding to native prairie, prescribed burns and mowing. With an abundance of existing non-native invasive plants, this site will require two full seasons of site preparation. Using LCCMR and in-kind support, we will engage volunteers and citizen scientists to survey pollinators and track changes before and after restoration.

**ENRTF BUDGET: $46,640**

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| **Outcome**  | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Removal of invasive woody vegetation on 7.5 acres | June 2021 |
| *2.* Prescribed burn and seeding of native prairie mix/plant 20 pollinator shrubs | June 2023 |
| *3.* Mow grassland 4 times and conduct 2nd prescribed burn | June 2025 |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

Ole Olson Park and Minneapolis Gorge Sand Flats: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will support volunteer events with in-kind labor; the Longfellow Community Council (for Sand Flats) will support volunteer activities through match funding and volunteer recruitment.

River Heights Park: City of Inver Grove Heights will assist with invasive woody removal and support for volunteer activities; Local community of volunteers is highly engaged and will assist restoration and monitoring efforts.

**IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:**

FMR strategically focuses on areas within designated conservation corridors. We stay engaged with projects, landowners, partners and communities, ensuring continuous improvement and expansion of the habitat values at these sites, while protecting the public investment. The project at Ole Olson will complete restoration for the entire site and bring it to a maintenance state requiring minimal future efforts. FMR will partner with the Minneapolis Park Board and work with volunteers to maintain the restoration. The project at the Minneapolis Gorge Regional Park more than doubles the acres FMR will have restored of the roughly 65 acres of park along the river’s west bank. We will continue to work with FMR’s volunteer Gorge Leadership Team to maintain the previous and new restorations with support from the Longfellow Community Council and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Our future goals are to expand restoration north and south of these acres once Master Planning has been completed by the Park Board. The River Heights Park site will likely need spot-management of invasive species as well as periodic prescribed burns. FMR will work with the city and volunteers to assist with these tasks and will seek funding as needed for larger tasks. Brought to these stages of restoration, the sites will provide contiguous corridors for the benefit of wildlife and people, and improve water quality for the river.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet**

**B. Visual Component or Map**

**C. Parcel List Spreadsheet**

**D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements**

**E. Research Addendum (Not required at proposal submission stage. Required later in process, if proposal is recommended. Staff will provide further information at that time)**

**F. Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description**

**G. Letter or Resolution**

**H. Financial Capacity**