**PROJECT TITLE:** *Grants for Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas*

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

The Outdoor Recreation (Local Parks), Natural and Scenic Area and Local Trail Connections Grant Programs provide competitive matching grants for local parks, natural areas and trails to local governments for land acquisition and improvements related to parks and trails statewide. Local governments provide at least a 50 percent cash and/or in-kind match for local parks and natural areas and at least a 25 percent cash match for local trails, as required under MN Statutes 85.019. Many projects include renovation of existing recreational amenities to improve safety and accessibility, acquisition of locally significant natural and scenic areas, completion of trail linkages to safely connect where people live to desirable locations within the community and/or connecting local trails to regional or state facilities. Demand for these programs are significant. Historically, we have able to fund between 20-25% of the applications submitted but with the 2018 LCCMR funding we were able to increase the applications funded to 33% funding 33 applications out of the 90 submitted.

These programs are at the front line of the DNR’s effort to partner with local communities in providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities. It is especially important given that most funding sources have greatly diminished for these local programs, and they are not eligible for the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, which only funds projects of state or regional significance. Connecting citizens with the outdoors through parks and trail connections to the State Outdoor Recreation System, Regional Parks and Trail Systems and significant local resources enhances Minnesota’s stewardship ethic and furthers the goals of the Department’s Strategic Conservation Agenda.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

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| **Activity 1 Title:** *Grants for the Local Parks, Natural and Scenic Areas and Trail Connections.***Description:**This request will provide approximately 25 matching grants to cities and counties for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of natural resource based local park projects, natural and scenic areas and trail connections. If needed, two grant rounds will be held. The local match for projects funded at the requested level would exceed $2 million*.* **Outdoor Recreation (Local Parks):** Local governments are struggling to acquire, develop and redevelop their local and community parks. The goal of this funding is to increase and enhance close-to-home natural resource based recreation facilities, not including athletic facilities such as sport fields, courts, and playgrounds, to provide safe and accessible recreation amenities. Parks acquired and developed under this program are retained for public use in perpetuity. **Natural and Scenic Areas:** Opportunities for local governments to acquire and protect natural and scenic areas statewide are diminishing due to development, especially in high growth areas, shore lands, bluff tops and areas where land use changes may limit future opportunities. The goal of this program is to ensure protection of natural and scenic resources by helping and encouraging local governments to acquire and protect such land for appropriate public use, protection of natural communities, species protection, appreciation of scenic vistas, and scientific and environmental education purposes. Land acquired and natural resources are retained for public use in perpetuity. These areas complement state protected areas and provide close-to-home natural resource-based benefits. **Local Trail Connections**: Local Trail Connections grants fund projects to acquire, develop and re-develop local trail connections across Minnesota. The projects are primarily for shorter distance connections between residential areas, schools, businesses, parks, and the regional park and trail system and/or the State Outdoor Recreation System. These projects help to expand the connections between individuals and the outdoors by providing funding for local outdoor recreation infrastructure that also provides for alternative transportation options. Trails developed under this program are retained for public use for a minimum of 20 years. Land acquisition is permanent.**ENRTF BUDGET: $ $2,925,000** |  |
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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Provide approximately 11 matching grants for Local Parks.* | *Fall 2020/2021* |
| *2. Provide approximately 3 matching grants for Natural and Scenic Areas.* | *Fall 2020/2021* |
| *3. Provide approximately 11 matching grants for Trail Connections.* | *Fall 2020/2021* |
| ***Activity 2 Title:*** *Grant Program Administration****Description:***The requested funding will be used to support personnel costs for administering the grant programs and DNR direct and necessary costs associated with this funding. Grant staff are involved in grant solicitation, evaluation and ranking, grant agreement management, project billings, project inspections, compliance monitoring and project close out.***ENRTF BUDGET: $ 75,000*** |  |
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| ***Outcome*** | ***Completion Date*** |
| *1. Administer RFP, application process and grant contracts* | *June 30, 2023* |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:** Partners are local governments, primarily counties and cities. They will acquire, own, develop, and manage the parks or trails. The local governments will provide at least $2 million match with approximately $1.9 million in cash match and approximately $100,000 in in-kind services. In addition, they cover the costs of appraisals, land transaction costs, and required archeological/historical surveys and assume all ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

**IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:** The local government recipients are responsible for the ongoing operations and maintenance costs. All property acquired must be kept for public outdoor recreation purposes permanently.

**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**