**PROJECT TITLE: Metropolitan Regional Parks System Land Acquisition – Phase 6**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

This project will acquire approximately five properties with high-quality natural resources or strong natural resource restoration potential for the metropolitan Regional Parks System. This system serves as the State Parks System of the metropolitan area, offering large-scale, natural-resource based recreation opportunities to all Minnesotans. The properties included in this proposal offer a broad range of ecological significance, from native prairie, wetland, river bluffs and ravines, shoreline, and agricultural land to an urban property along the Mississippi River.

Many of these properties are at risk of being developed if they are not acquired for the Regional Parks System. The project will contribute to the equitable use of the Regional Parks System by increasing access and protecting properties for public use in Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties in perpetuity. Some of the properties would help assemble the land for regional parks or trails that are not currently open to the public; others would purchase inholdings for regional parks or trails that are open to the public.

The metropolitan Regional Parks System is owned and operated by the ten Regional Parks Implementing Agencies (Agencies) identified in [Minnesota Statutes, section 473.351](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.351). Working with the Agencies, the Council has compiled a list of 30 properties that may potentially be acquired between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2023. The parcels range in size from 2.93 acres to 110 acres. Some of these properties are under active negotiation; for others, the sellers have expressed an interest in selling to the Agency or are aware of the Agency’s interest. Because the timing is uncertain as to when properties will be available from willing sellers, this proposal builds a property pool which allows Agencies to capitalize on opportunities as they arise.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

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| --- | --- |
| **Activity 1 Title: Acquisition of properties**  **Description:**The Agencies individually negotiate each acquisition. After they have obtained a signed purchase agreement, a certified appraisal, and a resolution of support from their elected boards, the Agencies submit a grant request to the Metropolitan Council.  The Council serves as the fiscal agent and awards grants to the Agencies to assist with buying property for the metropolitan Regional Parks System through its Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund (PAOF) program. The PAOF program has three major funding sources: ENRTF, Parks and Trails Legacy Fund (Legacy), and matching dollars. Agencies must provide at least 25% of acquisition costs from non-state funds. PAOF is administered as “first-come, first-served.”  In accordance with [Minnesota Statutes, section 473.313](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.313), the Council first reviews the application to confirm that the property is with the boundaries of a Council-approved regional park or trail master plan. The Council then conducts an administrative review of the appraisal and other proposed acquisition-related costs. If all elements of the purchase conform to ENRTF requirements, the staff presents the item for approval by the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC), as required by [Minnesota Statutes, section 473.315](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.315). Next, the Community Development Committee and the full Council consider the item for approval. Agencies are then able to close on the property.  After the grant agreement is executed, the necessary amount of ENRTF funding and the Council’s match have been properly added to the Council’s Authorized Capital Program, and upon receipt of a properly substantiated claim, the Council reimburses the Agency for approved costs. It is the Council’s practice to require Agencies to spend down their match on eligible ancillary costs, such as the appraisal, title search or closing costs, so that the Council’s reimbursement request to LCCMR includes only a portion of the purchase price.  The Council is requesting $2.5 million in ENRTF funds, which it would more than double with $1.66 million in matching Council bonds and $1.39 million in Agency funds, for a total of $5.5 million. The total estimated cost to acquire all 30 properties is more than $17 million.  Some of these properties do contain residences; the Council and Agency staff have reviewed each of them to ensure that the property can be split in a logical and reasonable manner so that ENRTF funds the portion without a house.  **ENRTF BUDGET: $2,500,000** |  |

| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| --- | --- |
| *Request for proposals* | *January 31, 2019* |
| *Agencies submit grant applications as properties become available* | *Ad hoc* |
| *Council reviews properties for inclusion in a Council-approved master plan, reviews proposals for completeness and eligibility, and awards grants* | *Generally within 2 months of application submittal* |
| *Agencies may close on properties* | *After award* |
| *Properties acquired for the Regional Parks System* | *June 30, 2023* |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

| **Regional Park Implementing Agency** | **Contact name** |
| --- | --- |
| Dakota County | Al Singer |
| Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | Christine Downey |
| Ramsey County | Scott Yonke |
| Scott County | Patty Freeman |
| Three Rivers Park District | Kelly Grissman |
| Washington County | Sharon Price |

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

Individual Agencies are responsible for the development and maintenance of the properties once they are acquired. Historically, the state provides an average of 9% of the operation and maintenance funding in accordance with [Minnesota Statutes, section 473.351](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.351), with the vast majority coming from local sources. Agencies undertake removal of unneeded structures, natural resource restoration, and trail and facility development; these activities may be funded from a variety of sources, including state General Obligation bonds, Legacy projects, or self-funding.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet**

**B. Maps**

**C. Parcel List Spreadsheet**

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

**E. Research Addendum – N/A**

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

**G. Letter or Resolution – N/A**

**H. Financial Capacity – N/A**