



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-338

Proposal Title: Above the Falls Regional Park Acquisition and Restoration

Project Manager Information

Name: Adam Arvidson

Organization: Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This project would acquire and restore 3.25 acres of industrial land along the Mississippi River within the Above the Falls Regional Park.

Funds Requested: \$1,267,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2026-12-31

LCCMR Funding Category: Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation (G)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Metro

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): Metro

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

All of the waterfront in Minneapolis has been public for more than 100 years—except the Mississippi River in North and Northeast Minneapolis. This historic gap in habitat and public access illuminates disparities across the city and creates a break in the Mississippi Flyway. Over years and with significant state assistance, parcels were purchased by MPRB and other public entities in the interest of implementing a grand park vision known as RiverFirst. That 2012 vision established a framework for Above the Falls Regional Park that would acquire and restore the entire riverfront, thereby closing historic access and habitat gaps.

On the west bank, nearly 3.5 miles of shoreline is in public hands and either is or will soon be converted to parkland with restored ecosystems. Stretching from near the Lowry Bridge northward to Interstate 694, this nearly continuous ribbon is comprised of Minneapolis's Upper Harbor Terminal (soon to have public park on its shoreline), MPRB's Northside Operations Center, and both the MPRB and Three Rivers Park District portions of North Mississippi Regional Park. It is only broken by a single parcel with 600 feet of shoreline. This project will close a small gap in this public riverfront.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

Acquisition of this single parcel will create a continuous public shoreline and establish habitat connectivity along 3.5 miles of the Mississippi River—the most traveled flyway in the U.S. With assistance from the ENRTF, this gap can finally be closed. The timing is ideal: the Upper Harbor Terminal—thanks to state bond funding—will see the creation of naturalized park spaces within the next five years. This will extend the existing natural areas of North Mississippi Regional Park another mile to the south, if this single gap can be bridged. Acquisition and then restoration of this parcel will benefit the entire flyway and make investment in communities that have been historically left without public water access.

We understand this acquisition would be eligible for ENRTF-funded Parks Acquisition Opportunity Funds through the Metropolitan Council, because it is a site with restoration potential within a regional park boundary. We are bringing a proposal directly to LCCMR because this acquisition could exhaust the PAOF quickly and, because of its urban/industrial character, it could be viewed as out of character with typical PAOF purchases. MPRB feels it is worthwhile to make this proposal directly so it can be discussed individually.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This project would extend the benefits of restored habitat and shoreline to underserved portions of the Metro. It will help complete the continuous green ribbon of the Mississippi Flyway. To leave a 600 linear foot gap in the existing 3.5 miles of green would minimize the overall quality of the habitat and public access. The outcome of this project, therefore, is to contribute to the eventual acquisition of all the Minneapolis riverfront, as envisioned in plans that go back decades. Much work has been already completed to this end, and we are requesting funds to bridge the last gap.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Parcel Acquisition

Activity Budget: \$950,000

Activity Description:

MPRB would work with the current property owner to acquire fee title to the parcel. MPRB staff time, legal costs, and most closing costs would be paid by MPRB as part of the grant match, with the majority of the ENRTF funding going to actual parcel acquisition. A preliminary (restricted) appraisal has been performed but a new appraisal would be ordered upon receipt of funding.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Appraisal, Negotiations, and Due Diligence	2021-11-30
Parcel Acquisition	2022-04-30

Activity 2: Restoration Planning

Activity Budget: \$20,000

Activity Description:

MPRB will hire an ecological restoration professional through a competitive process and work with them to prepare a restoration plan for the site. The restoration plan will become part of the construction plans for the project that will be publicly bid (Activity 3). The restoration plan will guide all construction, the process for ongoing monitoring, and long-term maintenance. Construction plans will be prepared by MPRB staff (as part of the grant match) and will be based on the restoration plan.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Selection of Restoration Ecologist Professional	2021-09-30
Completion of Restoration Plan	2022-04-30
Completion of Restoration Plans for Bidding	2022-10-31

Activity 3: Ecological Restoration and Ongoing Monitoring

Activity Budget: \$297,000

Activity Description:

This phase will include the hiring of a construction contractor through the public bidding process. Following construction contract award by the MPRB Board of Commissioners, Permitting and Construction Mobilization will commence. The Contractor will complete the restoration under the observation of the MPRB hired consultant and MPRB staff that will oversee Construction Administration activities. Demobilization from the site will occur when the contractor has completed the Work as described in the bidding documents. The selected ecological consultant will assist with oversight of the work and then perform annual plant biodiversity and health surveys for three years.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Restoration Construction Bid Award	2023-01-31
Completion of Site Restoration	2023-10-31
Three Years of Restoration Monitoring	2026-10-31

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as part of its overall natural resources maintenance programs. Such activities do include paid staff work, volunteers, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Maintenance and management activities are funded by the MPRB tax levy and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. Additional work necessary after initial construction will be covered by the contractor's warranty and will not require additional funding. Additional restoration and enhancement work after the warranty period will be funded by MPRB.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Expanding Nature Knowledge and Experience with New Interactive Exhibits at North Mississippi Regional Park	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05h	\$500,000
Invasive Carp Management Research in Lake Nokomis Subwatershed	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 06g	\$189,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Adam Arvidson

Job Title: Director of Strategic Planning

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Mr. Arvidson is MPRB's Director of Strategic Planning, in which role he is responsible for large-scale planning of public lands. He is a registered landscape architect with 20+ years of experience in the public and private sector and has worked on numerous habitat and environment projects, including several funded through LCCMR and the Lessard-Sams Council. He is currently the project manager for the MPRB's Ecological Systems Plan and is also leading the agency's effort to create new environmentally sound master plans for each neighborhood park.

Organization: Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board

Organization Description:

With 179 park properties totaling nearly 6,800 acres of land and water, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) provides places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment. Each year, approximately 20 million visits are made to the nationally acclaimed Minneapolis park system. Its urban forests, natural areas, and waters endure and captivate. Its Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and diversified programming have made the Minneapolis park system an important component of what makes Minneapolis a great place to live, play and work.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Ecological Restoration Professional to be determined	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Selected consultant will prepare the restoration plan for the site, based on BWSR guidelines. Consultant will also monitor the site during establishment and prepare summary reports for MPRB, which will be compiled into the project's biological report at the end of the project.				-		\$25,000
Construction Contractor to be determined	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will perform all construction work, as directed by the approved construction plans. Contractor and hired sub-contractors will provide demolition, excavation, soil remediation, grading, planting, erosion control, and other construction tasks.				0		\$292,000
							Sub Total	\$317,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	3.25 Parcels: 1						\$950,000
							Sub Total	\$950,000

Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,267,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board General Fund as designated for general staffing and fringe.	Matching funds will be used for all personnel costs, including community engagement, landowner negotiation, and project administration for the acquisition and restoration activities.	Secured	\$50,000
Cash	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board General Fund as designated for land acquisition.	Land acquisition designated funds will be used for a portion of land costs and other acquisition soft costs.	Secured	\$200,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$250,000
			Funds Total	\$250,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
PID: 0302924310012	Hennepin	The site has frontage on the Mississippi River but has been historically used for industrial uses. There is no intact ecosystem on the site. However, as part of Above the Falls Regional Park, this parcel would connect public lands and restored waterfront to the north (North Mississippi Regional Park) and the south (Upper Harbor Terminal) in a nearly 5-mile continuous public riverfront.	Fee Title	3.25	0.11	\$950,000	Private	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Has not begun
Totals				3.25	0.11	\$950,000			

Fee Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

The extents of Above the Falls Regional Park were determined through extensive community engagement as part of the RiverFirst vision in 2011 and 2012. The boundary of this park is recognized by the Metropolitan Council and it includes both publicly owned and privately owned parcels. The ultimate vision is to acquire and bring into MPRB ownership all parcels within the boundary, including the one included in this request. Specific decisions around which parcels to acquire when is dependent on three main factors: willingness of the owner to sell, impact on completeness of the park, and available funding. This parcel is being brought forward because we understand the owner may have an interest in divesting the property and (as described in the project narrative) the positive impact on habitat and water access connectivity will be high. MPRB will be unable to acquire this parcel without outside assistance.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Though not strictly a natural resources plan, the MPRB- and City of Minneapolis-adopted RiverFirst Vision calls for the acquisition and restoration of this parcel, along with the entire riverfront in North and Northeast Minneapolis. The principles of RiverFirst are displayed in MPRB's Master Plan for Above the Falls Regional Park, which has been adopted by the Board of Commissioners and is pending at the Metropolitan Council. A link to the ATF Master Plan is found below.

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/park_care__improvements/park_projects/current_projects/above-the-falls-regional-park-master-plan-update/

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

Components of the restoration and management plan will include a description of current conditions, with a focus on hydrology, geology, and the aquatic biotic community as they apply large river systems; description of a target restoration community, which is most likely to be partly an aquatic to emergent wetland/riparian system and partly an upland grassland or savanna system; a timeline for restoration; and guidance for ongoing management of the restored areas. The restoration plan will be included in the creation of construction plans for the project and will guide both construction and ongoing management. This plan will be kept both in MPRB staff project files and in the MPRB archive, as well as posted publicly on the MPRB website.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

Not applicable.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

MPRB confirms that M.S. 116P.17 will be followed and that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained.

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 will occur on land permanently in public ownership (owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, once purchased).

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.

Components of the restoration and management plan will include a description of current conditions, with a focus on hydrology, geology, and the aquatic biotic community as they apply large river systems; description of a target restoration community, which is most likely to be partly an aquatic to emergent wetland/riparian system and partly an upland grassland or savanna system; a timeline for restoration; and guidance for ongoing management of the restored areas. The restoration plan will be included in the creation of construction plans for the project and will guide both construction and ongoing management. This plan will be kept both in MPRB staff project files and in the MPRB archive, as well as posted publicly on the MPRB website.

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.

MPRB and its partners will fully utilize BWSR’s guidance document. Because this project occurs on an urban site, we expect to use the "Disturbed Site" guidance according to the “Minimum Recommended Number of Species” matrix (p.8), though the exact target will be determined by the restoration plan. The project will utilize and source seed as recommended for the project location (Ecological Section 8, astride the Big Woods and Anoka Sand Plain Subsections). Primary project type guidance will come from the section native prairie reconstruction because the site is an industrial plot with no existing native vegetation (p. 37).

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.

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as part of its overall natural resources maintenance programs. Such activities do include paid staff work, volunteers, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Maintenance and management activities are funded by the MPRB tax levy and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding.

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

Prior to the commencement of construction activities, the project manager will contact the Conservation Corps of Minnesota to determine desire and availability to perform applicable work.

6. 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 immediately after construction, and then annually for three years.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [fa94f3bc-630.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map of North Minneapolis along the Mississippi River showing proposed acquisition parcel along with adjacent MPRB and City owned parcels.

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
MPRB Approved and Signed Resolution 2020-175	05d5466d-327.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration, Fee Acquisition,

Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?

No

Does your project include research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No



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Minneapolis Park and
Recreation Board

Above the Falls Regional Park
Land Acquisition and Restoration

