



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-128

Proposal Title: Gateway Wildlife Management Area Pilot Project

Project Manager Information

Name: Jami Markle

Organization: MN DNR - Fish and Wildlife Division

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Gateway wildlife management area (WMA) pilot project will allow wildlife managers to acquire and design inclusive WMAs with an emphasis on outreach and engagement with new audiences.

Funds Requested: \$2,862,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30 2025

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

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro, Central,

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

Region(s): Metro, Central,

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

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

As public hunting and angling participation declines in Minnesota, the relevancy of public wildlife lands will eventually suffer. The DNR's WMA system offers an opportunity to immerse Minnesotans in wildlife habitat, by protecting public land and fostering connections to the outdoors. The timing is right for an initiative that curates an introductory WMA visitor experience evolving with changing social and demographic trends. Region 3 has many WMAs located near cities and other population centers. Opportunities arise each year to acquire additional parcels, whether as additions to existing units, or as new standalone WMAs. These "close to home" state wildlife lands create opportunities to welcome new WMA users, provide quality recreational experiences to multiple audiences, deliver wildlife-focused environmental education and highlight Minnesota's distinct wildlife habitat types. Providing approachable urban WMAs will serve as a "gateway" experience to public lands statewide, and more importantly, to engaging all Minnesotans in the outdoors.

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.

The Fish and Wildlife Division of MN DNR proposes the Gateway WMA pilot project, designed to connect people to the outdoors by providing an introductory experience to outdoor recreation on a WMA. The Gateway WMA concept integrates multiple components to create a welcoming and approachable WMA for a variety of compatible uses and underrepresented community groups. This more inclusive experience at the WMA entry point and specific points of interest on the land will facilitate learning, build confidence in outdoor settings and introduce visitors to a network of state wildlife lands and public lands that may otherwise be new to them. We recognize an opportunity to serve diverse communities closer to population centers, removing barriers in order to foster connections to nature and wildlife habitat.

Gateway WMAs will be designed and administered in a manner that allows for public hunting (unless restricted by local ordinance), wildlife observation, sport fishing, hiking, snowshoeing and other resource-related uses that are consistent with rule. Approachable public facilities and self-guided educational resources will enhance visitor experience and encourage WMA recreation system-wide.

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?

The Gateway project will protect WMA lands in perpetuity, enhance and restore wildlife habitat and develop inclusive access at select pilot sites. The Gateway WMA initiative does not require or seek changes to the rules and statutes that guide WMA acquisition, designation and management. Rather, Gateway WMAs will be developed and managed in a way that meets the full spirit and intent of the outdoor recreation system as identified in MS 86A.05, Subd. 8 for WMAs. The proposed facilities and anticipated public uses Gateway WMAs are also compatible with MR 6230.0250, the general provisions for WMAs.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Gateway WMA Pilot Sites Land Acquisition

Activity Budget: \$1,650,000

Activity Description:

Wildlife Management Areas protect lands and waters which have a high potential for wildlife production, habitat and native plant communities. These WMA lands are developed and managed for public hunting, fishing and trapping, and for other compatible outdoor recreational uses such as wildlife watching and hiking. Strategic and targeted WMA land acquisition is a central component to the overall success of the Gateway WMA pilot project. This activity and supporting budget will allow Wildlife managers to proactively pursue new parcels that fit the project criteria, within and adjacent to metro opportunity areas. In some instances, new standalone WMAs opportunities may arise, in other cases, key additions to existing WMAs can be acquired to improve public access and provide development sites for Gateway WMA entry points and facilities. While highly successful, the current WMA system does not meet all present and future needs for wildlife habitat, wildlife population management, public access, and wildlife related recreation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
GIS Analysis of Existing WMAs and Gateway Pilot Site Opportunity Areas	September 30 2022
List of Pilot Site Recommendations, Maps and Issue Brief Document	December 31 2022
Work with Willing Sellers and Partners to Acquire the Highest Priority Properties	June 30 2024

Activity 2: Gateway WMA Pilot Site Design, Engineering and Landscape Architecture

Activity Budget: \$175,000

Activity Description:

Add description of needed design elements. Survey and public input, focus groups, open house

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Facility Concept Designs, Drawings and Cost Estimates	December 31 2022
Public Engagement Including Surveys, Open House Meetings and Focus Group Input	March 31 2023
Facility Design Recommendations and Concept Renderings	June 30 2023

Activity 3: Gateway WMA Pilot Site Construction and Implementation

Activity Budget: \$750,000

Activity Description:

Well-designed and constructed WMA user facilities are central to the Gateway WMA pilot project. While it would not be practical to implement these facilities and features broadly across the WMA system, a targeted and consistent application of facilities like these at select pilot sites would help introduce new audiences to WMAs, and be responsive to the evolution of recreation on public wildlife lands. Specific examples of WMA facilities include:

- Welcoming WMA entry points
- Gathering spaces with benches or seating
- Standardized and accessible parking lots
- Information kiosks and interpretive signs

- Wildlife viewing platforms or blinds
- Wetland boardwalks
- Mowed or graveled trails that serve management purposes (i.e. prescribed fire breaks) and also offer ADA accessibility
- Vault toilets or aesthetic pads/receptacles for seasonal rental toilets
- Garbage, recycling and compost containers

A workgroup of Wildlife managers have identified several examples of WMAs in Region 3 that already include examples of these desired facilities and features. Some of these unique WMAs are the result of partnerships with local government, non-profit organizations and schools, while others emerged due to the interest and dedication of local staff to provide outreach and make connections with new audiences.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Facility Bid Packages and Advertisements	June 30 2023
Review Bids and Award Contracts	December 31 2023
Facility Construction Complete	September 30 2024

Activity 4: Gateway WMA Pilot Pilot Coordination, Momentum and Implementation

Activity Budget: \$287,000

Activity Description:

Project coordinator support is essential for the success of this supplemental pilot project. A three-year, temporary unclassified coordinator position will allow for focused attention and sustained momentum to develop and implement the Gateway WMA project components. The requested budget for this activity provides staff support and oversight for the activities above, and includes salary, fleet, travel and direct and necessary costs associated with the position, including agency support.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Gateway WMA Pilot Project Implementation	June 30 2025

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?

Following this pilot project, a phase II proposal may be assembled for additional Gateway WMA development work at new sites. With design work completed under the pilot projects, costs would be reduced for future development work. WMA land and facility investments resulting from this grant will be maintained through annual DNR operations and budgets.

Several existing and draft WMA Directives will help inform the development and administration of Gateway WMAs. Directive topics include WMA development standards, recreation management and habitat management. Directives under development include guidance on non-motorized trails and public group events on WMAs.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jami Markle

Job Title: Regional Wildlife Manager

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

In my role as regional manager at MN DNR, I'm responsible for managing 10 administrative work areas geographically dispersed throughout central and southeast Minnesota. This includes: 1) Overseeing operations, budgets and fleet for the region and providing day-to-day leadership to a team of 45 field staff, 2) Direct responsibility for administering 240 Wildlife Management Areas encompassing over 180,000 acres of public land and 3) Collaborating with local governments, non-profit organizations and partner groups to accomplish and enhance wildlife populations, habitats, and public lands outcomes. I am experienced in project management, grant administration and reporting.

Organization: MN DNR - Fish and Wildlife Division

Organization Description:

The Division of Fish and Wildlife's work supports the DNR mission: Work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

The division is responsible for managing fish and wildlife populations and providing related outdoor recreational opportunities in Minnesota. We conserve and enhance water and land habitats; regulate hunting, trapping and fishing; foster environmental stewardship; and work with partners and the public to accomplish shared goals. Our work is informed by biological and social sciences, cultural and economic values, and our public trust obligation to manage fisheries and wildlife in perpetuity.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Gateway WMA Pilot Project Coordinator		Project launch, strategic direction, momentum, engagement, coordination, reporting			20%	3		\$249,000
							Sub Total	\$249,000
Contracts and Services								
MN DNR Engineering/Landscape Architecture/Creative Services (Professional Services)	Internal services or fees (uncommon)	WMA facility design, concept plans, final plans, bid specifications, bidding, contract awards and construction supervision.				0		\$175,000
MN DNR Land and Minerals (Professional Services)	Internal services or fees (uncommon)	Professional services related to fee title acquisition including appraisals, surveys, title review, insurance and other transactional services.				0		\$150,000
							Sub Total	\$325,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Construction contracts to install WMA Facilities at up to five pilot sites	Implementation through capital improvement projects such as - accessible parking lots and gates, information kiosks, boardwalks, wildlife viewing platforms, interpretive signage, day-use gathering areas, vault toilet facilities or receptacles for rentals.					\$750,000
							Sub Total	\$750,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 300 Parcels: 3						\$1,500,000

4/7/2021

							Sub Total	\$1,500,000
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Average travel for coordinator (1 FTE) would be 75 miles per week, over the 3 years of the proposed pilot project.	Routine in-state travel for project coordinator.					\$6,481
							Sub Total	\$6,481
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Direct and Necessary Costs	Direct and necessary costs cover HR Support (\$4,993), Safety Support (\$773), Financial Support (\$12,812), Communication Support (\$1,311), IT Support (\$10,622), and Planning Support (\$1,008).					\$31,519
							Sub Total	\$31,519
							Grand Total	\$2,862,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Dakota County Opportunity Area	Dakota	Quality mix of wildlife habitat, restoration/enhancement potential, close to home recreation	Fee Title	75	-	\$375,000	Private	MN DNR	Has not begun
Hennepin County Opportunity Area	Hennepin	Quality mix of wildlife habitat, restoration/enhancement potential, close to home recreation	Fee Title	75	-	\$375,000	Private	MN DNR	Has not begun
Olmsted County Opportunity Area	Olmsted	Quality mix of wildlife habitat, restoration/enhancement potential, close to home recreation	Fee Title	75	-	\$375,000	Private	MN DNR	Has not begun
Washington County Opportunity Area	Washington	Quality mix of wildlife habitat, restoration/enhancement potential, close to home recreation	Fee Title	75	-	\$375,000	Private	MN DNR	Has not begun
Totals				300	0	\$1,500,000			

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.

MN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife employs a rigorous WMA acquisition review process involving area, region, section and division approvals. MN DNR also relies on the annual Strategic Lands Asset Management (SLAM) process to ensure interdisciplinary coordination of proposed state land acquisitions. Both processes require extensive documentation of land attributes, conservation values, current conditions, and development/restoration needs. Additionally, WMA acquisition proposals are scored through a GIS-based evaluation tool to aid in ranking. For this proposal, Hennepin, Washington, Dakota and Olmsted Counties have been identified as likely locations for Gateway WMA facilities, due to proximity to population centers.

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.

The Gateway WMA pilot project is closely aligned with MN DNR's pheasant and duck action plans, both of which contain an objective to improve access to land for outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat appreciation. A strategy is articulated in each plan to "develop and pilot a new model at select WMA sites located near population centers, with a focus on enhanced facilities, wildlife and habitat education, and connecting new users with information about the broader WMA system and associated recreational opportunities."

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/pheasant-plan.html>

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/duck-plan.html>

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.

MN DNR requires initial development proposals (IDPs) for all WMA acquisitions. This documentation outlines basic development needs (i.e. survey, posting, signage, well sealing) and also serves as a habitat enhancement/restoration plan, with a corresponding implementation timeline.

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.

County board approval will be obtained for each Gateway WMA acquisition project.

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.

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.

Any restoration work completed in the Gateway WMA opportunity areas will occur on lands permanently protected in public ownership.

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.

According to WMA/AMA Directive on development standards, WMAs are developed to at least minimum standards within two years of acquisition for facility and habitat development that will provide basic asset preservation, public

access and safety, environmental and cultural resource protection and soil and water resource conservation. Initial development efforts can extend 2-3 years beyond the “minimum standard” time table to establish high quality native plant communities. All new WMA acquisitions require a WMA Initial Development Plan (IDP) be completed by the Area Wildlife Supervisor responsible for land management and approved by the Region.

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.

Any restoration efforts that require planting/seed selection will be guided by MN DNR operational orders and BWSWR guidelines, to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator habitat.

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 management costs (e.g., invasive species treatments, prescribed fire, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination funding sources, including, but not limited to the Game and Fish Fund, ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund, federal grants, and small game surcharge.

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

If site restoration work is contracted, rather than completed by MN DNR staff, consideration will be given to Conservation Corps of Minnesota.

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.

Any restoration sites on acquired lands will be evaluated once the project is complete, and three years following, to ensure that restoration goals have been met.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [dce31798-902.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map of Wildlife Management Areas located in MN DNR's Region 3....

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Gateway WMA Concept Rendering	b35b1aba-13f.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee Acquisition, Restoration,

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Section of Wildlife - Central Region

