

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

# 2022 Request for Proposal

## **General Information**

**Proposal ID:** 2022-223

**Proposal Title:** Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration

## **Project Manager Information**

**Name:** Matthew Yavarow

**Organization:** Otter Tail County

**Office Telephone:** (218) 998-8497

**Email:** myavarow@co.ottertail.mn.us

## **Project Basic Information**

**Project Summary:** Restoration of 28 acres of prairie and 20 acres of wetland along 3/4 miles of the Otter Tail River.

**Funds Requested:** $792,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** December 31 2026

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

## **Project Location**

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?** Region(s): Central

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?** Region(s): 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.**

Otter Tail County acquired 55 acres and the facilities of Phelps Mill County Park in 1965 to create a recreation site and to protect an important element of the area’s local history. The park includes Phelps Mill Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Recently, Otter Tail County purchased 72 acres of farmland on the park’s northern boundary that could more than double the size of the county park. The property is situated in central Otter Tail County, just west of Otter Tail Lake in a part of Minnesota that has hundreds of lakes, wetlands and rolling hills, indicative of a landscape shaped by glaciers. A key natural feature of the area is the Otter Tail River, which flows northwest from Otter Tail Lake and forms the western boundary of the park. Despite the large number of lakes, agriculture is a prevalent land use in the area, including the newly acquired property. This proposal seeks to restore and protect lands with high-quality natural resources, ecological value, water protection value, and wildlife habitat, including pollinator habitat.

**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.**

This proposal seeks to restore existing farmland for habitat connectivity, the creation of new wildlife habitat, to benefit ground and surface water quality, and to increase public access for outdoor recreational opportunities. Specifically, this proposal would restore 28 acres of prairie and 20 acres of wetland along the Otter Tail River, Minnesota’s eighth longest river. The river originates in Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and winds through southern Becker County and Otter Tail County before depositing in the Red River of the North at Breckenridge, Minnesota. The Otter Tail River is classified as a State Water Trail by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It is a slow-moving river that is very good for paddling in a canoe or kayak. There are five wetlands that range in size from 0.25 acres to 9.5 acres. Two of the wetlands are situated along the bank of the Otter Tail River and three are in the northern portion of the property surrounded by cropland. Issues include invasion by reed canary grass and nutrient loading.

**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 proposal seeks to restore and protect lands with high-quality natural resources, ecological value, water protection value, and wildlife habitat. More specifically, this project will improve water quality by reducing nutrient loads in the Otter Tail River. It will address several concerns related to soil health and erosion control. It will also create new wildlife habitat, including pollinator habitat. Finally, this proposal will expand outdoor recreational opportunities through additions and connections to local parks and trails.

## **Activities and Milestones**

### **Activity 1: Wetland and Prairie Restoration**

**Activity Budget:** $769,000

**Activity Description:**Complete the necessary survey work, engineering, planning and construction to complete the restoration.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Surveying, Engineering, and Planning | December 31 2022 |
| Restoration | December 31 2023 |

### **Activity 2: Restoration Evaluation**

**Activity Budget:** $23,000

**Activity Description:**1 and 3 year evaluations

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| 1 Year Evaluation | December 31 2024 |
| 3 Year Evaluation | December 31 2026 |

## **Project Partners and Collaborators**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Role** | **Receiving Funds** |
| Howard Fullhart | MN Department of Natural Resources | Assisting with possible fish passage around dam. | No |
| Louise Mauldin | US Fish and Wildlife Service | Assisting with possible fish passage around dam. | No |
| Darren Newville | East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District | Assist with restoration planning. | No |
| Brad Mergens | West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District | Assist with restoration planning. | No |
| Chris Schuelke | Otter Tail County Historical Society | Assist with master planning. | No |
| Greg Wagner | West Central Initiative Foundation | Assist with master planning. | No |
| Jeff Wiersma | MN Department of Natural Resources | Assist with master planning. | No |

## **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?**The ability to complete and maintain the project long-term is of upmost importance. Per the attached resolution, the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners have approved this grant application for the Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration. Once the project is completed, Otter Tail County will assume financial responsibility for the ongoing protection and maintenance of the natural resources within the park.

## **Project Manager and Organization Qualifications**

**Project Manager Name:** Matthew Yavarow

**Job Title:** Assistant County Engineer

**Provide description of the project manager’s qualifications to manage the proposed project.**Matthew Yavarow, P.E. and Nicholas Leonard, Ph.D. will serve as the project managers for the Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration. Matthew is currently the Assistant County Engineer and oversees a dedicated staff of engineers, technicians, accounting and maintenance staff who maintain the County and County State Aid Highways as well as the County parks and trails. The Highway Department typically constructs $12+ million of projects each year and is well versed in all facets of project planning, development, and construction. Nicholas is the Deputy County Administrator for Economic Growth and Community Investment. In this capacity, he will facilitate the necessary county departments to implement the project, including but not limited to the Land and Resources and Parks and Trails Departments. He will also work closely with SWCD, DNR and USFWS as needed.

**Organization:** Otter Tail County

**Organization Description:**Otter Tail is a county located in West Central Minnesota. It has over 10% of Minnesota’s beautiful lakes and boasts many miles of scenic highways, rolling hills, and is home to two Minnesota State Parks (Glendalough and Maplewood) as well as historic Phelps Mill County Park. Otter Tail County's mission is to enrich lives, innovate services and enhance resources so people can live their best life here.  
  
Otter Tail County is dedicated to developing a robust park and trail network to expand outdoor recreational opportunities and enhance the quality of life as well as economic opportunities. A detailed master plan for Phelps Mill Park has been developed and is available upon request.

## **Budget Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category / Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Gen. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified Staff?** | **$ Amount** |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Contracts and Services** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District | Sub award | Surveying, Design, Engineering and Construction required to complete the restoration. |  |  |  | 0 |  | $769,000 |
| West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District | Professional or Technical Service Contract | 1 and 3 year evaluation of completed restoration. |  |  |  | 0 |  | $23,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$792,000** |
| **Equipment, Tools, and Supplies** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Capital Expenditures** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Acquisitions and Stewardship** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel In Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel Outside Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Printing and Publication** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Other Expenses** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Grand Total** | **$792,000** |

### **Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category/Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request** |

### **Non ENRTF Funds**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific Source** | **Use** | **Status** | **Amount** |
| **State** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **State Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Non-State** |  |  |  |  |
| Cash | Otter Tail County | Purchase of 72 acres | Secured | $285,000 |
|  |  |  | **Non State Sub Total** | **$285,000** |
|  |  |  | **Funds Total** | **$285,000** |

## **Acquisition and Restoration**

### **Parcel List**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **County** | **Site Significance** | **Activity** | **Acres** | **Miles** | **Estimated Cost** | **Type of Landowner** | **Easement or Title Holder** | **Status of Work** |
| 38000260189000 | Otter Tail | Prairie Grassland and Deciduous Forest | Restoration | 48 | 0.75 | $792,000 | Public | Otter Tail County | Has not begun |
|  |  |  |  | - | - | - |  |  |  |
| **Totals** |  |  |  | **48** | **0.75** | **$792,000** |  |  |  |

### **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 completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or 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.**All wetlands and tillable cropland will be restored to pre settlement conditions. Operation and maintenance agreements for both practices will be developed. West Otter Tail SWCD will develop monitor and implement both short and long term management plans.

**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.**The project will be implemented by the West Otter Tail County SWCD offices and all practices will follow Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines.

**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.**The ability to complete and maintain the project long-term is of upmost importance. Per the attached resolution, the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners have approved this grant application for the Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration. Once the project is completed, Otter Tail County will assume financial responsibility for the ongoing protection and maintenance of the natural resources within the park.

**5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.**West Otter Tail County Soil and Water Conservation District has a long history of successfully working with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and they will be given strong consideration for restoration activities.

**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 on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations will 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.

## **Attachments**

### **Required Attachments**

#### ***Map***

File: [57d1a67d-e29.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/57d1a67d-e29.pdf)

#### ***Alternate Text for Map***

Proposed restoration areas....

#### ***Board Resolution or Letter***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Board Resolution | [f7788c40-c8f.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/f7788c40-c8f.pdf) |

## **Administrative Use**

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**   
 Yes: 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