



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2023 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2023-039

Proposal Title: Local Parks, Trails and Natural Areas Grant Programs

Project Manager Information

Name: Audrey Mularie

Organization: MN DNR - Grants Unit

Office Telephone: (651) 259-5549

Email: audrey.mularie@state.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Provide approximately 19 matching grants for local parks, trail, acquisition of natural areas and trails to connect people safely to desirable community locations and regional or state facilities.

Funds Requested: \$4,000,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2026

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

Project Location

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

Statewide

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

Statewide

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.

The Outdoor Recreation Grant Program (Local Parks), Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program and Local Trail Connections Program provide competitive matching grants, as authorized under MN Statutes 85.019, to local governments for land acquisition and improvements related to parks and trails. The grant programs are for local projects improving parks, acquiring natural areas and providing trail connections statewide. 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 park and trail facilities enhances Minnesota's stewardship ethic and further the goals of the Department's Strategic Conservation Agenda. Many projects include renovation of existing facilities to improve safety and accessibility, acquisition of locally significant natural and scenic areas, completion of trail linkages to safely connect people from where they live to desirable locations within the community and/or connecting local trails to regional or state facilities.

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

Outdoor Recreation (Local Park) Grants: The goal of this program is to increase and enhance close to home recreation facilities and to provide safe and accessible recreation facilities. This aim is achieved through competitive, matching grants that provide financial incentive and ensure the parks acquired and developed under this program are retained for public use in perpetuity.

Natural and Scenic Area Grants: Opportunities for local governments and school districts 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.

Local Trail Connections Grants: 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 regional and/or state facilities. These projects help to expand the connections between individuals and the outdoors.

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 funding will provide approximately 19 matching grants to cities and counties for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of local parks, natural and scenic areas and trail connections. Strong priority will be given to projects in the metro and southern Minnesota with this funding. The local match for each project will meet or exceed the match required under the specific program that the project was funded. The required match for each program is listed in MN Statutes 85.018. The match level is expected to exceed \$3.2 million.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Grant Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$100,000

Activity 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.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Administer RFP, application process and grant contracts.	June 30, 2026

Activity 2: Grants for the Local Parks, Natural and Scenic Areas and Trail Connections

Activity Budget: \$3,900,000

Activity Description:

This funding will provide approximately 19 matching grants to cities and counties for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of local parks, natural and scenic areas and trail connections. Two grant rounds are proposed. The local match for each project will meet or exceed the match required under the specific program that the project was funded. The required match for each program is listed above and in MN Statues 85.018. The match level is expected to exceed \$3.2 million.

Local governments are struggling to acquire, develop and redevelop their local and community parks and trails. The goal of this funding is to increase and enhance close to home natural resource based recreation facilities, to provide safe and accessible recreation amenities and to provide trail connections between residential areas, schools, businesses, parks, and the regional park and trail system and/or the State Outdoor Recreation System. This does not include athletic facilities such as sport fields, courts, and playgrounds. Parks and naturals areas acquired and developed under this program are retained for public use in perpetuity. Trails developed under this program are retained for public use for a minimum of 20 years. Land acquisition is permanent.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Provide approximately 9 matching grants for Trail Connections.	October 31, 2024
Provide approximately 3 matching grants for Natural and Scenic Areas.	October 31, 2024
Provide approximately 7 matching grants for Local Parks.	October 31, 2024

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Local Units of Governments	Primarily cities, counties and townships	They will acquire, own, develop, and manage the parks or trails. The local governments will provide at least \$3.2 million match.	Yes

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 work be funded?

A Request for Proposal is announced for the programs in December of each year through our park and trail contacts e-mail list and regional and statewide organization. Regional and statewide organizations are encouraged to forward to their members. Program information and applications are available to download on the DNR Recreation Grants web page under each specific program. A list of the awarded projects will be posted on the program web pages.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo installed at each project site and in accordance with Guidelines.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Grants for Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$2,000,000
Grants for Local Parks, Trails and Natural Areas	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09b	\$3,000,000
Grants for Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$2,400,000
Local Parks, Trails And Natural Areas Grant Programs	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$2,250,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Audrey Mularie

Job Title: Grant Specialist Coordinator

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

Audrey Mularie has worked for the State of Minnesota for over 30 years. She administers federal and state grant programs to local units of governments for park, natural areas and trail acquisition and improvements. She has extensive experience with the grants management policies, procedures and additional requirements associated with a variety of funding sources including federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), Future Resources Fund, Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund, Park and Trail Legacy Fund, Lottery in Lieu funding, Remediation Fund, bonding and general fund dollars.

Organization: MN DNR - Grants Unit

Organization Description:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Parks and Trails Division's vision is to create unforgettable park, trail, and water recreation experiences that inspire the public to pass along the love for the outdoor to the next generation. More information on the Minnesota DNR can be found at MNDNR.gov

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Grants Specialist Position		Manage grant program and funded projects			30%	0.75	X	\$91,219
							Sub Total	\$91,219
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Capital Construction Costs	Development/ Redevelopment of Parks and Trails. Estimated amount, final amount TBD based on grant applications.	X				\$2,900,000
							Sub Total	\$2,900,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 100 Parcels: 3						\$1,000,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000,000
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Direct and Necessary Expenses	To support the costs related to the program administration *Direct and Necessary expenses: People Support (~\$1,367), Safety Support (~\$276), Financial Support (~\$1,224), Communication Support (~\$1,811), IT Support (~\$3,083), and Planning Support (~\$1,020) necessary to accomplish funded programs/projects.					\$8,781
							Sub Total	\$8,781
							Grand Total	\$4,000,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Personnel - Grants Specialist Position		Manage grant program and funded projects	Classified : Classified positions paid for with LCCMR funds will either be 1) back filled with a new position or 2) the work previously done by this position will be delayed, eliminated, or completed by the start of the project.
Capital Expenditures		Capital Construction Costs	Trails will be maintained for a minimum of 20 years and park facilities will be maintained for the useful life by the local unit of government receiving the grant. Additional Explanation : Trails will be maintained for a minimum of 20 years and park facilities will be maintained for the useful life by the local unit of government receiving the grant.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Local units of government, contractors and/or volunteers.	Donations of time, materials and/or labor.	Pending	\$100,000
Cash	Local units of governments	Local unit of governments will provide required match for capital construction and acquisition of land.	Pending	\$3,250,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$3,350,000
			Funds Total	\$3,350,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
TBD				-	-	\$1,000,000			
Totals				0	0	\$1,000,000			

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.

Acquisitions under the Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are reviewed and ranked by program staff using selection criteria developed with guidance by a group of internal and external people when the program was created. The project review assesses the natural resource qualities of the site such as endangered, threatened, rare or special concern species or communities, high quality native terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems, ecological viability, outstanding geological or physiographic features, protection of water quality and potential vulnerability to invasive species. Scenic qualities such as, blufflands or other elevated terrain that afford an opportunity for viewing scenic vistas, viewing unique natural features, viewing unique historical or cultural features, and shoreland properties that offer scenic vistas across lakes or streams will be assessed. Other review components include adjacent lands, educational and scientific values, open space and historical/cultural values and local government commitment. Any acquisitions under the Outdoor Recreation Grant and/or Local Trail Connections Grant Program are selected based on program criteria. Projects are recommended based on the highest ranking and reviewed and approved by the Commissioner.

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.

Land Acquisition projects selected for funding under the Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are based on priorities in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp_final_2024.pdf.

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.

These acquisitions provide public natural and scenic areas, open space and park areas. Natural resource restoration is not a required component of the programs. In some instances, restoration may occur, otherwise most are primarily maintaining the resources on the site, which may include natural or scenic qualities. If applicable, a restoration plan will be required and maintained in the project file, and is available upon request.

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.

N/A

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.

All grants are approved by the Commissioner prior to contract.

Easement (Other) 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.

Acquisitions under the Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are reviewed and ranked by program staff using selection criteria developed with guidance by a group of internal and external people when the program was created. The project review assesses the natural resource qualities of the site such as endangered, threatened, rare or special concern species or communities, high quality native terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems, ecological viability, outstanding geological or physiographic features, protection of water quality and potential vulnerability to invasive species. Scenic qualities such as, blufflands or other elevated terrain that afford an opportunity for viewing scenic vistas, viewing unique natural features, viewing unique historical or cultural features, and shoreland properties that offer scenic vistas across lakes or streams will be assessed. Other review components include adjacent lands, educational and scientific values, open space

and historical/cultural values and local government commitment. Any acquisitions under the Outdoor Recreation Grant and/or Local Trail Connections Grant Program are selected based on program criteria. Projects are recommended based on the highest ranking and reviewed and approved by the Commissioner.

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.

Land Acquisition projects selected for funding under the Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are based on priorities in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp_final_2024.pdf.

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.

These acquisitions provide public natural and scenic areas, open space and park areas. Natural resource restoration is not a required component of the programs. In some instances, restoration may occur, otherwise most are primarily maintaining the resources on the site, which may include natural or scenic qualities. If applicable, a restoration plan will be required and maintained in the project file, and is available upon request.

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.

N/A

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.

All grants are approved by the Commissioner prior to contract.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [933b6d59-f09.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Description of the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program and Local Trail Connections Grant Program. Photo of a person jogging on a trail and a photo of a scenic view of the Mississippi River. A chart showing demand for funding....

Optional Attachments

Media Links

Title	Link
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/index.html

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee Acquisition, Easement (Other) Acquisition,

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

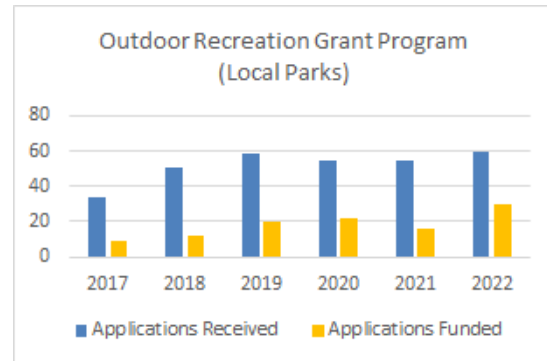
Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Grants for Local Parks, Trails and Natural Areas

Outdoor Recreation Grant Program (Local Parks):

Local governments are struggling to acquire, develop and redevelop their local and community parks. The goal of this program is to increase and enhance close to home recreation facilities and to provide safe and accessible recreation opportunities. Demand for grants has been increasing each year.



Local Trail Connections Grant Program:

Local connections grants help local governments provide trail linkages to safely connect people from where they live to desirable locations within the community, to regional or state facilities and provide alternative transportation options.

Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program:

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. These areas complement state protected areas and provide close to home natural resource-based benefits.



Photo:
Mississippi River Overlook, City of Baxter