



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2023 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2023-250

Proposal Title: Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration

Project Manager Information

Name: Nicholas Leonard

Organization: Otter Tail County

Office Telephone: (218) 998-8057

Email: nleonard@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: \$974,000

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.

Minnesota was a wetland- and prairie-rich State. Before European settlement, wetlands (28 percent) and prairies (34 percent) covered 62 percent of the State. By 1984, the wetland area in the prairie region of the State was reduced by 92 percent, and statewide, the prairie area was reduced by 98 percent. The negative impact of lost wetlands and prairie is well documented. This project seeks to convert agricultural lands back to wetlands and native prairie. Recently, Otter Tail County purchased 72 acres of farmland adjacent to the Phelps Mill 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. Like much of Minnesota, agriculture is a prevalent land use in Otter Tail County, 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? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & 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: Planning, Engineering and Design

Activity Budget: \$169,000

Activity Description:

Complete the necessary survey work, engineering, and planning to complete the restoration.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Planning	July 31, 2023
Surveying	December 31, 2023
Engineering and Design	May 31, 2024

Activity 2: Construction and Vegetation Establishment

Activity Budget: \$769,000

Activity Description:

Initiate construction and establish vegetation with an emphasis on maximizing landscape functions, developing stable habitats for a wide variety of wildlife species, diversifying plant communities, providing competition for invasive plants, and using vegetation to help address soil and water resource issues.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Vegetation Removal/Treatment of Invasive Species	June 30, 2024
Seedbed Preparation/Placement of Clean Sand and Sediment	August 31, 2024
Seeding and Planting	November 30, 2024

Activity 3: Site Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

Activity Budget: \$36,000

Activity Description:

Control weeds and promote the establishment and growth after seeding. Continue site monitoring schedules and checklists for routine inspections that allows for measurement of specific goals, objectives, and project outcomes.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Establishment and Aftercare	December 31, 2025
Year 1 Evaluation	December 31, 2025
Year 2 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 work be funded?

The ability to complete and maintain the project long-term is of utmost 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: Nicholas Leonard

Job Title: Deputy Administrator

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

Kevin Fellbaum and Nicholas Leonard, Ph.D. will serve as the project managers for the Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration. Kevin is the Otter Tail County Parks and Trails Director, responsible for implementing the county's long-range strategic plan, ensuring access to recreational opportunities for all county residents. 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. You can find our long-range strategic plan here:

https://ottertailcountymn.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Otter-Tail-County-Long-Range-Strategic-Plan_FINAL.pdf.

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 is available online: https://ottertailcountymn.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/PhelpsMill_MasterPlan_04-22-2021.pdf.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Planning, Engineering and Construction Design				0		\$169,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction and Vegetation Establishment				0		\$769,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Site Management, Monitoring and Evaluation				-		\$36,000
							Sub Total	\$974,000
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	\$974,000

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	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	\$974,000	Public	Otter Tail County	Has Not Begun
Totals				48	0.75	\$974,000			

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.

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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. Otter Tail County 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 experienced contractor with consultation from 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.

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](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Proposed restoration areas....

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board of Commissioner Resolution	e2a6aa5d-6f1.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?

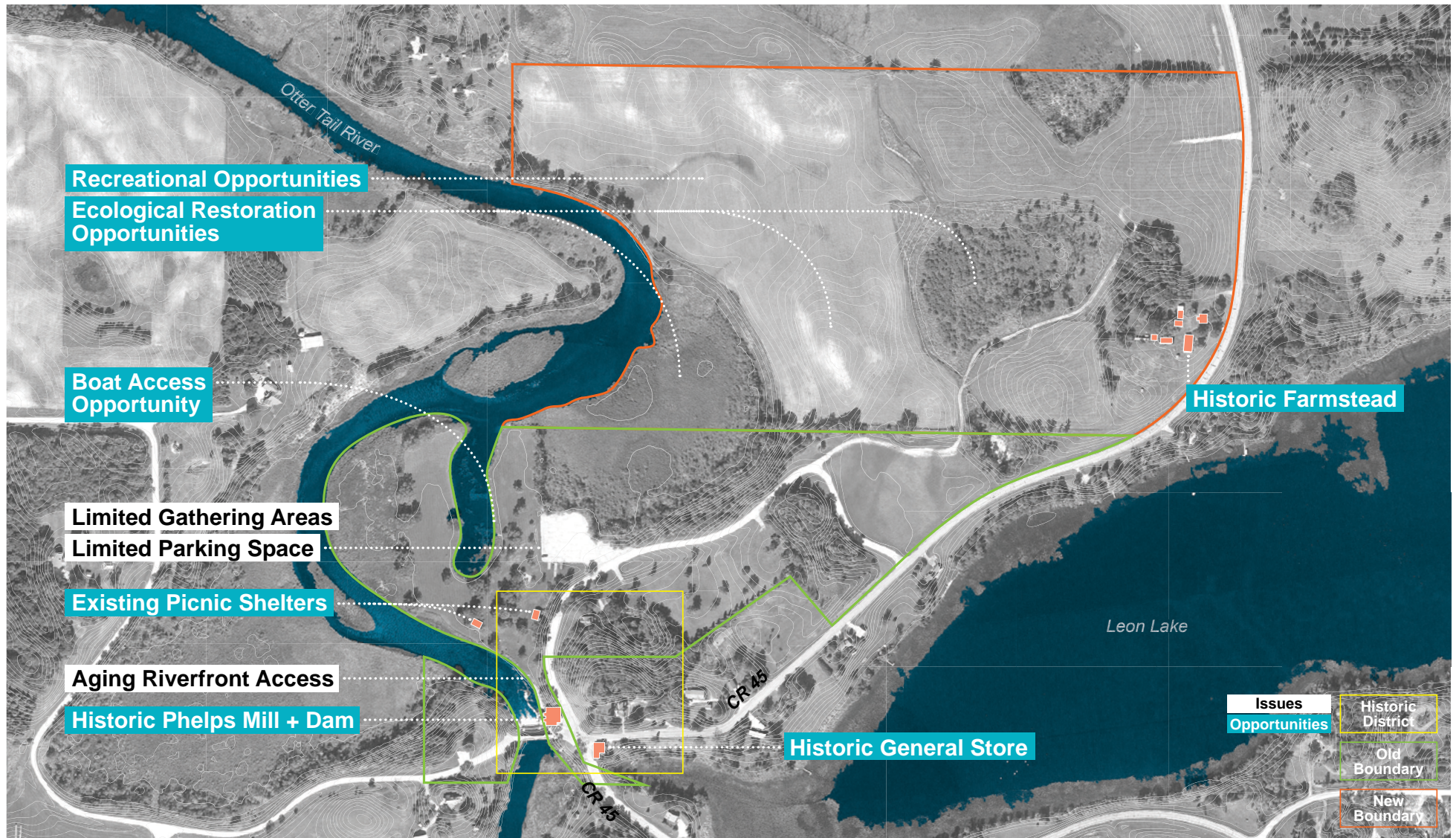
N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No



Issues and Opportunities





Phelps Mill County Park Master Plan

