



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-092

Proposal Title: Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) Biodiversity Protection

Project Manager Information

Name: Judy Schulte

Organization: MN DNR - Ecological and Water Resources Division

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) strategic acquisition (~100 acres) will conserve Minnesota's most unique places and rare species for everyone's benefit.

Funds Requested: \$1,100,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

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 and In the Future

Narrative

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

Minnesota's Scientific & Natural Areas (SNAs) are established to protect and perpetuate natural features possessing exceptional scientific or educational value, in an undisturbed natural condition. SNA designation represents the highest form of ecological protection of public land in the state and as such, these are the sites that meet the highest standards of quality: ratings by the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) of high to outstanding biodiversity significance; key habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species; and containing Minnesota's flagship geologic features.

Ensuring that this natural heritage is not lost, however, is an ongoing challenge: the SNA Program strives to ensure protection of at least a representative sample of five high-quality occurrences of every native plant community (NPC) in each of the state's ecological subsections, as well as three viable populations of every animal and plant species native to Minnesota. These land-acquisition goals have not yet been attained, and more protection work is necessary. Moreover, we are seeing the continued acceleration of impacts to native ecosystems from development, agricultural conversion, fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change, while visitors arriving in record numbers also present management challenges on the landscape. Under these conditions, natural area protection and stewardship are increasingly urgent and necessary.

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.

Safeguarding Minnesota's natural heritage for future generations requires both the designation of currently unprotected high-priority lands, and the attentive stewardship of acres already under SNA protection. The SNA Program must continue to proactively seek out, acquire, and protect the "gaps" in the protected area system of high-quality natural lands. It must simultaneously increase the land management and stewardship capacity of its committed staff, partners, and volunteer base with every new acre protected. This stewardship work revitalizes the native plant communities and habitats protected on SNAs through scientifically-supported management tactics such as prescribed disturbance, invasive species treatment or removal, and other actions to reduce or reverse pressures that lead to environmental degradation. The SNA Program continues to meet these challenges with innovative solutions, partnering with the broader conservation community and enhancing Minnesotans' awareness, appreciation, and support for protected public natural spaces.

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 aims to acquire and protect, from willing sellers, around 100 acres of at-risk native plant communities and wildlife habitat of state significance to designate as SNAs.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Strategic Acquisition of Sites with Biodiversity Significance

Activity Budget: \$1,100,000

Activity Description:

MN DNR will acquire ~100 acres of lands of high biodiversity significance, as mapped and recommended by the MBS. These lands will be designated as state SNAs to protect and buffer the state's rare features and most important at-risk native plant communities (NPCs) present. Proactive landowner contacts will target SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan (SLPP) priority areas, including those identified in the Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan and State Wildlife Action Plan. Candidate sites must be recommended for SNA designation through an Ecological Evaluation report and rank-evaluated (quantitatively) with priority to sites identified by MBS as NPCs of outstanding or high biodiversity significance, with habitat for rare, endangered, and threatened species as well as Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Most acquisition will be of fee-title, but if more appropriate, acquisition could be via SNA-administered conservation easement. Any new data from MBS and other scientific sources will be incorporated into periodic updates of the SLPP's gap analysis, along with climate change risk/resilience assessment factors, to refine strategic prioritization of SNA acquisition work.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Acquisition and designation as SNA of ~100 acres of high-quality habitat & native plant communities	June 30, 2028
Proactive landowner contacts for ~5 target areas/sites	June 30, 2028
Site development (posting, parking, etc.) of acquired parcels	June 30, 2028

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?

Acquiring lands that harbor plant communities not yet protected is central to the state's long-term strategy for averting biodiversity loss in Minnesota. There are around 192,500 acres in the MN DNR's system of ~170 SNAs, which must be managed and protected in perpetuity by the agency, including new lands acquired under this proposal. The support of the people of Minnesota, and of key funding like ENRTF of \$2-5M per annum, among others, are critical to long-term success and sustainability. All restoration, enhancement, and site development results are tracked in DNR databases including the Adaptive Management Spatial Database (AMSD).

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Scientific and Natural Areas Acquisition, Restoration, Citizen Science and Engagement	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 09b	\$2,500,000
Scientific and Natural Areas Program	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 09I	\$3,250,000
Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$3,500,000
DNR Scientific and Natural Areas	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$3,000,000
SNA Acquisition, Restoration, Citizen-Science and Outreach	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$3,336,000
SNA Habitat Restoration and Public Engagement	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09h	\$5,000,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Judy Schulte

Job Title: SNA Unit Supervisor

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

The Scientific and Natural Areas Program mission is to “preserve and perpetuate the ecological diversity of Minnesota's natural heritage, including landforms, fossil remains, plant and animal communities, rare and endangered species, or other biotic features and geological formations, for scientific study and public edification as components of a healthy environment”. As the Scientific and Natural Area Unit Supervisor, Judy is responsible for coordinating and administrating efforts designed to protect, manage, monitor, interpret, promote research on, and acquire state lands of high biodiversity significance and sensitive or vulnerable resources.

Judy has been involved with the implementation and management of 48 previous LCCMR & LSOHC projects, all of which were aimed at the protection and management of Minnesota's most unique and rare remnant native plant communities.

Judy has served as the SNA Unit Supervisor since December of 2022. Other related experiences include:

- Statewide SNA Prairie Biologist (March 2015-Nov 2022)
- Acting SNA Unit Supervisor (May 2018-May 2019), while continuing to cover Prairie Biologist duties.
- Southern Region Prairie Specialist, MN DNR (2011-2015)
- District Technician, Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District (2009-2011)

- CRP & GRP Program Technician, USDA Redwood County Farm Service Agency (2007-2009)

Education: Graduated from South Dakota State University in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science in Park Management & Horticulture.

Judy will provide overall management to this proposed LCCMR project. She has effectively demonstrated her capacity to manage programs and budgets, maintain accurate records, and direct staff. Judy has experience and has demonstrated the ability to collaborate with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in addressing complicated and contentious natural resource protection and management issues. She is organizationally driven and has the knowledge and background to get the work done on the ground.

Organization: MN DNR - Ecological and Water Resources Division

Organization Description:

The mission of the Minnesota DNR is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for the commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life. To carry out the MN DNR's Division of Ecological and Water Resources' commitment to healthy lands and waters, its Scientific & Natural Areas Program is charged under MS 86A.05 to protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural state those natural features that possess exceptional scientific or education value.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Laborers, Seasonals & crews		On-the-ground site development			20%	0.08	X	\$2,000
Specialists & Technicians		Protection Lead Generation and Implementation			25%	0.4	X	\$29,000
Coordinators & planner		Coordinate acquisition, protection implementation, partner coordination, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan (SLPP) updates			25%	0.28	X	\$25,000
							Sub Total	\$56,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD & Conservation Corps of MN & IA (CCMI)	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Site development activities (site clean-up, posting, parking lot installation, etc.)				0.02		\$2,760
State of Minnesota	Acquisition costs	Professional Services for Acquisition: DNR Lands and Minerals (and if necessary, Attorney General's Office) costs associated with completing an acquisition				0.32		\$80,000
							Sub Total	\$82,760
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Materials & Supplies	Site Development: signs (entry, boundary, & rules signs), posts/hardware, fencing, gravel, etc.					\$2,000
							Sub Total	\$2,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-

Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 100 Parcels: 3						\$935,000
							Sub Total	\$935,000
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	DNR fleet charges (for operation of trucks, cars, & special fieldwork equipment) & in-state travel costs (as per state contracts)	Travel expenses needed to complete direct project work					\$6,500
							Sub Total	\$6,500
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	State Register publication (required to designate acquired parcels)	To achieve improved public awareness and transparently disclose additions of new SNA parcels.					\$2,000
							Sub Total	\$2,000
Other Expenses								
		DNR's Direct and Necessary Costs	Pay for activities that are directly related to and necessary for accomplishing appropriated projects. Direct and necessary costs cover HR (~\$1,394), Safety (~\$290), Financial (~\$951), Communication (~\$6368), IT (~\$3628), and Planning Support (~\$3109).					\$15,740
							Sub Total	\$15,740
							Grand Total	\$1,100,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Personnel - Laborers, Seasonals & crews		On-the-ground site development	Classified : Consistent with approved work plans for previous ENRTF appropriations for the SNA program, this funding will be used to pay project-associated costs for classified and unclassified staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds. These positions would not exist, but for special project funding received through the ENRTF and other funds. Each year these positions are assigned work based on the particular combination of soft funding available to address priority SNA Program activities.
Personnel - Specialists & Technicians		Protection Lead Generation and Implementation	Classified : Consistent with approved work plans for previous ENRTF appropriations for the SNA program, this funding will be used to pay project-associated costs for classified and unclassified staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds. These positions would not exist, but for special project funding received through the ENRTF and other funds. Each year these positions are assigned work based on the particular combination of soft funding available to address priority SNA Program activities.
Personnel - Coordinators & planner		Coordinate acquisition, protection implementation, partner coordination, SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan (SLPP) updates	Classified : Consistent with approved work plans for previous ENRTF appropriations for the SNA program, this funding will be used to pay project-associated costs for classified and unclassified staff paid almost exclusively with special project funds. These positions would not exist, but for special project funding received through the ENRTF and other funds. Each year these positions are assigned work based on the particular combination of soft funding available to address priority SNA Program activities.

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
Blanket Flower Prairie SNA addition	Clay	Adjacent to existing SNA, this parcel contains dry prairie and mesic hardwood native plant community types, the latter of which is not yet protected in this ecological subsection of the state. Habitat for several special-concern butterfly species.	Fee Title	40	-	\$65,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Cedar Rock SNA addition	Redwood	Seepage meadow, mesic prairie, mesic forest, rock outcrop communities with listed species present adjacent to existing SNA.	Fee Title	60	-	\$420,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Cherry Grove Blind Valley SNA addition	Fillmore	Extensive network of caves of high conservation value due to use as overwintering site for bats, fossils present, and unique geology of site.	Fee Title	15	-	\$100,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Cooks Lake Forest (NEW)	Becker, Otter Tail,	Large intact mesic hardwood forest, rich fen, rich tamarack swamp, and sedge meadow plant communities in an underrepresented target ecological subsection, with state endangered and special-concern plant and animal species present.	Fee Title	160	0.1	\$365,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Englund Ecotone SNA addition	Benton	Provides the only public access to the site and protects additional oak forest, oak savanna, and sedge meadow.	Fee Title	115	-	\$218,400	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Franconia Bluffs SNA addition	Chisago	Majority of parcel consists of high-quality Red oak forest types with State-listed special-concern and threatened species found in or near this parcel. Its location is near or adjacent to two existing SNAs along the St. Croix River corridor.	Fee Title	40	-	\$319,800	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Little Mantrap Lake SNA addition	Becker	High biodiversity significance sugar maple-basswood (aspen) forest, northern rich fen, black ash-mountain maple swamp, extremely rich tamarack swamp,	Fee Title	40	-	\$75,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun

		alder-maple-loosestrife swamp, and aspen-(sugar maple-basswood) forest.							
Marsh Grove (NEW)	Marshall	High quality mesic and wet prairie complexes with rare species present, and ranked as Outstanding Biodiversity Significance.	Fee Title	455	-	\$450,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
McKinley Barrens SNA (NEW)	Cass	A globally rare fire-dependent Jack Pine-(Yarrow) Woodland, characterized by a mix of prairie and northern forest plant species.	Fee Title	300	-	\$500,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Mille Lacs Moraine SNA addition	Crow Wing	MBS-mapped forest communities of biodiversity significance; Red-shouldered hawk and Cerulean warbler habitat, with lakeshore.	Fee Title	240	1.5	\$370,500	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
North Fork Zumbro Woods SNA addition	Goodhue	Contains incredibly high-quality habitat and is one of the few remaining populations of the state- and federally-endangered Dwarf trout lily. This property would join two disjunct SNA parcels together and extend protections to the largest portion of the Dwarf Trout Lily population that is present on-site.	Fee Title	35	-	\$165,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
River Warren Outcrops SNA addition	Renville	The proposed parcel is an in-holding within an existing SNA. Acquisition would protect significant floodplain forest and create contiguous protections and management strategy.	Fee Title	2	0.03	\$3,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Rock Valley Prairie (NEW)	Yellow Medicine	Large complex of dry hill prairie and other plant communities in Minnesota River corridor. Populations of at least five Special Concern species present.	Fee Title	116	-	\$130,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Rosedale Fen SNA (NEW)	Mahnomen	High quality native prairie, calcareous fen, and tamarack seepage swap. Rare species present.	Fee Title	160	-	\$100,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Six Mile Grove (NEW)	Mower	Contains a mesic oak-hickory forest, dominated by shagbark hickory, northern pin oak, bur oak, red oak, bitternut hickory, white oak, and lesser amounts of elm, black cherry, and basswood. This is a unique forest observed nowhere else in the state.	Fee Title	40	-	\$90,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun

Tom Lake (NEW)	Cook	High-quality intact forest and lakeshore communities present, with high biodiversity significance and S2 imperiled native plant community ranking.	Fee Title	334	1.2	\$900,000	Private	DNR-SNA	Has Not Begun
Totals				2,152	2.83	\$4,271,700			

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.

To be acquired and designated as SNA, the site must be recommended for SNA designation in an Ecological Evaluation report, which serves as the site's baseline assessment for fee acquisitions. All such sites are predominantly MBS-mapped native plant communities and contain habitat for rare species and SGCN. In addition, SNA staff use the "SNA Candidate Site Evaluation Guide" (initially developed through the ENRTF-funded SNA strategic planning process) which incorporates criteria to rank which sites are currently pursued. Criteria include diversity and quality of the native habitat, occurrence of rare species, occurrence of native plant communities under-represented in SNA system, parcel size, proximity to biodiversity hotspots (particularly MBS-mapped areas of outstanding and high biodiversity significance) and other conservation lands (including SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan's Conservation Opportunity Areas and Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan's Core Areas), potential for long-term management, and additional factors (e.g. landowner readiness, urgency, and/or willingness to donate; degree of vulnerability to imminent degradation; and partnership opportunities).

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.

- SNA Strategic Land Protection Plan – <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snap/plan.html>
- Minnesota's State Wildlife Action Plan – <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mnwap/index.html>
- Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan – www.dnr.state.mn.us/prairieplan

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.

Each parcel acquired as a new SNA in fee will have an Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) or, if acquired as an addition to an existing SNA, that SNA's Management Plan would be amended to add the new parcel. The AMPs include goals, ecological description, priority features with indicators, and management recommendations. The intended outcome of management of SNAs is that 1) all the lands be native plant communities or restored to plant communities that would have been native to the site, 2) these plant communities are sustained over time, and 3) visitors are accommodated safely (unless visitor access is restricted by designation order). The goals for the SNA's management are based upon soils, topography, geology, and other factors necessary to sustain the plant community. Each plan includes an implementation timetable that summarizes ongoing management needs and a statement on funding. Long-term management costs (e.g. invasive species treatments, prescribed fire, and monitoring/evaluation) will be covered by a combination of funding sources, including but not limited to ENRTF, Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF), federal grants, and other funds as appropriated. Each AMP is kept in a DNR internal shared electronic filing system accessible to all SNA staff.

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.

The DNR follows Minnesota Statutes 84.033, which require that any land acquired for designation as SNA must have county board approval as prescribed under MS 97A.145.

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.

As part of the DNR acquisition process, all SNA acquisitions are required to have approval of the Ecological and Water Resources Division Director and land conveyances are accepted by the Director or Assistant Director of the Division of Lands and Minerals, all of whom have delegated authority to approve this for the Commissioner.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [dd2034c6-587.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Minnesota's SNAs protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural condition the state's natural heritage features of exceptional scientific or educational value. This map depicts parcel locations included on the proposal's parcel list for protection through fee-title acquisition (circle markers)....

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee 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

Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?

No

Is the purpose of the acquisition for construction of a building(s), trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more, either now or in the future?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?

No