



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-113

Proposal Title: Spring Lake Park Reserve Restoration and River Access

Project Manager Information

Name: Niki Geisler

Organization: Dakota County

Office Telephone: (952) 891-7088

Email: niki.geisler@co.dakota.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Development of Mississippi River access that includes parking, a non-motorized boat launch, access to the national Mississippi River Trail and hiking trails, natural resource restoration, and cultural resource management.

Funds Requested: \$4,770,000

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?

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

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.

Spring Lake Park Reserve is singular among regional parks in the Twin Cities, with five miles of shoreline on a west-to-east flowing reach of the Mississippi River with north-facing bluffs and river terraces that support rare ecosystems and offer expansive views. A rich legacy of archaeological discovery and history is testimony to the power of this place to draw people over millennia. It is a destination with local, regional, state, and national significance. The park is within the National Park Service Mississippi River National River Recreation Area (MNRRA), along the All American Great River Road and the Mississippi River State Water Trail, host to the national Mississippi River Trail, and home to a Minnesota State Bison Conservation herd. The park reserve currently lacks safe Mississippi River access; ADA trail access linking visitor areas in the western park; and a management plan for culturally scared and historically important sites, including Indigenous burial mounds within the park boundary. The park's natural areas, essential habitat on the Mississippi River Flyway, are only partially restored. This project will address these issues as guided by the 2021 Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan and the 2021 Natural Resources Management Plan.

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.

The proposed \$5,300,000 project will restore critical habitat; design, engineer and construct a non-motorized boat launch and visitor area on the Mississippi River; and develop a management plan for Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites within the park. All recreation facilities will be open to the public and be handicap accessible. The proposed project will:

- Restore 175 acres of prairie, savanna, forest, and woodland in the Mississippi Flyway which is both a migratory corridor and year-round home to many wildlife species including the federally endangered rusty patch bumble bee.
- Develop a cultural landscape management plan for Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites within the park in collaboration with Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.
- Construct a non-motorized boat launch including entry drive and ADA trail, 10 parking stalls accommodating boat trailers, an access road, picnic shelter and grounds, vault toilet, ADA canoe-kayak launch, canoe-kayak rental kiosk, and fishing dock.
- Construct an ADA-accessible one-mile Bison and Mississippi River Discovery trail loop linking the national Mississippi River Trail, Fisher Avenue Trailhead, bison range, and the Retreat Center/Y Camp Spring Lake to the boat launch.
- Complete a one-mile riverside hiking trail.

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 Mississippi River non-motorized boat launch and accessible trails will enhance the outdoor experience for visitors from around the state and nation who visit Spring Lake Park Reserve and the MNRRA by providing safe river access and a riverside visitor destination. Restoring 175 acres of habitat will increase biodiversity along the Mississippi Flyway migratory corridor by providing essential habitat for migratory birds, mammals, amphibians, insects, and other pollinators. The cultural resources management plan will guide responsible stewardship of Indigenous burial mounds and historically important sites.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Non-Motorized Boat Launch and Trail Construction – Design and Engineering, Construction, and Construction Administration

Activity Budget: \$3,600,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will hire a professional with engineering, landscape architecture, architecture, and other required qualifications through a competitive process and work with them to prepare construction plans for the project. Construction will include mobilization, site demolition, site clearing and grubbing, trenching, site preparation, grading, hardscape construction (backfilling, compaction, pavement, site utilities), softscape installation (native trees, shrubs, ground cover), erosion control, and other construction items. This activity will also include construction management, a service provided by the awarded consultant.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Completion of Design and Engineering	December 31, 2024
Completion of Bidding and Award of Contract	March 31, 2025
Construction Completion	June 30, 2026

Activity 2: Restore 175 acres of prairie, woodland, and savanna

Activity Budget: \$720,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will restore seven acres of prairie, 65 acres of savanna, 103 acres of forest/woodland for a total of 175 acres. The goal is to restore conditions that promote natural regeneration of bur and white oaks and native ground and shrub layer species that are appropriate for each community. A contractor will be hired through a public bidding process. Tasks include removal of exotic woody shrubs, strategically thinning the canopy to stimulate native plant growth, and reinstating fire as an ecosystem process, essential to sustain community composition and structure.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Completion of Bidding and Contract Award	March 31, 2024
Completion of Restoration Plan for Bidding	December 31, 2024
Restoration Completion	June 30, 2026

Activity 3: Cultural Landscape Management Plan

Activity Budget: \$450,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County will hire a cultural landscape professional with expertise in preparing management plans for Indigenous and historical sites through a competitive process. The contracted professional will work with Dakota County staff, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for Dakota Communities and other associated Indigenous communities, The Minnesota Office of the State Archeologist, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to research, survey, and identify the extent of sites within the park and prepare a cultural landscape management plan.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Research and Survey Completed	December 31, 2025
Cultural Landscape Management Plan Completed	June 30, 2026

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?

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Dakota County Parks and Facilities Departments as part of the existing management programs for park facilities, natural resources, and cultural resources. These activities include paid staff work. Maintenance and management activities are funded by Dakota County tax levy, external grant funding, and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. If additional capital work is needed it will be funded by Dakota County through the annual capital improvement budgeting process.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Reintroduction Of Bison To Spring Lake Park Reserve	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q	\$560,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Niki Geisler

Job Title: Dakota County Parks Director

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

As the Dakota County Parks Director, Niki directs and administers all operations, personnel, public relations, policies, and budgets for a nature-based Parks department. Prior to joining Dakota County, Niki served as the Vice President of Camping for YMCA of the North and has 20+ years as a professional in the non-profit sector where she also held positions of Executive Director, Professional Fundraiser, Senior Program Director, and Program Director. She is an accomplished professional in community-based youth development, family camping, outdoor engagement strategy advancement, grant management, and fundraising. She has a passion for connecting communities to nature and a deep commitment to equity in outdoors.

Organization: Dakota County

Organization Description:

Located in the southeast corner of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Dakota County Park System serves the state's third most populous county with more than 400,000 residents, as well as the Region. Dakota County Parks is a nature-based system with more than 5,000 acres and a rapidly growing network of greenways. Dakota County Parks oversees park development to give residents facilities that enable natural resource-based recreation; operates a natural resource program that is restoring, maintaining, and enhancing hundreds of acres of prairie, forest and woodland; and operates a professional outdoor education program that manages and interprets the cultural sites within the Dakota County Park System.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Natural Resource Project Manager		A Dakota County Parks Natural Resource Department project manager will hire consultants through a competitive bid process and oversee the preparation of restoration plans and will administer the restoration process			25%	0.5		\$112,500
							Sub Total	\$112,500
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Park design and engineering contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will develop the site design, engineering, and construction specifications for all recreation features (boat launch, entry drive, parking, trails, picnic area, shore fishing)				0		\$720,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Cultural resource professional services contractor will be selected by competitive bid process and will perform all cultural resource research and survey work needed. Contractor will work with County Staff, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, Minnesota State Office of Archeology, and Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to prepare a cultural landscape management plan.				0		\$450,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Natural resources restoration contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will perform all restoration work. Contractor will provide site preparation, installation of native plantings, erosion control, and other restoration tasks.				0		\$607,500
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will prepare the site and construct all recreation and access features according to the construction plans and specifications. Contractor will provide site preparation, construction, erosion control, and other construction tasks.				0		\$2,880,000
							Sub Total	\$4,657,500

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	\$4,770,000

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	Dakota County Parks Capital Improvement Program	10% cash match for all project elements	Secured	\$530,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$530,000
			Funds Total	\$530,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [30715199-bb0.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Spring Lake Park Reserve restoration and river access improvements, project overview graphic showing recreation, natural resource, and cultural resource areas and recreation improvements detail...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dakota County Board Resolution	b17d5e93-0a0.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Hyperlinks to Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan	6fc3ea40-9eb.pdf
Project Overview Graphic	31c83f35-68a.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

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?

Yes

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