



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-151

Proposal Title: Oak Wilt Suppression at the Northern Edge III

Project Manager Information

Name: Shannon Wettstein

Organization: Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Suppress oak wilt at the leading edge to prevent infestation in private and public forests to the north and west including Pillsbury State Forest and Camp Ripley.

Funds Requested: \$200,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 31, 2026

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary Category: Aquatic and Terrestrial Invasive Species (D)

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

Narrative

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

To date funding from this commission has helped protect nearly 1 million oak trees from infestation of the disease within 5,000 acres of woods according to estimates from DNR Forest Health. The overall goal for this project is to continue to suppress oak wilt at its northern edge of spread in Minnesota.

Oak wilt is a burgeoning invasive problem near Little Falls and has been identified and treated as far north as the Brainerd area and Cass Counties. It has the potential to kill significant percentages of trees in the nearly pure red oak forests of the area. The only active oak wilt locations are located within an epicenter outside of Little Falls but new sites continue to emerge at new northern locations. This money would work to control the invasive species at its leading edge where it is most optimal to invest funding on.

Eradicating the oak wilt sites will protect the surrounding forest, arrest oak wilt spread to the north and west, and ease the financial burden of oak wilt to landowners in Morrison County and communities to the north and west.

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.

SWCD staff will contact landowners to explain the importance of oak wilt control and seek permission for control. SWCD will use grant funds to contract out 100 percent of the control work, including vibratory plowing and diseased tree removal and destruction. DNR forest health (FH) staff will help the SWCD through their on-going forest health detection surveys and through technical training and advising. If oak wilt is found in the Brainerd area, this grant would be applied there, as well as at other future oak wilt outlier locations in Todd, Cass, Crow Wing, or northern Mille Lacs counties.

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?

While the project is focused on private lands, the public good comes from controlling and preventing the spread of oak wilt to both public and private forests, resulting in preserved wildlife habitat and ecosystem services these healthy forests provide. Oak wilt will be eradicated in all disease locations identified by DNR and SWCD staff where landowners sign up for control, thus enhancing those forests and protecting surrounding healthy forests.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Control Oak Wilt

Activity Budget: \$179,000

Activity Description:

Control oak wilt by mechanical means including vibratory plowing and diseased tree removal and destruction. An optional additional control tactic would be for threatened tree removal (i.e. removal of healthy oaks inside plow lines that likely will die of oak wilt in the future).

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Begin oak wilt control on selected properties identified in 2023-2024	October 31, 2024
Complete oak wilt control on selected properties identified in 2023-2024	April 30, 2025
Begin oak wilt control on selected properties with known oak wilt pockets	October 31, 2025
Lab confirm oak wilt where appropriate	October 31, 2025
Complete oak wilt control on selected properties with known oak wilt pockets	April 30, 2026

Activity 2: Secure Permission to Control Oak Wilt and Outreach

Activity Budget: \$18,000

Activity Description:

SWCD staff will establish face to face meetings with affected landowners to secure permission to control oak wilt on their land.

Northernmost sites (closest to the Pillsbury State Forest, Camp Ripley, and Brainerd) will be controlled first. SWCD will also provide technical assistance to affected landowners throughout the project.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Host an open house for affected landowners	July 31, 2024
Get signed landowner agreements for affected property owners - those identified 2023-2024	December 31, 2024
Get signed landowner agreements from affected property owners - known locations	December 31, 2025
Provide public outreach materials throughout project	April 30, 2026
Provide technical assistance to affected landowners throughout project duration	April 30, 2026

Activity 3: Project Management/Bookkeeping

Activity Budget: \$3,000

Activity Description:

Staff time to execute grant, secure a private contractor for mechanical work, reporting and processing invoices.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Publication of Request for Proposal for Private Contractor	August 31, 2024
Contractor Selection	September 30, 2024

Reporting on Grant Deliverables	December 31, 2026
Financial Management and Tracking	December 31, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Rachel Dube	Department of Natural Resources	Forest Health Specialist for DNR Forestry, Northwest Region to provide early detection of oak wilt through on-going forest health surveys in Crow Wing and Cass counties; public notification on oak wilt locations; advise and train SWCD staff on all aspects of oak wilt control; communicate to relevant SWCDs.	No
Matt Wappler	Department of Natural Resources	DNR Area Forestry Manager for Little Falls and Backus areas will provide assistance as needed to area SWCD staff with landowner contacts and public meetings. Will also provide assistance, as needed, to DNR Forest Health Unit staff.	No
Brian Schwingle	Department of Natural Resources	Forest Health Specialist for the DNR Forestry, Central Region will do early detection of oak wilt through on-going forest health surveys in Todd, Morrison and Mille Lacs counties; public notification on oak wilt locations; advise and train SWCD staff on all aspects of oak control; communicate with relevant SWCDs.	No
Melissa Barrick	Crow Wing Soil and Water	District Manager to outreach and technical staff who can provide assistance during the life of the grant.	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?

The DNR Forest Health team receives a forest health monitoring grant to generally survey the health of the state's forest canopy every year. They will monitor the success of oak wilt eradication efforts in Morrison County, and they will continue to track the leading edge of oak wilt in the state. Also, the DNR secured funding to control oak wilt on public lands in the state on priority sites. If oak wilt arises after control efforts have been completed the SWCD or DNR may seek another control grant for private lands.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Oak Wilt Suppression at its Northern Edge	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 06b	\$100,000
Morrison County Performance Drainage and Hydrology Management II	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 03j	\$197,000
Oak Wilt Suppression At The Northern Edge II	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 06c	\$423,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Shannon Wettstein

Job Title: District Manager

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

Shannon Wettstein, District Manager for Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District holds an MBA from the University of Chester England and an Environmental Studies degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth. She has served in this role since 2018, prior to this she worked as the Water Planner in another district. Wettstein has been working in the conservation of natural resources since 2002.

Morrison SWCD has a long successful history of administering and executing grants such as MPCA 319 grants, NRCS

RCPD and state direct agreements, NACD and Clean Water Funds through BWSR as well as the budget for the district which includes multiple sources of funding from the state, county, and federal funds. The district also is the main fiscal for the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape (CRSL) partnership, administers the MN Wetland Conservation Act, the Local Water Plan, is the fiscal for a One Watershed One Plan and administers one of the biggest easement programs in the state, the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program which holds just over 300 easements funded by the Dept. of Defense, LSOHC, and National Guard Bureau which has received nearly \$44,000,000 to date. The mission of Morrison SWCD is to provide leadership and direct assistance for conservation management of soil and water.

Organization: Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District

Organization Description:

Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District's mission is to "To provide leadership and direct assistance for conservation management of soil and water." The district is directed by a five-member Board of Supervisors, each is elected to serve a four-year term of office. The SWCD has eight staff which have the primary focus of offering technical assistance to landowners. When funds are available the district also provides cost share assistance to install conservation practices on private lands to solve resource concerns identified through one or several planning documents which guides the district. The district has been a leader in the natural resource community and is often the first-place citizens, county commissioners and agency staff call or stop for help.

Morrison SWCD offers 40 different programs including the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) and other RIM easement programs, AgBMP, climatology reporting, NRCS RCPD, nitrate testing, Water Plan administration and administers the Wetland Conservation Act and the Buffer Law for Morrison County. The office works collaboratively with other partner agencies effectively and provides technical assistance to landowners to help them solve resource concerns regarding forestry, shoreland, hydrology and drainage, conservation agronomy and nutrient management and native plant community restoration.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Manager/Administration		Billing, reporting, contract management, support			30%	0.02		\$2,000
District Technicians		Landowner outreach and technical assistance			30%	0.2		\$18,000
							Sub Total	\$20,000
Contracts and Services								
Private Contractor TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Vibratory plowing, tree felling and tree removal contractor. Competitive bids will be solicited.				0.4		\$178,000
							Sub Total	\$178,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Diagnostic Laboratory Testing	For detection of oak wilt on difficult sites					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Publication	Legal Notices	RFP Annoucement					\$1,000

							Sub Total	\$1,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$200,000

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				
In-Kind	Department of Natural Resources, Area Forestry Office Staff, Little Falls	Assistance, as needed to area SWCD staff with landowner contacts and public meetings. Assistance, as needed to DNR Forest Health Unit staff.	Secured	\$5,000
In-Kind	Department of Natural Resources, Forest Health Specialist	Early detection of oak wilt through on-going forest health surveys; public notification on oak wilt locations; advise and train SWCD staff on all aspects of oak wilt control; communicate to all SWCDs which landowners are affected.	Secured	\$10,000
			State Sub Total	\$15,000
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$15,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
				-	-	-			
Totals				0	0	-			

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.

Oak wilt has the potential to kill thousands of oaks and threatens the Brainerd area and surrounding DNR-managed land including Camp Ripley therefore restoration activities will not be restricted to land permanently protected or in public ownership. Oak wilt is controllable on the landscape, if treated early and if all affected landowners participate however, it is relatively expensive to control, so many landowners choose not to control it using their own money. Control of an invasive species is optimal at its leading edge where this work will all occur.

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.

Morrison SWCD has partnered with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forest Health Specialists, local DNR foresters and surrounding SWCD offices to suppress oak wilt in the region. DNR staff work to identify oak wilt by aerial imagery review and local field staff and SWCD staff work to field verified these sites.

Morrison SWCD and DNR staff prioritized work zones and rank sites Highest to Low, with the epicenter of the outbreak being low and the northern most sites being the highest priority due to the proximity to public forests near Brainerd. Wilting oaks painted by DNR Foresters or SWCD technicians so an accurate count of each pockets size can be considered for treatment and so landowners could grasp the extent of the disease on their properties.

During this time, landowners are approached by the SWCD to garner interest in oak wilt suppression activities on their properties. These landowners sign a "Landowner Agreement" which outlines program requirements, landowner and contractor responsibilities and timelines for treatment. Landowners have to be willing to have a professional contractor vibratory plow a trench around their wilting and buffer trees. They also have to be willing to destroy the actively wilting trees.

A contract with an experienced oak wilt suppression contractor is secured and work began in the fall of each year. Vibratory plowing is completed and wilted trees are destroyed and buffer trees cut using grant funds. All of the sites in the high and highest priority zones will be addressed. The SWCD and DNR staff continue to work with landowners affected by oak wilt to guide them in properly addressing the disease on their properties. DNR continues to monitor treated sites.

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.

This project does not establish new vegetation onsite. Affected owners are encouraged to replant with more diverse tree species to make forests more resilient in the future.

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.

Long term maintenance should not be needed. Oak wilt is controllable on the landscape, if treated early.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

The Minnesota Conservation Corps will be given notice of work to be completed if the grant is awarded to Morrison SWCD. The project manager will notify them via email of the opportunity to complete the work.

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.

On-site construction inspection is completed by SWCD technicians while the contractor is doing the work and will verify vibratory plowing is completed at the correct locations in proximity to buffer and wilting trees. They will also verify wilted trees are destroyed and that landowner expectations are met as far as service delivery is concerned.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [8efb031a-dee.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map shows red oak densities in north central Minnesota with known oak wilt locations pinpointed. The map draws attention to the leading edge of oak wilt infestation located in Morrison County and the proximity to Camp Ripley and the Pillsbury State Forest. Circled area is grant work area....

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution 3.24.23	0d04a2c2-db9.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Letter of Support - DNR	3c99c9d5-791.pdf
Morrison 2021-162 Background Check Certification	67ab5566-d66.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

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

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