



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2025 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2025-054

**Proposal Title:** Engaging our Diverse Public in Environmental Stewardship - Phase 2

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Brennan Blue

**Organization:** Great River Greening

**Office Telephone:** (651) 665-9500

**Email:** bblue@greatrivergreening.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Through outreach, education, internships and hands-on restoration activities, we will engage Minnesota's diverse population in community-based conservation work and learning that strengthens connection to and restores our natural areas.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$249,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2028

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Small Projects (H)

**Secondary Category:** Environmental Education (C)

### Project Location

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, SE, SW,

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, SE, SW,

**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.**

Great River Greening believes that Minnesota's natural areas and environmental careers should be accessible to and enjoyed by our diverse and changing population. In pursuit of this vision, we recognize that historic and present-day inequities have created systemic barriers of access to natural systems and green spaces for communities of color, Indigenous peoples, and lower-income communities. This includes barriers to equitable participation and representation within the environmental field itself. Likewise, environmental conservation careers and opportunities are often more available to those living in the seven-county metropolitan area, despite the breadth of vital natural areas presenting conservation opportunities and needs through the state.

Our "Engaging the Diverse Public of Minnesota in Environmental Stewardship" program works to address these disparities by developing relationships, projects, internships, and opportunities that will (1) improve access to and enjoyment of natural areas, (2) grant Minnesotans exposure to a variety of conservation career pathways, and (3) strengthen a collective conservation ethic while restoring Minnesota's natural areas.

### **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.**

Great River Greening will develop and host a variety of engagement opportunities that connect Minnesotans to conservation work, learning, internships, and hands-on restoration events. Our overarching goals include (1) community outreach and relationship building to engage communities underrepresented in conservation work and careers, (2) environmental education and hands-on restoration initiatives to connect Minnesotans to the many benefits that public lands and environmental careers offer, (3) cultivating an environmental stewardship ethic in the public, and (4) restoring our shared natural areas through community-based conservation work.

We will engage 1,250 volunteers, 500 youth, and 6 interns with demographic goals aimed to equitably provide conservation opportunities to Minnesota's diverse public. Activities will prioritize engagements in Greater MN, Environmental Justice neighborhoods, and majority BIPOC community groups/spaces, as described in our Activities section.

The conservation and restoration engagements described in Activity 1 will target 65-75% of events occurring outside the seven-county metro area, with the remaining 25-35% of events being provided in the Environmental Justice neighborhoods. Our Activity 2 internship program will target at least 50% BIPOC representation. Our BIPOC youth and young adult education events in Activity 3 will occur in communities or groups with at least 50% BIPOC representation.

### **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?**

As a result of this program, Minnesota's natural resources will be directly conserved and enhanced through at least 20 restoration projects on protected public land throughout Minnesota. Further, by engaging and supporting a broad, diverse population base in environmental education and hands-on restoration work, this program will cultivate a long-lasting, applied conservation and stewardship ethic in Minnesotans. Our community-based, inclusive restoration work invites all participants to view themselves as the ongoing stewards of Minnesota's shared natural systems and resources.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Engage 1,250 local volunteers through community outreach, public education and habitat restoration events.**

**Activity Budget:** \$127,400

**Activity Description:**

Outreach and event materials will be translated into multiple languages to remove barriers of access. Public, community-based environmental education engagements will be provided to meet groups where they are and build relationships along the way, with the end goal of then recruiting participants to join in hands-on restoration events. When possible, community groups will be invited to co-design restoration events to strengthen community-input and buy-in while nurturing a conservation ethic.

Hands-on restoration events will occur on public, protected land with the goals of (1) increasing a conservation ethic in volunteers (2) by training and educating them in stewardship work that (3) restores Minnesota’s natural areas. Events will enhance and restore natural areas through planting, seeding, invasive species removal, and other site enhancements. Restoration events will be family-friendly. Healthy snacks or meals will be provided to reduce barriers to participation. All hands-on restoration volunteers will be fitted with necessary protective equipment, tools, and training needed to participate in these activities safely. Educational materials promoting action-based environmental stewardship strategies at all events.

Activity 1 will target 65-75% of events occurring in Greater MN with the remaining engagements occurring in Environmental Justice neighborhoods. Demographic data on all volunteers will be requested and documented.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Fall conservation events and engagements planned and implemented, 3 events, 100 individuals engaged	December 31, 2025
Full year of conservation events and engagements planned and implemented, 11 events, 675 individuals engaged	December 31, 2026
Further conservation events and engagements planned and implemented, total of 20 events, 1250 individuals engaged	December 31, 2027
Additional spring events developed and hosted, if budget allows	June 30, 2028

**Activity 2: Great River Greening will provide three paid internships during 2026 and 2027.**

**Activity Budget:** \$67,500

**Activity Description:**

Great River Greening will recruit, hire, train, and support at least six interns who will receive conservation career training and experience in community-based conservation work. Interns will be recruited through a variety of channels across the state. Staff will work with local education facilities to identify students interested in internship opportunities, with a particular focus on recruiting BIPOC participants and students in schools in Greater Minnesota. We will target at least 50% BIPOC representation in our intern program to support ongoing efforts to reduce representation disparities in the sector.

Core internships tasks will include supporting community outreach and engagement, environmental education, and conservation events. Interns will support these efforts in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota. Additionally, each intern will be provided the opportunity to meet with leadership in the varying departments of our growing conservation

non-profit, providing exposure and learning in community stewardship, ecological conservation, administration, operations, and funding/finance. To support career exploration and skill development, each intern will design and carryout a “capstone project” that supports conservation work in an area of their choosing. Concluding the internship, each intern will be tasked with sharing a personal testimonial reflecting on the experience.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Program review and refinement, begin networking with Greater MN and BIPOC community groups for recruitment	December 31, 2025
Three interns hired and hosted, three capstone projects and personal testimonies completed	December 31, 2026
Six total interns hired and hosted, six capstone projects and personal testimonies completed	December 31, 2027

**Activity 3: Youth Engagement**

**Activity Budget:** \$54,100

**Activity Description:**

Great River Greening will engage 500 youth and young adults in environmental stewardship work and education. This will include both (1) in-class/in-house introductory conservation lessons and (2) outdoor learning opportunities in the form of habitat monitoring and hands-on restoration work. Lessons and engagements will be designed with teachers and community leaders to fit the youth's needs and grant educators access/support to curriculum design. Additionally, curriculum and engagements will be designed to both increase enjoyment of and conservation commitment to local natural areas.

Students will receive exposure to a variety of environmental professionals through the series of engagements, highlighting a wide range of potential conservation careers to consider for their future. Local BIPOC community leaders and experts will be brought in as consultants or presenters to ensure a wide vary of representation within a sector still working towards equitable representation.

Engagements will be carried in public schools or community groups with at least 50% BIPOC representation. Surveys will be implemented with teachers, community leaders, and/or youth to gauge quality and effectiveness of engagements.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Continue strategic partnerships with youth organizations and schools, outreach to new groups to expand representation	December 31, 2025
Engage 250 students across at least 5 engagements with majority BIPOC schools or community groups	December 31, 2026
Engage 500 total students across at least 10 engagements with majority BIPOC school/community groups	December 31, 2027

## 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 first iteration of this program is underway and successfully meeting its aims, with a similar set of activities engaging our broad, diverse public in restoration activities, conservation internships, and applied educational opportunities with majority BIPOC youth communities. The second iteration of this program will build on the successes of the first, expanding our outreach, engagements, and hands-on restoration offerings: all resulting in more Minnesotans inclusively participating to restore our natural area while deepening their care and connection to conservation work and enjoyment. We anticipate returning in ML 2027 to support this program, if it continues to prove successful.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Pollinator Central II: Habitat Improvement With Community Monitoring	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08c	\$631,000
Engaging a Diverse Public in Environmental Stewardship	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05d	\$300,000
Biochar Implementation in Habitat Restoration: A Pilot	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 07b	\$185,000
Pollinator Central III: Habitat Improvement with Community Monitoring	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g	\$190,000
Restoring Forests and Savannas Using Silvopasture - Phase2	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$674,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Brennan Blue

**Job Title:** Environmental Stewardship Director

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

Brennan Blue is responsible for developing and implementing Great River Green's diverse stewardship goals by supporting individuals, organizations, and community partners to connect with and care for the natural world. Brennan is a Master Naturalist and Certified Tree Inspector who joined Great River Greening after spending 11 years as a faith community leader and 9 years as a nature center summer camp leader. Brennan has a Doctor of Ministry in community-based anti-racism identity development work and is particularly interested in formational education and the intersections of racial justice and climate justice work.

**Organization:** Great River Greening

**Organization Description:**

Great River Greening's mission is to secure the legacy of Minnesota land and water through community-based restoration, stewardship and partnership, striving to improve Minnesota's natural resources, protect clean air and water, and increase community access to sustainable open space. Since 1995, Great River Greening has engaged 47,000 volunteers (12,500 of them youth) in hands-on education and stewardship activities, helping restore over 12,000 acres of habitat in 400 communities across Minnesota. Great River Greening focuses our work in locations and on activities that provide conservation impact, ecosystem services, and community benefits, with projects including: developing planting designs and/or restoration management plans for natural areas; planting native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses; stabilizing shorelands and ravines; conducting ecological inventories; implementing conservation practices on

farmland; and completing restoration and management activities including exotic species removal, prairie seed collection, and prescribed burns. In addition, Great River Greening engages community members from schools, faith groups, civic groups, businesses, and veterans groups in public volunteer events and engages over 100 youth per year through targeted service-learning programs. Through community education and engagement, Greening is restoring natural resources, while building environmental leaders and stewards of tomorrow.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Program Manager		Responsible for project and grant oversight, event support, intern support, and youth event support			21%	0.24		\$31,000
Education and Outreach Coordinator		Outreach to diverse public, youth education engagements, internship supervision, event support			21%	0.36		\$25,000
Field Coordinator		On site coordination and support for restoration activities with volunteers and youth			21%	0.27		\$20,000
Grant Administer		Mange grant reporting and grant finances			21%	0.06		\$6,000
Intern		Interns to assist with community engagement and restoration			20%	0.64		\$35,000
Volunteer Events Coordinator		Volunteer event recruitment, coordination, and leadership			21%	0.36		\$25,000
Ecologist		Provide ecological oversight of restoration projects			21%	0.15		\$12,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$154,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Propio Language Services	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Translation Services				0.24		\$8,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Bus rentals, youth transportation				0.16		\$5,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Youth engagement speakers/consultants stipend - culturally appropriate representative				0.04		\$8,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$21,000</b>

<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Restoration supplies (native plants, trees, seed, erosion matting, etc.)	Habitat enhancement					\$41,000
	Tools and Supplies	Restoration event supplies (sanitation unit rental, gloves, safety glasses, volunteer tools, healthy snacks)	Event supplies	X				\$15,000
	Tools and Supplies	Youth Engagement Events Supplies (tools, kids gloves, resource books, binoculars, healthy snacks)	Event Supplies	X				\$9,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging		Vehicle mileage to community outreach, restoration events, and engagement with interns. Meals and lodging for sites across Greater MN. All mileage, meals, and lodging expenses will abide by the Travel Reimbursement and Documentation Guide for OHF and LCCMR projects					\$9,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$9,000</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-



<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$249,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>		Restoration event supplies (sanitation unit rental, gloves, safety glasses, volunteer tools, healthy snacks)	Healthy snack option (granola bar, fruit) at volunteer events. Volunteers will be at events in remote areas.
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>		Youth Engagement Events Supplies (tools, kids gloves, resource books, binoculars, healthy snacks)	Healthy snacks for youth participants while we are in remote areas or missing classroom snacks.

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
Cash	Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Funded projects.	Site prep ahead of some events at OHF funded restoration and enhancement sites.	Pending	\$10,000
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Great River Greening cash match.	Great River Greening direct expenses required to do the work for this grant.	Pending	\$100,000
In-Kind	Private Foundation	Metro Internship funding	Pending	\$5,400
Cash	Private Foundation	Funds supporting youth education	Pending	\$20,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$125,400</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$135,400</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$384,400**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [228c059a-da4.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Summary flyer with inspiring images of Minnesotans engaging in conservation work...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Great River Greening 990	<a href="#">527ef9d2-65b.pdf</a>
990 Form Great River Greening	<a href="#">64b8f63f-5b2.pdf</a>
Great River Greening Audit	<a href="#">19cdcd42-5c5.pdf</a>
Sec of State-In good standing	<a href="#">d5830b34-6b8.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Board Approval Letter	<a href="#">3f4563ce-928.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Letter of Support - DIW	<a href="#">ecb385b4-f29.pdf</a>
Letter of Support - Frogtown Green	<a href="#">54e74ff2-738.pdf</a>
Background Check Form	<a href="#">3f1b332c-739.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

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 pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

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 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

No

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:**

Melissa Greenwood, Grants Administrator for Great River Greening

