



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-210

Proposal Title: Ash Recovery and Recycling Center

Project Manager Information

Name: Nicholas Leonard

Organization: Otter Tail County

Office Telephone: (218) 998-8057

Email: nleonard@ottertailcounty.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Water resources in Otter Tail County are priceless. Minnesota has spent hundreds of millions on landfill cleanup. This proposal will protect water by reversing the landfilling process and recycling instead.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$1,270,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31, 2028

LCCMR Funding Category: Water (B)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central, NW,

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

Region(s): Central, NW,

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.

Landfills can be harmful to water resources. If not properly managed, landfills can impact groundwater, lakes, and rivers, posing risks to human health and the environment. Minnesota has spent approximately \$500 million on closed landfill cleanup. Projected future closed landfill costs exceed \$400 million – not including treatment of groundwater contamination from Per and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs). Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste Authority (PLMSWA) processes approximately 54,000 tons per year of municipal solid waste (MSW) from its five member counties (Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Todd and Wadena) through resource recovery. The MPCA recommends resource recovery as an alternative that is safer than landfilling (including its effective destruction of PFAs). However, the process produces about 10,000 tons ash/year that is still being landfilled at an Otter Tail County-owned facility near New York Mills, Minnesota – an area rich in water resources. The ash contains ferrous and non-ferrous metals, and oversized objects like slag and glass. Otter Tail County and PLMSWA desire to protect its water resources by finding a more sustainable solution for managing ash. They desire to reduce or eliminate their dependency on landfilling.

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.

Our solution to this problem is to recycle ash and eliminate landfilling. Recycling ash protects air, soil and water from contamination. Recycling lowers greenhouse gas emissions and reduces mining of virgin materials (metals, lime and aggregates). This sustainable practice supports environmental protection while conserving resources and works towards a circular economy. Ash is cleaned (processed) by removing the metals and oversized objects. The processed ash can be used in state and local road construction projects – most commonly full depth reclamation. Ash has been used in road construction for over 30 years. The MPCA determined PLMSWA ash is suitable for road construction and memorialized its decision with a case specific beneficial use determination (CSBUD – see attached) . A pilot project is underway on CSAH 75 in Otter Tail County (2025). A second pilot project is scheduled in Becker County (CSAH 39 and 40) in 2026. Currently, the ash is processed and stored inside the landfill, or stockpiled at construction sites. To create a safe, systematic full scale operation with improved stormwater and air quality protection, we will build a fabric-covered building and ash handling conveyor system to store the ash on a recently purchased 10-acre parcel.

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 project aligns with LCCMR’s strategic priorities by protecting Minnesota’s water resources from landfill contamination and conserving valuable materials through metal recycling. There are two specific outcomes for this project:

1. Allow PLMSWA to stop landfilling ash as a primary management method, reducing landfilling by approximately 10,000 tons per year.
2. Prevent soil, water and air contamination related to ash management- ultimately protecting our groundwater, lakes, rivers, and wells from contamination.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Construction

Activity Budget: \$1,270,000

Activity Description:

Surveyors and engineers will be retained by Otter Tail County to develop drawings and technical specifications for the project. Based on the project description and cost, it is not anticipated that Predesign is required by Minnesota Statute §16B.335, but is contemplated in our schedule. While we are not requesting funding for design or other professional services, here is the anticipated timeline for that work:

- 1 Obtain Professional Services Agreements for Design 9/30/2026
- 2 Perform Subsurface Soils Investigation 11/30/2026
- 3 Complete Pre-Design requirements, if any 11/30/2026
- 4 Apply for permits, including MPCA 12/31/2027
- 5 Issue purchase order for fabric building, using State Contract 2/28/2027
- 6 Complete Earthwork Design and advertise/bid project 2/28/2027

Upon completion, a bidding document will be advertised for bidding and awarded to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder. The awarded contractor will perform work. The work will be sequential. So, installation of the fabric building will need to occur after earthwork is completed. If the building has more than an aggregate floor, such as concrete, this will probably need to be poured after building installation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Commence Earthwork Construction	May 31, 2027
Substantially Complete Earthwork and Building Construction	September 30, 2027
Substantially Complete Building Construction and Equipment Installation	June 30, 2028
Final Payment to Contractors	July 31, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Brian Schmidt	Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste Authority (PLMSWA)	Facility Manager	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 this project long-term is of utmost importance. Otter Tail County has managed ash by landfilling for over 20 years. If funded, Otter Tail County, the ash management partner of PLMSWA, will be responsible for the construction of a fabric building and ash handling conveyor system for the storage of clean ash. The Otter Tail County Board has already approved acquisition of 10 acres of land contiguous to the existing ash landfill for processing. Revenue generated from sale of recovered metals, reduced landfilling costs, and tipping fees are funding sources for ongoing operations and maintenance.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail (McDonald Segment)	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$2,245,000
Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail (West Segment)	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09n	\$2,600,000
Phelps Mill Wetland and Prairie Restoration	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08r	\$974,000
Dent and Vergas Spur Trails	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$934,000

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.

Chris McConn, P.E. and Nicholas Leonard, Ph.D. will manage the project. Mr. McConn has a B.S. from Michigan Technological University in Environmental Engineering. He is a professional engineer with 30 years of experience (primarily in Minnesota, but also in WI, IA, ND, SD and MT) managing a diverse range of construction projects (practicing civil and environmental engineering). Projects include residential, commercial and industrial site development, underground utilities (drinking water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer), transportation and solid waste. Projects have been performed for private developers, businesses, local municipalities, counties and state agencies. Experience includes financing locally, with special assessments, bonding, state and federally funds. Mr. McConn has been involved in the process of obtaining permits, Environmental Assessment Worksheets, property purchasing, eminent domain, platting, easements, variances and zoning. Projects have ranges in value from less than \$100,000 to over \$100 million. Projects have used CSI, AIA, EJCDC, MnDOT and special provisions for bidding and technical specifications. Currently, Mr. McConn is the solid waste director for Otter Tail, Todd and Wadena Counties. He also services as the executive director for the Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste Authority managing in aggregate approximately 85 employees and

\$25 million/year. Recently, Mr. McConn was appointed to serve on the MPCA Critical Minerals Recovery Advisory Task Force. Dr. Leonard is the Deputy County Administrator for Economic Growth and Community Investment. In this capacity, he will facilitate the necessary county departments and private sector partners to implement the project. He has extensive experience overseeing state and federal grants, ensuring compliance with funding regulations, financial reporting, and program implementation. His expertise includes managing grant applications, budgeting, auditing, and stakeholder coordination to maximize funding impact and program success.

Organization: Otter Tail County

Organization Description:

Otter Tail County is a dynamic organization serving a vast region in west-central Minnesota. The county provides essential services in public safety, health and human services, public works, economic development, and more. Covering over 2,200 square miles, Otter Tail County is one of the largest counties in Minnesota, encompassing 22 rural communities and 62 townships.

The Solid Waste Department operates the NE Otter Tail Ash & Demolition Facility (SW-544). The ash monofil has been receiving waste combustor ash for over 30 years. Currently, it receives ash from waste processed at the Prairie Lakes Municipal Solid Waste Authority (PLMSWA), a five-county joint powers authority (Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, Todd and Wadena). Otter Tail County is under contract to provide administrative services for PLMSWA including an executive director (Chris McConn), human resources, accounting, IT and legal. PLMSWA is audited as a component unit of Otter Tail County.

The county boasts a diverse economy, driven by agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, and a strong tourism sector, thanks to its 1,048 lakes and natural resources. Supporting this economic diversity is a large and complex transportation system, including 1,067 miles of county highway and 74 bridges that connect residents, businesses, and visitors across the region.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD by Competitive Bid	Service Contract	Contracted work will include earthwork and site preparation, construction of a 72'x255' ash receiving facility, 8' tall building bunker panels, electrical and mechanical, and acquisition and installation of material processing equipment, including ash handling conveyor system for the storage of clean ash. This also includes a 5% contingency.		X		0		\$1,270,000
							Sub Total	\$1,270,000
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	\$1,270,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Contracts and Services - TBD by Competitive Bid	Service Contract	Contracted work will include earthwork and site preparation, construction of a 72'x255' ash receiving facility, 8' tall building bunker panels, electrical and mechanical, and acquisition and installation of material processing equipment, including ash handling conveyor system for the storage of clean ash. This also includes a 5% contingency.	The facility and affixed mechanical equipment for handling ash are permanent structures, unable to be moved. If funded, these capital items will continue to be used for the same program through their useful life. Additionally, Otter Tail County understands and acknowledges the requirement to pay back the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund an amount equal to either the cash value received or a residual value approved by the LCCMR director if it is sold. .

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Land Acquisition	County purchased 10 acres of land for building and processing.	Secured	\$140,000
Cash	Otter Tail County	Surveyors and Engineers - Develop drawings and technical specifications for the project	Secured	\$159,000
Cash	Otter Tail County Match for Earthwork and Site Readiness	Mobilization; Common Excavation; Aggregate; Concrete Surfacing; Receiving Pit Cast-in-place; Stormwater pond; RC Culverts; Erosion Control Devices; Turf Restoration	Secured	\$321,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$620,000
			Funds Total	\$620,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,890,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [2c7d7517-11a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Attached is a visual depiction of the ash storage facility that will be constructed for receiving, cleaning and handling the ash for use in transportation projects. Also included are several maps and a survey of the recently acquired property for the facility and processing activities....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Current financial statements	2c86af16-206.pdf
Otter Tail County Audit	ccc8421a-152.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	dbd3a001-812.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support	d5c54470-2fe.pdf
Capital Project Questionnaire	954af337-931.pdf
Detailed Budget Supplement	ae68ae11-22c.xlsx
Budget Addendum	6107344f-da8.xlsx

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

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?

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 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:

Nicholas Leonard, Otter Tail County and Chris McConn, Otter Tail County

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

