



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-229

**Proposal Title:** Perennials for Climate Resiliency on Minnesota Private Lands

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Jan Joannides

**Organization:** Renewing the Countryside

**Office Telephone:** (612) 251-7304

**Email:** jan@rtcinfo.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Private landowners will gain knowledge of the benefits of perennials and increase perennial plantings on their land through technical, financial and labor assistance and peer networks

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$672,000

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

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Resiliency (A)

#### 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.**

Private landowner own 75% of Minnesota's land and, therefore, are key to protecting Minnesota's natural resources and building climate resiliency. Over the past two years, Renewing the Countryside (RTC) and Climate Land Leaders (CLL) have used our grassroots connections and community-building expertise to engage Minnesota landowners who want to be better stewards of their land and natural resources.

Perennials - whether prairie grasses, elderberry bushes, or trees (to name a few) - provide a multitude of ecosystem services and environmental benefits - from capturing carbon, to soaking up and filtering water, to providing food and habitat for pollinators, birds, and wildlife. Our engaged landowners are interested in integrating perennials onto their land, but face challenges, including:

Lack of knowledge of how to get started

Prohibitive, upfront financial costs

Lack of confidence in seeking technical assistance

Lack of access to peer-to-peer networks

Lack of time and energy to implement and manage new practices

While excellent programs are available through state, federal and county agencies, many individuals we have reached either haven't known about these, haven't felt comfortable accessing them, or haven't had found the type of support that they needed to enable them to take action.

**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.**

This project will help private landowners gain knowledge of the benefits of perennial plantings for climate mitigation and natural resource protection and help 44 landowners increase perennial plantings on their land. It will also support peer networks that build community and connections among landowners.

RTC's MN Women in Conservation (MNWiC) and the Climate Land Leaders Initiative (CLL) both have been working to engage and support more landowners in implementing conservation and climate mitigation practices on their land. MNWiC and CLL have grown quickly in Minnesota, primarily due to our similar approaches which focus on meeting landowners where they are at, providing information and assistance in ways that are easy to understand, and providing a supportive environment that builds community connections. Some of the approaches we use include: 1) learning circles, which research shows is a preferred method of learning among women. 2) peer networks that provide opportunities for learning, discussion, and support 3) field days and events, where landowners share with their peers the practices they have implemented, and the journey to do so 4) individualized technical assistance from knowledgeable, friendly staff and contractors; 5) webinars and newsletters that are designed for a general audience, making them interesting and accessible.

**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?**

1. Broadened understanding among landowners and volunteers of perennial plantings and how they can build climate resilience and enhance natural resources.
2. 44 perennial plantings established on private lands where they will have positive impacts on biodiversity, habitat, water quality and quantity, and climate mitigation.
3. Expanded network of landowners interested in learning about and implementing conservation and climate adaptation processes.
4. Greater connections and collaboration among landowners (including Indigenous landowners, women landowners,

and beginning farmers) with conservation professionals.

5. Participating nonprofits expand their network of volunteers and ability to mobilize them for conservation projects.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Outreach and Education on Perennial Plantings

**Activity Budget:** \$331,207

**Activity Description:**

Objective: to inform and engage landowners about the benefits, practices, and importance of integrating perennial plants onto their lands.

**Tasks:**

RTC's MNWiC Regional Coordinators plan and hold 4 learning circles per year in 4 regions.

MNWiC team plans and conducts 3 webinars on this topic annually.

CLL holds 10 meetings/year where private landowners share challenges and opportunities as they work to increase perennials on the land.

CLL & RTC each publishes 20 social media posts and CLL secures media coverage four times per year about landowners incorporating perennials on their land and the LCCMR program.

RTC hosts 6 field days per year on farms that have received support for perennial plantings. Field days will be promoted to landowners in the region.

**Outcomes:**

Participants increase their knowledge about perennial plantings as a result of attending events.

Participants make connections with interested others, becoming more motivated to implement plantings on their land.

An expanded audience learns about opportunities through CLL and LCCMR.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Four learning circles held each year with at least 60/participants/yr	December 31, 2027
Three webinars, focused on perennials, held each year, with at least 150 participants/yr	April 30, 2028
80 social media posts that reach 1,200 people	May 31, 2028
20 cohort meetings occur over the 2 years of the project	May 31, 2028
Eight articles published	May 31, 2028
6 field days hosted per year, with at least 180 attendees/yr	May 31, 2028

### Activity 2: Selecting partner landowners and Implementation of plantings on 44 farms

**Activity Budget:** \$340,262

**Activity Description:**

Objective: Successful planning and implementation of perennial plantings on 44 farms.

**Tasks:**

- A process is developed and implemented for recruiting/selecting landowners to receive planting stipends available through this project.
- CLL and RTC staff or advisor members choose 22 most appropriate landowners to receive funds each year
- Staff with technical assistance expertise visit each of the landowners site
- Create/enhance a system for recruiting volunteers to help with perennial plantings
- Stipends are distributed to landowners
- Projects identified that would benefit from volunteer assistance

- Volunteers recruited and trained
- Planning and coordination take place for plantings that include volunteers
- Plantings take place on landowners land, some with volunteer assistance
- A soil specialist and biodiversity specialist visit 10 of the projects prior to being implemented to collect baseline data.

**Outcomes:**

- With assistance, participants develop plans for perennial plantings on their land.
- Participants successfully apply for funds to support perennial plantings
- Volunteer systems improved and in place
- 100 Volunteers recruited & participate in plantings
- Landowners report on how they used the funds and document the plantings.
- Soil and biodiversity baseline and changes over time are documented.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Applications for year 1 perennial planting assistance are received by project team	September 30, 2026
Volunteers recruited and trained	September 30, 2026
22 participants are chosen in first year	October 31, 2026
Soil and biodiversity assessments on 10 sites are documented	May 31, 2027
First year planting occur and are documented	June 30, 2027
Applications for year 2 perennial planting assistance are received by project team	July 31, 2027
22 participants are chosen in the second year	August 31, 2027
Staff technical assistance providers visit each site	March 31, 2028
Second year planting occur and are documented	May 31, 2028
Volunteers assist in 6 plantings per year	May 31, 2028

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Teresa Opheim	Climate Land Leaders	Recruit landowners; collect baseline data on soils and biodiversity on landowners' lands, work with landowners to plant perennials such as trees, shrubs, and grasses; facilitate peer networking among landowners; secure media about the project and ENRTF; assist Renewing the Countryside on grant administration and reporting.	Yes
Shelly Connor	Wild Farm Alliance	Teach landowners about pollinators, assist Climate Land Leaders in collecting baseline data on biodiversity.	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?**

Through our established networks we will conduct learning circles, webinars and field days which will focus on perennials on the landscape. We will use our media channels to promote these opportunities.

44 landowners will receive \$2,000 to help establish plantings and some will be assisted by volunteers. They will become part of the Climate Land Leaders Initiative, where they will receive ongoing support and assistance from fellow landowner, beyond the length of the grant.

Landowners who receive stipends will maintain their plantings using their own resources. Many will seek to protect their conservation efforts through conservation easements.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Jan Joannides

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Summary of Qualifications. Jan Joannides is the Executive Director of Renewing the Countryside, a Minnesota-based 501c3 nonprofit organization. She holds an M.S. in Forestry from the University of Minnesota and a B.S. in Biology from Anderson University. Joannides has over 25 years of experience developing and implementing initiatives that blend rural economic development with the care and protection of our natural resources. She has been the Project Director on over 30 federal and state grants and contracts, including current contracts with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Risk Management Agency, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Education totalling over \$4.5M.

Joannides leads a staff of 22 people and dozens of community-based contractors. She has served as the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota, is on University of Minnesota Extension's Statewide Advisory Committee, and personally manages 30 acres of woodlands in southeast Minnesota.

**Responsibilities Pertaining to this Grant**

Joannides will oversee and manage the execution of the grant, ensuring that the project is completed on time, within budget, and in alignment with the objectives and requirements of the grant. She will lead the team of staff and partners working on the project, ensuring a coordinated, effective, and efficient process for launching, implementing and evaluating the work. Joannides will oversee the project's budget, ensuring that funds are allocated appropriately and used according to the grant's guidelines and will coordinate timely reporting.

**Organization:** Renewing the Countryside

**Organization Description:**

Renewing the Countryside (RTC)'s mission is to empower and support people to build healthier communities through sustainable and innovative initiatives, businesses, and projects. We do this by sharing stories of rural renewal, building awareness and support for sustainable endeavors, providing practical assistance and networking opportunities for those working to "renew the countryside," and fostering connections between urban and rural people. RTC is a Minnesota-based 501c3 nonprofit that has been working in the state for over 20 years.

Our main areas of work focus on sustainable agriculture, conservation on private lands, local food systems, entrepreneurship, and community building. Our conservation and climate resiliency programs include Minnesota Women in Conservation, Conservation Connectors, Go Farm Connect, and Urban Agriculture. These programs support farmers and landowners with education, technical assistance, and support to access other programs and resources.

Complementary RTC programming focuses on improving farmland access for beginning farmers and on expanding market access for small-scale, diversified farmers. Additionally, RTC coordinates the Food and Agriculture exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair's EcoExperience and is working on creating infrastructure and markets for Minnesota Grown elderberries.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Jan Joannides		Project Manager			32%	0.2		\$24,116
Burke Murphy		MNWic Statewide Coordinator			32%	0.6		\$54,664
Matthew Barthelemy		Volunteer Coordinator			32%	0.6		\$46,625
Maeve Mallozzi-Kelly		Events Coordinator			32%	0.6		\$45,017
Kara Komoto		Program Associate			32%	0.4		\$30,547
Communications Manager		Communications Manager			32%	0.3		\$24,920
Regional Coordinator		SE Regional Coordinator			32%	0.3		\$40,328
Regional Coordinator		WC Regional Coordinator			32%	0.3		\$40,328
Regional Coordinator		EC Regional Coordinator			32%	0.3		\$40,328
Regional Coordinator		NW Regional Coordinator			32%	0.3		\$40,328
Jody Padgham		Finance Director/ Admin			32%	0.15		\$10,049
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$397,250</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Climate Land Leaders	Subaward	Collect baseline data on soils and presence of pollinators on individual landowners' lands; work with private landowners to plant perennials such as trees, shrubs, and grasses; secure media about the project and ENRTF; assist Renewing the Countryside on grant administration and reporting.				1.28		\$116,837
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$116,837</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	tools and gloves for planting	for planting perennials					\$1,731



							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,731</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	10 trips avg 300 mi @ 0.70 in yr 1	to collect baseline data					\$2,100
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	22 trips x 300 mi x .70/mi	Technical assistance visits to farms					\$9,240
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	1 person x 80 miles x 0.070/mi, 4 trips per year	Leadership of learning circles					\$448
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 people x 200 mi RT x 0.70/mi x 6 trips per year	Field day mileage					\$3,360
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	\$130/night x 1 person, 6 times per year	Lodging for field day travel					\$1,560
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	\$43 x 1 person x 6 trips per year	Per diem field day travel					\$516
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 people x 300 mi RT x 0.70 x 6 per year	Staff to volunteer events					\$5,040
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	10 people x 100 mi RT x 0.70 x 6 trips per year	Travel for volunteers to help with plantings					\$8,400
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	1 staff to 6 events avg 300 mi RT x 0.70/mi	Staff to present at 6 conferences					\$1,260
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	\$130/night x 6 events	lodging for 1 staff to attend 6 conferences					\$780
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	\$43 x 1 staff x 6 events	Per diem for 1 staff to attend 6 conferences					\$258
	Conference Registration	6 conferences @\$150	Registration for staff to present at 6 conferences					\$900

	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging							
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$33,862</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	5000 copies @ \$0.40 each	Brochures to publicize project					\$2,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Learning Circle Costs	room and refreshments for 4 events per year @ \$350 ea					\$2,800
		Field Day Costs	portapottie, refreshments and insurance for 6 field days per year @\$900 ea					\$10,800
		Volunteer day costs	Porta pottie, meals and insurance for 6 volunteer days per year @\$860					\$10,320
		Stipends	\$2,000 stipends to 22 landowners per year to cover planting materials and other needs					\$88,000
		Speaker stipends	\$200 stipends for speakers at webinars, 6 per year					\$2,400
		Field day host stipends	\$500 for each field day host, 6 per year					\$6,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$120,320</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$672,000</b>

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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	McKnight Foundation	To cover additional staff and contractors salaries, benefits, and travel expenses.	Secured	\$65,000
Cash	Margaret A Cargill Foundation	To support additional time of MNWiC coordinators to connect with landowners outside of the specified events	Secured	\$25,000
Cash	NRCS	To support communications work beyond what is budgeted in this proposal. And to cover costs associated with Zoom meetings, website, and other internet based tools.	Secured	\$40,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$802,000**

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

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [a80f1981-980.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Visual shows location of Climate Land Leader participants across Minnesota and MNWiC's 4 regions in SE, WC, NE, and NW MN...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Secretary of State Good Standing	<a href="#">6844a253-e03.pdf</a>
Renewing the Countryside Audit 2023	<a href="#">9c5067f4-6d0.pdf</a>
Renewing the Countryside 990 2023	<a href="#">5ab606a6-e36.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Renewing the Countryside Board Resolution	<a href="#">012a9473-653.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
MN Women in Conservation Brochure	<a href="#">b7eef746-d37.pdf</a>
Climate Land Leaders Annual Report	<a href="#">0cb2eba2-c85.pdf</a>
Wild Farm Alliance Letter of Support	<a href="#">a26fd15d-e55.pdf</a>
Climate Land Leaders LOS	<a href="#">84ade808-80c.pdf</a>

## 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?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**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:**

Jody Padgham, Renewing the Countryside; Teresa Opheim, Climate Land Leaders

**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**

N/A