



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-265

**Proposal Title:** Enhancing Forest Resilience through Collaborative Partnerships

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Eric Schenck

**Organization:** Minnesota Forest Resources Council

**Office Telephone:** (651) 603-6761

**Email:** eric.schenck@state.mn.us

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** This proposal addresses forest resiliency challenges due to climate and land-use changes in Minnesota's forests through strategic research, regional planning, and experiential professional training in collaboration with MFRC stakeholder communities.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$980,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**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.**

The resiliency of Minnesota's 17.7 million acres of forest is threatened by extreme weather, spread of insect pests and pathogens, land-use changes, biodiversity loss, and accumulation of dead trees and woody debris. Forest resiliency risks include increased wildfire, repressed forest regeneration, wildlife habitat loss, and reduced ability to store carbon. Loss of forest resiliency also threatens the ability of forests to offset CO2 emissions (21.5 MMT in 2022)—a climate mitigation factor critical to achieving Minnesota's net zero emissions goal by 2050.

This proposal presents a comprehensive, novel approach to address forest resiliency within MFRC's (Minnesota Forest Resources Council) programmatic responsibilities under the Sustainable Forest Resources Act (MN Stat. 89A). This project will pioneer forest resiliency research, regional planning, and experiential training beyond the existing operations of the MFRC and its stakeholder representatives.

Forest resilience is defined here as being the ability to prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change and associated forest land-use changes. The proposal addresses forest resilience at all scales (site-level, landscape, and statewide). In doing so, MFRC will broaden the audiences, coordination, and collaboration among Minnesota's forestry stakeholders.

### **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.**

MFRC's solution uses science-based research, locally led planning, and outreach to better understand, guide, and communicate forest resiliency needs and opportunities. Development of deliverables will be led by the MFRC and vetted with diverse forest stakeholder representatives.

MFRC has broad statutory responsibility to provide leadership in sustainable forest resource management. MFRC will expand understanding of forest disturbance patterns, risks, mitigation strategies, and management practices—factors critically tied to the resiliency of Minnesota's forests. MFRC also will lead updated forest management guidelines training and outreach to land managers, foresters, and loggers to expand forest management activities that enhance forest resiliency. MFRC will support its six stakeholder-led regional committees by providing a synopsis of emerging science, new practices, and existing projects for incorporation into regional forest landscape planning and coordination. Importantly, MFRC is proposing robust forest resiliency communication and information strategies to serve broad public audiences across the state.

The strength of MFRC's solution lies in expanding Minnesota's existing sustainable forest management framework to integrate forest resiliency into implementation of MFRC's research, landscape, and site-level programs going forward. The proposal provides additional outreach and interactive trainings focused on forest resiliency through the framework of the MFRC's existing programs.

### **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?**

Research on increasing forest resilience on public and private lands, as well as implications of landscape-level forest loss and increasing tree mortality within forests.

Training on forest management guidelines featuring site-level practices that support climate change considerations, adaptation, and resiliency.

Synthesize information on new practices and leverage the experience-based knowledge of field practitioners within six regional landscape committees on forest resiliency for incorporation into regional forest landscape planning.

Collaborative statewide communication and knowledge transfer featuring forest resiliency strategies and stories developed in cooperation with MFRC stakeholders and state agencies.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Research landscape-level forest resiliency and adaptation conditions and strategies on public and private forestland (Statute 89A.08)

**Activity Budget:** \$300,000

#### Activity Description:

Guided by MFRC’s Research Advisory Committee (MN Stat. 89A.08), use readily available data to advance research and understanding of landscape-level forest resiliency, and adaptation on public and private forestland within six forested regions of Minnesota. Resiliency as defined here is a measure of the forest’s adaptability to a range of stresses and reflects the functional integrity of Minnesota’s forest ecosystems under changing climate, land use, and extreme weather conditions. This activity compares adaptive forest management scenarios within these six regions. Results will inform sustainable forest management plans and decisions to enhance site- and landscape-level forest resiliency and adaption on public and private forestlands. Activity tasks:

- In partnership with the research community, identify forest metrics for assessing climate resiliency through literature review, peer input, and stakeholder review.
- Assess the resiliency consequences of forest loss through land conversion and increased tree mortality due to changing weather conditions and pathogens.
- Assess forest resilience and adaptation strategies on public and private forestlands.
- Compare forest resiliency and adaptation under selected management strategies.
- Final report on forest resilience and adaptation strategies.

#### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify forest metrics for resiliency assessment	April 30, 2027
Preliminary report on forest resilience and adaptation strategies	March 31, 2028
Presentation of research results to MFRC forestry stakeholders	March 31, 2029
Delivery of final report on forest resilience and adaptation strategies	June 30, 2029

### Activity 2: Build site-level forest resiliency through revised timber harvesting and forest management guidelines and training (Statute 89A.05)

**Activity Budget:** \$180,000

#### Activity Description:

MFRC has the statutory responsibility to develop, maintain, and revise site-level sustainable timber harvesting and forest management guidelines (FMGs) for use on public and private lands. MFRC has completed a multi-year review and revision of FMGs that includes updates for climate change considerations. MFRC proposes expanding statewide FMG training and implementation of updated resiliency practices and considerations. These trainings will leverage standing partnerships, with an enhanced focus on forest resiliency practices. Trainings will include new considerations to maintain site-level sustainability and resiliency in conjunction with forest management and timber harvests. Trainings offer the opportunity for interactive discussion and peer-based learning. Additional investment will be made to strengthen the usability, searchability, and navigation within the FMGs to support their application by practitioners often on remote sites using handheld devices. Activity tasks:

- Conduct six regional site-level FMG trainings which now include considerations on forest resiliency and climate considerations into the site-level field instruction.
- Develop accessible, downloadable, mobile device friendly version of 2025 FMGs.

#### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Design curriculum and develop materials for regional FMG trainings	May 31, 2027
Develop accessible, downloadable, mobile device friendly version 2025 FMGs	June 30, 2028
Conduct six regional FMG trainings	June 30, 2029

### Activity 3: Enhance landscape-level forest resiliency through knowledge sharing and regional networks (Statute 89A.06)

**Activity Budget:** \$300,000

**Activity Description:**

The Sustainable Forest Resources Act tasks the MFRC with creating a framework for long-range strategic planning and coordination across all forested regions of the state and across all ownerships. This activity will leverage regionally specific knowledge to create resiliency guidance for landscape-level planning and coordination. This activity will utilize the existing network of regional forest resource committees to share, capture, and document successful strategies and field-learned knowledge. Resulting guidance documents will be utilized by diverse stakeholders including MFRC regional landscape committees and anyone with an interest in forest resilience. This inclusive process will ensure forest management for resilience has buy-in from those who own, manage, and recreate in Minnesota’s forests. This process will leverage long-standing regional landscape committee planning and information-sharing peer-to-peer networks as outlined in the Sustainable Forest Resources Act. Activity tasks:

- Host forest resiliency workshops through the MFRC Regional Landscape Program network and partners to gather field insights and knowledge.
- Develop forest resiliency guidance from known and emerging science, field practitioner knowledge and experience, with social, environmental, and economic considerations.
- Increase awareness and implementation of forest resiliency strategies by MFRC partners through information-sharing and peer-to-peer networks.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Assemble and create draft guidance of findings and summary of strategies for forest resilience	March 31, 2028
Regional meetings to discuss forest resilience and collect information on existing projects and techniques	June 30, 2028
Final guidance is released for use by regional landscape committees and the public	June 30, 2029

### Activity 4: Provide collaborative, experiential learning to build forest resiliency and mitigate climate and land use change

**Activity Budget:** \$200,000

**Activity Description:**

This activity builds understanding and collaboration among forestry professionals through experiential learning. Participants will share challenges and opportunities, gain knowledge, and build relationships to help them prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate climate and land-use change effects on forests. A forest resiliency forum(s) will showcase forest resiliency techniques, strategies, and plans. Insights gained through experiential learning activities will help guide participants in applying resiliency strategies. Feedback mechanisms will gauge effectiveness and strengthen future events. Activity tasks:

- A statewide in-person and online forest resiliency forum(s), featuring experts, and public and private forest landowner-led discussions on preparing for, adapting to, and mitigating climate and land-use change effects. Participants will hear

real-world case studies and learn about resources for implementing forest resiliency practices.

- A roadmap with recommendations for future approaches to continue collaboration and experiential learning opportunities on forest resiliency informed by key insights, outcomes, and lessons learned.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Statewide forest resiliency forum(s) work plan, including agenda, date, location, participant outreach mechanism	August 31, 2028
Statewide forest resiliency forum held	May 31, 2029
Forest resiliency collaboration roadmap released	June 30, 2029

## 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?**

Project results will be incorporated into the MFRC's ongoing statutorily mandated programs, funded through an approximate \$1 million annual appropriation under the Sustainable Forest Resources Act. Project materials and results will empower the MFRC's 16 stakeholder appointees and Tribal representative to incorporate forest resiliency considerations within their unique responsibilities for sustainable forest resources management. MFRC appointees, as defined by statute, represent diverse local, state, Tribal, federal, and NGO partners.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Eric Schenck

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Eric Schenck is responsible for leading the 17-member Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC), all of MFRC's programs, the MFRC budget, and manages relationships with collaborators. Eric has a Master of Forest Science from Yale University and Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Resources from the University of Idaho. He is responsible for leading the Council's public policy, landscape planning, communications, and forestry research efforts that seek to sustainably balance and expand the economic, environmental, and social benefits of Minnesota's forest resources. Eric has more than 32 years of professional conservation experience, including nine years of public policy experience in Washington, DC, and more than 23 years of delivering multiple-use conservation programs in Illinois, Indiana, and Kansas. Prior to MFRC he served as Executive Director of the Illinois Conservation Foundation.

**Organization:** Minnesota Forest Resources Council

**Organization Description:**

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) is a 17-member board created to develop policy recommendations to the Governor and federal, state, and local governments and to encourage the adoption of sustainable forest management policies and practices. Council members represent a wide range of forest resource interests and hold public meetings every other month to discuss key issues. For over 25 years, the council has played an integral role in depoliticizing complex forest issues and helping Minnesota's citizens, lawmakers, and forest professionals make sound decisions regarding the stewardship of public and private forest lands. The council acts as a catalyst for new landscape-level cooperative models and championing long-term ecosystem integrity. Unlike a traditional state agency, the council fulfills its charge under the Sustainable Forest Resources Act, by developing recommendations related to "forest resource policies and practices that result in the sustainable management, use, and protection of the state's forest resources." This unique model of cooperation among diverse interests gives all Minnesotans an opportunity to care for their forests ensuring economic, ecological, and social sustainability.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD	Subaward	Conduct hypothesis driven forest resiliency research (Activity 1)				3		\$300,000
TBD	Subaward	Coordinate and deliver site-level FMG trainings (Activity 2)				1.5		\$150,000
TBD	Subaward	Host regional forest resiliency workshops and synthesize inputs, and develop forest resiliency guidance (Activity 3)				3		\$300,000
TBD	Subaward	Organize and host statewide forest resiliency forums(s) and develop forest resiliency collaboration roadmap (Activity 4)				2.1		\$200,000
TBD	Subaward	Develop accessible, downloadable, mobile device friendly version of 2025 FMGs and other training materials as needed (Activity 2)				0.3		\$30,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$980,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								

							<b>Sub Total</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>\$980,000</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
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$980,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

*Visual Component*

File: [cc2c83ac-014.pdf](#)

*Alternate Text for Visual Component*

MFRC Proposal Cover Letter...

### 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?**

Yes

**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:**

MFRC Members and Staff (Elizabeth Hutchison, Jaime Thibodeaux, David Wilson)

**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

