



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-313

Proposal Title: Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas Grant Programs

Project Manager Information

Name: Jenni Bubke

Organization: MN DNR - State Parks and Trails Division

Office Telephone: (651) 259-5638

Email: jennifer.bubke@state.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Provide approximately 18 matching grants for local parks, trails, acquisition of natural areas and trails to connect people safely to desirable community locations and regional or state facilities.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$5,000,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

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

Narrative

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

The Outdoor Recreation Grant Program (Local Parks), Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program and Local Trail Connections Program provide competitive matching grants, as authorized under MN Statutes 85.019, to local governments for land acquisition and improvements related to parks and trails. The grant programs are for local projects improving parks, acquiring natural areas and providing trail connections statewide. These programs are at the front line of the DNR's effort to partner with local communities in providing access to outdoor recreation opportunities. It is especially important given that most funding sources have greatly diminished for these local programs, and they are not eligible for the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, which only funds projects of state or regional significance. Connecting communities with the outdoors through park and trail facilities enhances Minnesota's stewardship ethic and further the goals of the Department's Strategic Conservation Agenda. Many projects include renovation of existing facilities to improve safety and accessibility, acquisition of locally significant natural and scenic areas, completion of trail linkages to safely connect people from where they live to desirable locations within the community and/or connecting local trails to regional or state facilities.

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.

Local Park Grants: This program seeks to increase and enhance close to home recreation facilities and provide safe and accessible recreation facilities. This is achieved through competitive, matching grants that provide financial incentive and ensuring parks acquired and developed under this program are retained for public use in perpetuity.

Natural and Scenic Area Grants: Opportunities for local governments and school districts to acquire and protect natural and scenic areas statewide are diminishing, especially in high growth areas, shore lands, bluff tops and areas where land use changes may limit future opportunities. This program seeks to ensure protection of natural and scenic resources by helping and encouraging local governments to acquire and protect such land for appropriate public use, protection of natural communities, species protection, appreciation of scenic vistas, and scientific and environmental education purposes.

Local Trail Connections Grants: This program funds projects that acquire, develop and/or re-develop local trail connections across Minnesota. The projects are primarily for shorter distance connections between residential areas, schools, businesses, parks, and regional and/or state facilities.

Exact construction needs will be determined based on grant applications but could include fishing piers, boardwalks/trails, nature observation areas, camping facilities, restrooms, parking or picnic shelters.

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 funding will provide approximately 18 matching grants to cities and counties for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of local parks, natural and scenic areas and trail connections. The local match for each project will meet or exceed the match required under the specific program that the project was funded. The required match for each program is listed in MN Statutes 85.018. The match level is expected to exceed \$3.58 million.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Grant Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$101,400

Activity Description:

This funding will provide approximately 18 matching grants to cities and counties for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of local parks, natural and scenic areas and trail connections. Two grant rounds are proposed. The local match for each project will meet or exceed the match required under the specific program that the project was funded. The required match for each program is listed in MN Statutes 85.018. The match level is expected to exceed \$3.58 million.

The requested funding will be used to support personnel costs for administering the grant programs and DNR direct and necessary costs associated with this funding. Grant staff are involved in grant solicitation, evaluation and ranking, grant agreement management, project billings, project inspections, compliance monitoring and project close out.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Administer RFP and application process for FY27	May 31, 2026
Award grants for FY27	June 30, 2026
Execute grant contracts for FY27	December 31, 2026
Administer RFP and application process for FY28	May 31, 2027
Award grants for FY28	June 30, 2027
Execute grants for FY28	December 31, 2027
Provide approximately 8 matching grants for Trail Connections	October 31, 2028
Provide approximately 4 matching grants for Natural and Scenic Areas	October 31, 2028
Provide approximately 6 matching grants for Local Parks	October 31, 2028
Project monitoring	June 30, 2029
Project close-out	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Grants for the Local Parks, Natural and Scenic Areas and Trail Connections

Activity Budget: \$4,898,600

Activity Description:

Local governments are struggling to acquire, develop and redevelop their local and community parks and trails. The goal of this funding is to increase and enhance close to home natural resource-based recreation facilities, to provide safe and accessible recreation amenities and to provide trail connections between residential areas, schools, businesses, parks, and the regional park and trail system and/or the State Outdoor Recreation System. This does not include athletic facilities such as sport fields, courts, and playgrounds. Parks and natural areas acquired and developed under this program are retained for public use in perpetuity. Trails developed under this program are retained for public use for a minimum of 25 years. Land acquisition is permanent.

Grantee responsibilities include:

- Obtaining approval from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), including any required archaeological literature reviews or surveys;
- Providing annual status reports to MN DNR and notifying DNR Grant Manager about project delays and scope changes;
- Submitting reimbursement requests to MN DNR for review and processing;

- Obtaining a recorded deed restriction (as required/needed) with the county and submitting to the MN DNR;
- Purchasing and installing a funding acknowledgment sign with trust fund logo; and
- Attending final inspection visit with DNR Grant Manager

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete SHPO review for FY27 grants	November 30, 2026
Construction work begins for Outdoor Recreation & Local Trail Connections for FY27 grants	March 31, 2027
Complete SHPO review for FY28 grants	November 30, 2027
Construction work begins for Outdoor Recreation & Local Trail Connections for FY28 grants	March 31, 2028
Land acquisition for Natural and Scenic completed & funding sign with ENRTF logo installed	March 31, 2028
Install funding acknowledgment sign with ENRTF logo for OR/LTC grants	May 31, 2029
New park and trail facilities for OR/LTC grants open for public use	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Local Units of Government	Primarily cities, counties and townships	They will acquire, own, develop and manage the parks and trails. The local governments will provide at least \$3.58 million in matching funds.	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 local government recipients are responsible for the ongoing operations and maintenance costs of the parks and trails. Park areas must be operated and maintained for public outdoor recreation and/or natural areas into perpetuity. Trails developed must be maintain for at least 25 years. All property acquired must be kept for public outdoor recreation purposes permanently.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo installed at each project site.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Grants for Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$2,400,000
Local Parks, Trails And Natural Areas Grant Programs	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$2,250,000
Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas Grant Programs	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$3,560,000
Local Parks, Trails and Natural Areas Grant Programs	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$3,802,000
Local Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas Grant Programs	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09b	\$4,791,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jenni Bubke

Job Title: Grants Specialist Coordinator

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

Currently managing all ENRTF appropriations for Local Parks, Trails and Natural Areas grant programs awarded to the Division of Parks and Trails/MN DNR. Grant manager for Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Areas grant programs since May 2023.

Organization: MN DNR - State Parks and Trails Division

Organization Description:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Parks and Trails Division's vision is to create unforgettable park, trail, and water recreation experiences that inspire the public to pass along the love for the outdoor to the next generation. More information on the Minnesota DNR can be found at MNDNR.gov

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Grants Specialist Position		Manage grant program and funded projects			30%	0.75		\$90,308
							Sub Total	\$90,308
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Capital Construction Costs	Development/ Redevelopment of Parks and Trails. Estimated amount, final amount TBD based on grant applications.	X				\$3,498,600
							Sub Total	\$3,498,600
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 130 Parcels: 4						\$1,400,000
							Sub Total	\$1,400,000
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Direct and Necessary	To support the costs related to the program administration *Direct and Necessary expenses: People Support (~\$1,536), Safety Support (~\$243), Financial Support (~\$1,035), Communication Support (~\$1,902), IT Support (~\$5,004), and Planning Support (~\$1,371) necessary to accomplish funded programs/projects.					\$11,092
							Sub Total	\$11,092
							Grand Total	\$5,000,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Capital Expenditures		Capital Construction Costs	<p>Please see the submitted capital project questionnaire in the attachments. This is for development/redevelopment costs to local sponsors and will cover multiple capital construction projects. All requirements for capital construction are included in the state contracts with local sponsors. The program already requires a 50% match for these projects.</p> <p>Additional Explanation : Grantees are required to maintain parks into perpetuity for public outdoor recreation use and to include plans and anticipated costs for operation and maintenance with the application.</p>

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Local units of government, contractors, and/or volunteers	Donations of time, materials and/or labor	Pending	\$100,000
Cash	Local Units of Government	Local unit of governments will provide required match for capital construction and acquisition of land.	Pending	\$3,480,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$3,580,000
			Funds Total	\$3,580,000

Total Project Cost: \$8,580,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
TBD				-	-	\$1,400,000			
Totals				0	0	\$1,400,000			

Fee Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

Acquisitions under the Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are reviewed and ranked by program staff using selection criteria developed with guidance by a group of internal and external people when the program was created. The project review accesses the natural resource qualities of the site such as endangered, threatened, rare or special concern species or communities, high quality native terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems, ecological viability, outstanding geological or physiographic features, protection of water quality and potential vulnerability to invasive species. Scenic qualities such as, bluff lands or other elevated terrain that afford an opportunity for viewing scenic vistas, viewing unique natural features, viewing unique historical or cultural features, and shoreline properties that offer scenic vistas across lakes or streams will be assessed. Other review components include adjacent lands, educational and scientific values, open space and historical/cultural values and local government commitment. Any acquisitions under the Outdoor Recreation Grant and/or Local Trail Connections Grant Program are selected based on program criteria. Projects are recommended based on the highest ranking and reviewed and approved by the Commissioner.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Land Acquisition projects selected for funding under the Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are based on priorities in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp_final_2024.pdf. The new SCORP is in process and will be used to evaluate FY27 applications.

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

These acquisitions provide public natural and scenic areas, open space and park areas. Natural resource restoration is not a required component of the programs. In some instances, restoration may occur, otherwise most are primarily maintaining the resources on the site, which may include natural or scenic qualities. If applicable, a restoration plan will be required and maintained in the project file, and is available upon request.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

N/A

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

All grants are approved by the Commissioner prior to contract.

Easement (Other) Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

Acquisitions under the Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are reviewed and ranked by program staff using selection criteria developed with guidance by a group of internal and external people when the program was created. The project review accesses the natural resource qualities of the site such as endangered, threatened, rare or special concern species or communities, high quality native terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems, ecological viability, outstanding geological or physiographic features, protection of water quality and potential vulnerability to invasive species. Scenic qualities such as, bluff lands or other elevated terrain that afford an opportunity for viewing scenic vistas, viewing unique natural features, viewing unique historical or cultural features, and shoreline properties that offer scenic vistas across lakes or

streams will be assessed. Other review components include adjacent lands, educational and scientific values, open space and historical/cultural values and local government commitment. Any acquisitions under the Outdoor Recreation Grant and/or Local Trail Connections Grant Program are selected based on program criteria. Projects are recommended based on the highest ranking and reviewed and approved by the Commissioner.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Land Acquisition projects selected for funding under the Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program are based on priorities in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/scorp_final_2024.pdf. The new SCORP is in process and will be used to evaluate FY27 applications.

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

These acquisitions provide public natural and scenic areas, open space and park areas. Natural resource restoration is not a required component of the programs. In some instances, restoration may occur, otherwise most are primarily maintaining the resources on the site, which may include natural or scenic qualities. If applicable, a restoration plan will be required and maintained in the project file, and is available upon request.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

N/A

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

All grants are approved by the Commissioner prior to contract.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [60bf8897-214.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Description of the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program and Local Trail Connections Grant Program. Photo of a boardwalk over a wetland and a photo of a scenic view of a river running through a park in Sherburne County. A chart showing demand for funding....

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
capital_construction_budget_addendum	39b760b3-bbb.xlsx
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	139c5997-530.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee Acquisition, Easement (Other) Acquisition,

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

Is the purpose of the acquisition for construction of a building(s), trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration, either now or in the future?

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:

N/A

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