



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-324

Proposal Title: Resilient Habitat Restoration Around Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape

Project Manager Information

Name: Melissa Barrick

Organization: Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Ensuring resilient, healthy habitats (private-public lands) within the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape:

- Prescribed Fire (200 acres)
- Habitat Restoration (60 acres)
- Forest Management Plans (60)
- Conservation and Oak Wilt Projects (20).

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$968,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

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

Narrative

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

This project will address forest fragmentation, oak wilt spread, windstorm-damaged woods, terrestrial invasive species, and fire-suppressed habitats for all lands within and around the 10-mile radius around Camp Ripley (719,463 acres). In 2015, a 10-mile radius was federally designated as the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape (CRSL). The CRSL contains 45,000 acres of lakes and streams, 37,316 acres of permanently protected land, 50 miles of the Mississippi River, 52,000 acres of State Game Refuge, 13 MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas, and County and City Land. Rapid urban and rural development within the City of Baxter, Crow Wing, and Cass counties threaten these crucial upland and aquatic habitats, which are susceptible to fragmentation, oak wilt, and invasive species encroachment. These changes threaten Camp Ripley's ability to conduct military training for aircraft, live fire, and artillery.

The CRSL partnership includes federal agencies, local government units, state agencies, and environmental nonprofits collaborating to pursue conservation projects protecting and restoring land around Camp Ripley. The CRSL team utilized the DNR Forest Health Annual Report, DNR Oak Wilt Mapping, and CRSL Strategic Plan to identify specific private and public landowners to engage in proven strategies to restore diverse habitats within this landscape.

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.

The Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will collaborate with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) Division of Forestry, Great River Greening (GRG), and Todd, Morrison, and Cass SWCDs to develop a regional network to restore and protect habitat for public and private landowners. Outcomes Include:

- 60 Forest Stewardship Plans (FSPs) and 15 best management practices (BMPs).
Local oak wilt eradication with a minimum of five projects.
Restore diverse forests, aquatics, and prairie native habitats.
- Enhance native habitats on 60 acres.
- Prescribed fire on 200 acres.

This proposal builds off the success of the CRSL protection and restoration work that completed 70 private FSPs and restored habitat on private and public lands. This project will utilize an existing list of landowners and prioritize public sites. The CW SWCD will partner with GRG to restore 60 acres of habitat, and TNC will develop a prescribed burn plan for 200 acres. The MN DNR Forest Health staff will identify and control oak wilt. The SWCDs will collaborate with landowners on cost-effective BMPs. The SWCD will follow the state cost-share policies for BMPs. This includes contracts, site inspection, plans, cost estimates, and SWCD approval.

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's specific outcomes are:

1. SWCD and private consultants will develop 60 FSPs with private landowners and enroll them in the Sustainable Forestry Incentive Act (SFIA) or county 2c as forest and habitat protection insurance. The landowners will implement 15 BMPs, including local oak wilt eradication projects on private lands (5), forest resilience, increased forest and prairie diversity, and restoration of existing habitats.
2. GRG will restore and enhance 60 acres of public lands within the project focus area.
3. TNC will develop and implement prescribed fire on 200 fire-dependent forested acres of protected lands within the project focus.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Restoration and Enhancement of Public Lands and Including Volunteer Engagement

Activity Budget: \$285,000

Activity Description:

GRG will restore and enhance 60 acres of forest woodland and shrubland habitat on public land. Activities include thinning, tree and shrub planting, and non-native invasive buckthorn control. A total of 30 volunteers will be engaged in appropriate, impactful, educational, and engaging portions of the work, such as shrub and tree planting.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Execute participant's agreements.	February 28, 2027
Management briefs, including writing long-term maintenance plans.	June 30, 2028
Implementation completed.	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Prescribed Fire Enhancement on Public Lands and Private Easements

Activity Budget: \$300,000

Activity Description:

TNC will focus on restoring fire-dependent native plant communities throughout the CSRL's forested ecosystems. It will collaborate with local partners and private landowners to determine the priority of treatment areas. TNC will conduct prescribed fires in forested communities to help improve understory conditions and enhance the regeneration of desirable species such as oak and pine. On sites with invasive species in the understory, TNC crews will use mechanical and chemical treatments to restore site conditions and make fire management effective.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Acquire appropriate equipment, personnel, and supplies to prepare for implementation.	December 31, 2026
Implement forest enhancement through prescribed fire and fuel treatments on roughly 200 acres.	June 30, 2029
Author 10 prescribed fire burn plans and identify scope of work for each site.	June 30, 2029

Activity 3: Landowner Outreach, Private Forest Management Plan Writing, and Landowner Forest Programs Enrollment, Oak Wilt Control, and Forest and Habitat Restoration

Activity Budget: \$253,000

Activity Description:

CW SWCD or private forest consultants will reach out to prioritized private forest landowners, develop 60 FSPs and 15 BMPs, and enroll landowners in local county 2c or SFIA programs.

Options for landowners to enroll are:

Easement - if a landowner is in or enrolling into a perpetual conservation easement (permanently protected), SWCD will cover the FSP costs and offer BMP cost share.

SFIA - If the landowner is in, or enrolling into SFIA, the SWCD will cover the FSP costs and offer BMP cost share. SFIA is a covenant with the State of Minnesota requiring they keep their land a forest described under the FSP for eight, 25, or 50 years. The State has adopted SFIA as protected land through the adopted comprehensive watershed plans.

2c - If the landowner is enrolling into 2c, the SWCD will cover the costs of the FSP if the landowner performs at least one

of the available BMPs with cost-share.

Cost-Share contracts require the landowner keep the practice on their land for a minimum of 10 years. The project will follow cost-share policies. The MN DNR staff will identify and test specific sites for oak wilt. The SWCD will prioritize identified sites for

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Convene and coordinate three partner meetings and three community landowner meetings.	June 30, 2029
Landowner solicitation, civic engagement, and project management.	June 30, 2029
Write 60 FSPs.	June 30, 2029
Implement 15 BMPs on private lands (riparian buffer, forest management, and invasive species).	June 30, 2029
Fiscal Agent: Manage bills, reporting, payments, billing for the subaward.	June 30, 2029

Activity 4: Oak Wilt Eradication on Private Lands

Activity Budget: \$130,000

Activity Description:

DNR Forest Health and local DNR Forestry staff will alert CW and Morrison SWCDs annually of suspect or confirmed oak wilt finds in high priority areas for eradication. SWCD staff will reach out to impacted property owners, notifying them of available cost-share, eligible control activities, the procedure for reimbursement from this grant, and a list of eligible contractors. Interested landowners will alert CW SWCD, and either SWCD or DNR Forestry staff will mark control lines on their land.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
SWCD reaches out to landowners in high priority areas alerting them to oak wilt	August 31, 2026
DNR notifies SWCDs of suspect or confirmed oak wilt.	September 30, 2027
Eligible landowners contract oak wilt control.	September 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Wiley Buck	Great River Greening	Activity 2: Sub-award Project Manager	Yes
Matt Graeve	The Nature Conservancy	Activity 3: Sub-award Project Manager	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 DNR Forest Health Team receives a federal forest health monitoring grant to survey the state's forest canopy annually.

The CRSL partnership is pursuing additional federal, state, local, and private funds and programs to meet this demand.

- Readiness Environmental Protection Integration Pilot project, Camp Ripley restoration program (\$300,000).
- Natural Resources Conservation Service-Regional Conservation Partnership Program for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (\$12.5 million).

Leveraging state funds to draw federal support for this restoration initiative is critical. The combination of state and federal funds produces measured results for habitat restoration and the local economy while protecting Camp Ripley's military training.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Forest Restoration And Enhancements	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08a	\$731,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Melissa Barrick

Job Title: District Manager

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

This project will be successful because of the SWCD's staff experience, expertise, and ability to garner community support, engage citizens and nonprofit groups, build partnerships, and work with private landowners. The CRLS partnership has excellent relationships with landowners, state agencies, nonprofit groups, and forest stewardship plan writers. The CW SWCD continues to provide exceptional project management for private and public BMPs, including riparian buffer erosion restoration, pollinator habitats, riparian forest buffers, and tree planting (managed 50 projects). In 2024, the CW SWCD managed 28 different grant programs, contracts, and funding sources and leveraged over \$5.1 million for conservation. Melissa Barrick has 15 years of experience in grant management, reporting requirements, grant procedures and policies, and reporting systems. The SWCD will utilize all these skill sets to enhance, protect, and restore forest habitat, engaging CRSL residents. This project reflects lessons from previous community projects, including onsite evaluations, maintenance agreements, civic engagement, and community awareness. The Cass, Todd, and Morrison SWCDs have comparable skill sets and abilities.

Organization: Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District

Organization Description:

The Crow Wing and Morrison Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCDs) are leaders within the CSRL for habitat restoration and enhancement on private lands. Since 2020, the CW SWCD has leveraged more than \$ 17 million for conservation projects, which include easement programs, stormwater runoff, habitat enhancements, and forest restoration projects. Morrison and Crow Wing SWCD have excelled at project management, reporting, contracting with sub awardees, and providing technical assistance to public and private landowners. In 2024, the CW SWCD managed more than 28 contracts and grants. The CW SWCD has a certified forest plan writer on staff with excellent communication skills with landowners and private consultants. The CW SWCD comprises six staff members and five elected official board members who are dedicated and believe in the mission of CW SWCD. Our mission is to foster healthy lands and clean waters through voluntary conservation. Our vision is to have clean water, productive lands, and vibrant communities. The CW and Morrison SWCD has policies, procedures, landowner and partner connections, and systems to implement restoration and enhance habitats within the CRSL Landscape successfully.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Administration		Contract/Administration			28%	0.9		\$60,000
SWCD Technician		Activity 3: Coordinate landowner projects and forest stewardship plans.			28%	1.2		\$80,000
							Sub Total	\$140,000
Contracts and Services								
Great River Greening	Subaward	Activity 1: Resilient restoration on public forest, woodland, and savanna, including volunteer engagement. Funds for competitive and potential CCMI subcontracts, personnel, travel, and supplies.				2.91		\$285,000
The Nature Conservancy	Subaward	Activity 2: TNC field crew salary and benefits for field crew members, supplies, mileage, and needed to implement the prescribed fire.				5.7		\$300,000
Private Consultant Forest Stewardship Plan Writers	Subaward	Activity 3: Write forest stewardship plans for private landowners.				0.01		\$60,000
15 Landowners will complete BMPs	Subaward	Activity 3: Provide landowners with cost-share funds to implement 15 habitat and forest BMPs. SWCD and the landowner will sign a 10-year cost-share funds contract. Once the project is completed, inspected, and expenses reviewed, the SWCD will reimburse the landowner.				0.01		\$50,000
5 Oak Wilt Control Projects	Subaward	Activity 4: Provide landowners with cost-share funds to implement 5 Oak Wilt Control Projects. SWCD and the landowner will sign a cost-share contract. SWCD will provide technical assistance with the support of the MN DNR Forest Health staff.				0.01		\$130,000
							Sub Total	\$825,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Activity 3: Action items 3 and 4: Travel to sites for projects 4,000 miles.	To visit sites and help landowners complete BMPs and FSPs					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Publication	Activity 3: Action item 2: Mailings, maps, and brochures	Landowner outreach about conservation programs.					\$1,000
	Printing	Activity 3: Action Item 2: Printing of program materials	To complete landowner outreach and grant requirements					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$2,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$968,000

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				
Cash	Federal and local government units, foundations, and corporations	Activity 1: primarily for GRG personnel costs, volunteer events, and plants.	Pending	\$5,000
In-Kind	Total of 75 volunteer hours at \$25/hr	Activity 1: Shrub and tree planting.	Pending	\$1,875
In-Kind	General support funds (foundations, corporations, and private donations).	Activity 1: GRG overhead costs funded by General Operating Support donations and awards.	Secured	\$56,000
In-Kind	TNC indirect expenses.	Activity 2: TNC's indirect expense to do the work for this grant will be leveraged to support the project. These expenses will not be tracked or reported and are not to be considered a match.	Secured	\$44,250
In-Kind	Landowner share to the project cost.	Activity 3: Landowner contribution to the project in labor or material cost. .	Pending	\$100,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$207,125
			Funds Total	\$207,125

Total Project Cost: \$1,175,125

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
Belle Prairie County Park Oak Woodland and Savanna	Morrison	45-acre habitat mosaic along 3400' of the Mississippi River , which is also a cultural site with known archaeological significance, and a popular destination for hiking, fishing, and picnicking.	Restoration	20	-	\$100,000	Public		In Progress
Mississippi River Overlook Park	Crow Wing	>700 acre habit core and corridor on upper Mississippi River, primarily forested but also wetland and shoreline.	Restoration	40	-	\$80,000	Public		Has Not Begun
Poor Farm WMA	Crow Wing	This 312-acre WMA is managed to provide habitat for hardwood forest species, grassland species, wetland species, and migratory waterfowl.	Restoration	10	-	\$40,000	Public		In Progress
Regional Buckthorn Containment - Public Lands	Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison,	Suite of sites for buckthorn containment on public lands, where site ranking will include both habitat value and vectoring threat potential to region.	Restoration	20	-	\$100,000	Public		Has Not Begun
Ruffed Grouse Management Area - South	Cass	Largely forested habitat, adjacent to 80,000-acre Camp Ripley base adding to habitat core.	Restoration	3	-	\$24,000	Public		In Progress
Whipple Beach	Crow Wing	Highly visible community-valued red pine stands.	Restoration	10	-	\$40,000	Public		Has Not Begun
Totals				103	0	\$384,000			

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

All GRG and TNC restoration work will occur on land in public ownership or permanently protected by a conservation easement.

The SWCD restoration work takes place on land with conservation easements permanently protected or enrolled in 2c or SFIA programs. When appropriate, the SWCD will work with landowners to enroll their forest land in SFIA. The Oak Wilt Management will be based on the MN DNR-identified sites and locations, which may be private or public land.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

All sites enhanced and restored through this work will see improved habitat conditions for wildlife and pollinators, reduced invasive species populations, oak wilt suppression (following MN DNR guidelines and recommendations for treatment), and improved conditions for forest regeneration. Management activities will be based on plans and recommendations from each site's land manager(s) and utilize the most current BMPs. Records of management activities will be kept on file with the implementing agency and the respective land manager(s). Utilizing adaptive management, activities will be evaluated after implementation, and input will be provided for adjustments to management plans and future planned activities for each site.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

All restoration and enhancement work will be done according to the BWSR Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines. All projects will utilize native seed mixes for all BMPs. All projects follow the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide. Management will focus on restoring ecological processes such as prescribed fire and reducing invasive species populations. These management activities will enhance native ecosystem function by improving soil health and nutrient cycling while creating enhanced growing conditions for more vigorous native plant growth. Overall efforts will improve function and resilience within the larger landscape to improve habitat conditions for pollinators and wildlife.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

Morison, CW, and Cass SWCDs will utilize the BWSR State cost-share contract and process, which includes:

- 1) A cost-share contract and maintenance plan between the SWCD Board and the landowner/land occupier.
- 2) SWCDs will complete maintenance inspections on the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th year after project completion.
- 3) The landowner will receive grant funding for their project. Each cost-share agreement will spell out the funding amount and match requirements.
- 4) The SWCDs will work with the MN DNR to identify and recommend oak wilt treatment, long-term maintenance, and testing for their property.

After the second year, the project participant must maintain the site annually.

After the appropriation, the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds become the landowner's responsibility as part of a written agreement between the landowner and GRG. GRG continues to monitor the sites, communicate with landowners, and seek to assist with maintenance when possible. On public lands, the resources currently available to public land managers will allow for the completion of long-term maintenance and management needs after the initial restoration and enhancements are made on these sites.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

Once the grant funding is secured, CCMI will be contacted to seek their interest in the various restoration activities. Projects will incorporate CCMI field crews when applicable to assist with the enhancement and restoration activities. Habitat enhancement crews may, at times, be a blend of hired staff and CCMI crews.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

All SWCD staff will complete project evaluations on all restoration activities and follow the BWSR inspection schedule, which requires inspections in years 1, 3, 6, and 9. An evaluation report will be filed with the project folder. An adaptive management approach will be utilized, and all phases of restoration and enhancement work will be evaluated to help inform future management efforts.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [4057326e-71e.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Project Area and Great River Greening Potential Public Restoration Site Locations. Oak Wilt control, prescribed fire, and other restoration activities will occur on private or easement lands within the Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape area....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
SWCD State Audit Report	1b6fc60e-798.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
SWCD Board Resolution	a9a5b85b-0a8.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Areas threatened by oak wilt relative to Camp Ripley's Sentinel Landscape	e1425d07-b24.jpe
2023 Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape Profile	694a0ed8-400.pdf
Cass SWCD Letter of Support	157cf5e9-b1e.pdf
GRG Support Letter	201df828-104.pdf
GRG Morrison Co Parks LOS	368b3f9f-40c.pdf
MN DNR Letter	a51ef4dd-5e2.pdf
Morrison SWCD Support Letter	972575d0-51a.pdf
TNC Qualifications	06a96514-097.docx
GRG Organization Description and Qualifications	eef2a538-9b3.pdf
GRG Audited Financial Statements	74f3b8c7-5a9.pdf
GRG 990 Financial Audit	1f012f04-060.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

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?

Yes, Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District

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 Barrick, Crow Wing SWCD, Shannon Wettstein, Morrison SWCD, Matt Graeve, The Nature Conservancy, Wiley Buck, Great River Greening

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

