



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-545

Proposal Title: Increasing Forest Resiliency, Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

Project Manager Information

Name: Dan MacSwain

Organization: Washington County

Office Telephone: (651) 430-4323

Email: dan.macswain@washingtoncountymn.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Increase Forest Resiliency in Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park by implementing forest management practices to reverse Mesophication.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$175,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31, 2030

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (G)

Secondary Category: Resiliency (A)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

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 proposal seeks to implement active forest management practices to protect against future climate change and restore 40 acres of forest impacted by mesophication to more resilient oak woodland communities within Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

Mesophication is a process where an ecosystem shifts towards species that prefer wetter conditions. This is particularly evident in the forest communities in Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park where fire, grazing and logging suppression has occurred over the last 50 years. Due to the absence of these disturbance processes, Oak woodlands within the park have transitioned from open woodlands with Oaks, to closed-canopy forests with no Oak regeneration and invasive plant species such as Common buckthorn. This is a problem, as several climate models point to a future in which this part of Minnesota is drier and will favor Oak woodlands. Forests containing mesic species such as Box elder, Elm and Hackberry will die and result in increased fuel loads and increased fire risk in the future if no action is taken.

This work also builds off of a partnership with the Friends of the Mississippi River who has helped developed a management plan and implementation of habitat restoration.

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.

Implementing active forest management practices on 40 acres to create resilient Oak forest conditions.

A contractor will be hired to complete the following tasks:

1. Fuel Load Reduction: Removing dead and downed trees to reduce fuel loads. This will create conditions suitable for future low-intensity prescribed burns. A contractor will be used to gather and remove downed fuels, this work would occur in the winter on frozen ground.
2. Canopy Thinning: Thinning the canopy to increase sunlight penetration, which supports the growth of fire-dependent native plants and Oak regeneration. A contractor with a feller buncher and skidder would be used to thin the canopy. Across site goal would be to obtain 65% canopy cover. Species to be targeted initially include Box elder, Elm and Hackberry.
3. Implementing prescribed burns to create a heterogenous landscape and to encourage oak regeneration. A contractor would be hired to complete a prescribed burn in the spring or fall. Goal would be to have 60% to 100% of the site burned.

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?

Implementing active forest management practices to reverse mesophication will help create a more resilient plant community and restore a healthy mix of plant and animal species. By reducing the encroachment of mesophytic species (such as trees that thrive in moister environments) and promoting fire-adapted ecosystems, the project would also enhance the habitat for species that depend on open, fire-prone landscapes, such as certain birds, insects, and plants. Specific practices include reducing fuel loads, thinning overcrowded stands, and implementing low intensity prescribed fire to conserve the long-term health of the forest.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Canopy thinning and fuel load reduction

Activity Budget: \$140,000

Activity Description:

In the winter, with frozen ground and snow conditions. A contractor would be hired to: gather and remove downed wood to reduce fuel loads and thin mesic trees to open canopy to allow for Oak regeneration.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Monitor, sample site to develop specifications	September 30, 2026
Hire contractor to perform thinning and fuel load reduction through RFQ posting	November 30, 2026
Canopy thinning and fuel load reduction occurs	February 28, 2027

Activity 2: Prescribed burning

Activity Budget: \$35,000

Activity Description:

Hire a contractor to perform a prescribed burn on 40 acres.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Implement prescribed fire through contractor	May 31, 2030

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?

Future work such as prescribed burning and diseased tree removal will need to be incorporated into the County's operational budget.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Dan MacSwain

Job Title: Natural Resource Coordinator II

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

Has been involved in land stewardship activities within the County for the past ten years implementing similar restoration and enhancement projects through other state-based grants. At scale, forest management practices implemented include invasive shrub removal, fuel load reduction and canopy thinning.

Organization: Washington County

Organization Description:

The County was established in 1849 and has the powers, duties, and privileges granted counties by state law, codified in Minn. Stat. § 373. The County serves an area of 423 square miles, with an estimated population of 262,748. The County's fiscal year begins on January 1 and ends on December 31. The County is governed by a five-member board of County commissioners representing separate districts within the county. In addition, the offices of County attorney and sheriff are elected on a county-wide basis.

The County offers a full range of services including property tax administration, law enforcement and corrections, public works, parks, solid waste management, library, community health, county extension, human resources, courts, and general administration. The County employs approximately 1,400 employees.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Canopy thinning and fuel load reduction for 40 acres				0		\$140,000
TBD	Service Contract	Prescribed burning				0		\$35,000
							Sub Total	\$175,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$175,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$175,000

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
Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park	Washington	Forest	Restoration	40	-	\$175,000	Public	Washington County	Has Not Begun
Totals				40	0	\$175,000			

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.

Yes, all lands are within public ownership by Washington County and part of the Regional Park system.

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.

A management plan exists for the site that is focused on initial site restoration for plant communities on site. A specific plan would be developed for the project area using monitoring data gathered in 2026 which will help in the release of the RFQ in fall of 2026. Management plans are kept on a shared drive folder as a PDF.

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.

Restoration efforts will promote native plant communities within the park using an already existing native seed bank. These native plant communities will provide habitat for animals and fungi. Thinning the canopy will provide more flowering resources for pollinators.

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.

County operational budget will be used to implement prescribed fire, and diseased tree removal as needed.

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

An email will be sent to Conservation Corps of Minnesota informing of them of the project and providing an opportunity for them to reach out about the project to see if they could provide assistance. LCCMR staff can be cc'd on this email for documentation.

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.

Monitoring will be completed in the beginning of the project to document site conditions and to help narrow down the canopy thinning goals/objectives. This same monitoring protocol will be implemented in 2030 prior to the closeout of the grant and submitted as a report.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [05aab9c2-4e5.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Project area shown on the attached PDF...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Financial Capacity	7cc62888-cd8.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board resolution	d22fa9f4-499.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support - Friends of the Mississippi River	c9f2349d-15c.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?

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?

Yes, Washington County

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:

Dan MacSwain, Washington County. Theresa Friendshuh Washington County

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

Yes, I understand