



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-586

Proposal Title: Mill District Riverwalk Project

Project Manager Information

Name: Anna Gruber

Organization: City of Sartell

Office Telephone: (320) 258-7306

Email: anna.gruber@sartellmn.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The project will include the restoration of a riparian area to foster and restore habitat, multi-use trail, utility extension, and river access with dock system.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$1,500,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central

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

Region(s): Central

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 City of Sartell has an incredible opportunity to transform a former industrial mill site into a thriving, mixed-use destination that embraces the natural environment, connecting people to the outdoors and Mississippi River while embracing the site's history, and enhancing the community's quality of life. A paper mill originally operated at the site from 1905 to 2012, when a catastrophic explosion and fire caused operations to cease. Most of the buildings were deconstructed and recycled, however the building slabs, footings, and concrete rubble remain and cover the entire site. Concrete, gravel, and rubble extend all the way up to the riverbank, providing zero natural habitat. The site has languished over the past decade, sitting vacant and unused. In 2023, the City purchased the property, to reinvigorate the mill site by creating public green spaces, connections to the Mississippi River, a riverwalk corridor to embrace the Mississippi River and nature environment and foster economic redevelopment.

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 project will help restore native habitat along the Mississippi River, construct a multiuse riverwalk trail, add a dock system connecting the public to the Mississippi River and extend utilities to serve the property and future park amenities. This project will connect people to the outdoors where they will be able to participate in fishing, kayaking, canoeing, boating, and walking/biking all within public spaces along the river. Because of the scale of the project, we are requesting funding to complete four critical elements within the riverwalk. First, the project will restore habitat along the Mississippi River by removing the existing concrete, gravel and rubble and creating green space that includes native plants and trees, creating habitats for pollinators and wildlife. Second, the project will include a multiuse riverwalk trail along the green corridor. The project will create nearly half a mile of newly paved, ADA-compliant pathways, designed for pedestrians, bicyclists, and inline skaters. Third, a dock system will be constructed to directly connect residents to the Mississippi River and provide boat access to the site. Utilities will be extended along the corridor to provide water and sewer service for the mill site and future park amenities.

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 will protect and enhance the Mississippi River and the nearby land by removing impervious surface at the site and restoring native vegetation. The transformation of the site from its past industrial use to green space will foster the return of wildlife, create a natural filter between the site and the Mississippi River, stabilize the Mississippi Riverbank, and enhance the natural beauty of the river and surrounding area. The riverwalk trail and dock system expands the trails and natural areas connecting green spaces, improves accessibility and safety, and encourages the public to recreate and engage with nature.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Design

Activity Budget: \$52,700

Activity Description:

The trail and utility extension design are already 90% completed. Design will include a removal plan to facilitate the removal of the existing concrete and remaining industrial debris up to 3-feet deep along a 3000 foot long, 50-foot-wide corridor adjacent to the Mississippi River. The void left from the removals will be replaced with fill and topsoil to create an environment to sustain vegetation into the future. A vegetation planting plan and long-term maintenance plan for the 50-foot-wide corridor will be developed creating a natural riparian habitat and ensuring success of the plantings into the future. The design will also include the removal of a small section of wood fencing located within the river that was formally used to contain logs. This will allow for boat traffic to access the dock system which will be designed to meet ADA standards. Final plan and profiles will be designed for the trail system and the utility extension. In addition to the construction plans, project specifications will be completed to solicit bids for the work to be completed. This phase will also include obtaining necessary permits and a Phase 2 Archeological survey and consultation with.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Consultation with SHPO	August 31, 2026
Permits/Agency Review	November 30, 2026
Complete Predesign Review through the Dept. of Administration	November 30, 2026
Approval of Final Plans	December 31, 2026
Advertise for Bid	February 28, 2027

Activity 2: Construction

Activity Budget: \$1,379,600

Activity Description:

A contractor will be obtained through a competitive bid process to complete the habitat restoration and construction of the trail, dock system, and utilities. The contractor will remove the existing concrete, gravel and footings from the 50-foot wide, 3000-foot corridor. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Assessment did not find evidence of contamination with the 3000 linear foot, 50-foot wide corridor. The project does not include contamination or environmental clean-up. The contractor will then install the water and sewer utilities, followed by filling the voids created by the removals with borrow material, compost and topsoil. This will create an environment filled with nutrients to support vegetation establishment and growth. The contractor will then construct the trail, dock system and install grasses, trees and shrubs based on the designed planting plan to restore native vegetation and create habitat along the Mississippi River. The Sartell Public Works and Parks departments will utilize the record drawings, maintenance manuals, and the vegetation and planning management plan developed during the design phase to provide ongoing care for the habitat and project elements to ensure ongoing and continued success.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pre-construction Meeting	April 30, 2027
Construction	September 30, 2027
Substantial Completion	October 31, 2027

Activity 3: Close-Out

Activity Budget: \$4,800

Activity Description:

This activity includes items to fully construct the project elements and ensure grant compliance. This will include punch list completion, development of record drawings, final paperwork close-out.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Punch List Items	May 31, 2028
Signage Installed with ENRTF Language or Logo	May 31, 2028
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded	June 30, 2028
Certificate of Occupancy Equivalent Obtained	June 30, 2028
Open for Intended Use	June 30, 2028

Activity 4: Project Management / Oversight

Activity Budget: \$10,400

Activity Description:

This activity includes resource management, risk management, quality control, communication and coordination, time/schedule management, and cost management for the project. These activities help ensure that the project is completed efficiently, safely, and to the required standards.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Kick-off Meeting	July 31, 2026
Design Quality Control	February 28, 2027
Construction Oversight and Coordination	October 31, 2027
Ongoing Status Meetings	May 31, 2028
Project Closeout	June 30, 2028

Activity 5: Construction Inspection & Construction Testing

Activity Budget: \$52,500

Activity Description:

This activity includes pre-construction reviews and meeting, ongoing construction inspections and oversight, construction testing and final inspections and acceptance. These activities help ensure the project is carried out effectively, with attention to safety and adherence to the necessary standards.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pre-construction Meeting	April 30, 2027
Ongoing Construction Status Meetings	October 31, 2027
Substantial Acceptance	October 31, 2027
Final Acceptance	June 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Anna Gruber	City of Sartell	City Administrator	No
April Ryan	Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH)	City Engineer	No

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 City will oversee implementation of the project and will select a contractor through a competitive bid process. The city has completed a feasibility plan for the docks and restoration projects, the proposed trail system and utility extension have been designed and are ready for immediate bidding and construction. The City established a special fund to help pay for these projects and has already invested a significant amount of money, more than \$500,000 to-date, for improvements related to the mill property. The city is committed to the project but needs grant assistance to fully complete the project components.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Anna Gruber

Job Title: City Administrator

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

Anna Gruber has nearly 16 years of experience in local government and city administration, including the successful management of several large, grant-funded projects throughout her career. This includes:

- Safe Routes to Schools (Pierz & Sartell Applications)
- State Highway 25 Reconstruct Project & State Funding
- Local Road Improvement Funding & Project Scout & Dehler Drives
- MN Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Recreation Grant for Watab Park
- Small Cities Development Program (Pierz & Sartell Applications)
- CARES Act & ARPA Funding Programs
- FEMA Emergency Response Applications (COVID-19)
- MN Department of Natural Resources Regional Trail Program (Multiple Projects)
- Transportation Alternatives Sidewalk & Trail Gap Projects
- Local Surface Transportation Black Grant Program – 15th Street North
- Sauk River Regional Park & Linear Park Enhancement Project

Organization: City of Sartell

Organization Description:

The City of Sartell is a unit of local government. Sartell, Minnesota, nestled along the picturesque banks of the Mississippi River, is a vibrant city located in the central part of the state within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in both Benton and Stearns Counties. Known for its natural beauty and small-town charm, Sartell offers residents and visitors alike a thriving community with a rich history, diverse amenities, and ample recreational opportunities. The city has experienced tremendous growth in the last couple decades, with a 101% increase in population from the 2000 Census to the 2020 Census. With a population of approximately 20,000, Sartell boasts a strong

sense of community spirit and a welcoming atmosphere. The City of Sartell is committed to fostering transparency, community engagement, and trust between the city government and its residents.

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	Project management, design, construction services, and project close-out work for project.				0		\$186,100
TBD	Service Contract	Construction of project.				0		\$1,313,900
							Sub Total	\$1,500,000
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	\$1,500,000

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	Benton County Grant	Grant matching funds to cover a portion of the design, construction, inspection, project management and construction inspection for the utility extension portion of the project.	Secured	\$400,000
Cash	City of Sartell	Local matching funds for the project. Secured within the park and mill site capital funds.	Secured	\$107,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$507,000
			Funds Total	\$507,000

Total Project Cost: \$2,007,000

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
The Former Papermill	Benton	The site is a riparian habitat located within the Eastern Broadleaf Forest biome. The site was developed as an industrial property for over 100 years. The create a vibrant, multi-use recreational corridor along the Mississippi River, connecting the public to nature and for public use, viewing and access.	Restoration	3.44	0.56	\$2,006,900	Public	City of Sartell	Has Not Begun
Totals				3.44	0.56	\$2,006,900			

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.

The City of Sartell currently owns the property, which encompasses the proposed project area. The City will retain the property, creating a park along the Mississippi River and retaining ownership and maintenance responsibilities into the future.

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.

The restoration project will provide guidance on multiple components to facilitate removing existing concrete, gravel and footing remnants along the Mississippi River, adding topsoil, reintroducing native vegetation, construction of a multi-use trail, river access, and dock system and utility extension. The project does not include contamination or environmental clean-up. Expected outcomes include the revitalization of the riparian area through the establishment of native vegetation, helping to provide additional habitat for pollinators and wildlife. The design phase of the project will include the development of a vegetation and planting maintenance plan, multi-use trail, dock system with river access and extension of water and sewer utilities. The record drawings and maintenance plan will educate and identify strategies for the Sartell public works and parks department. This will ensure the long-term success of the project and riparian habitat area created. The maintenance plan will be kept and filed with the Parks Department and the activities and strategies will be included within the city's annual budget.

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.

The Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" will be used to aid in the development of plans and specifications for the proposed project. The City of Sartell utilizes SEH Inc. as their city engineer. SEH has extensive experience in designing habitat restoration projects meeting the BWSR guidelines. SEH will lead and review the proposed planting plans to ensure that they meet they ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement based on the BSWR guidelines. The city will also meet with the local SWCD to help review and provide input on the vegetation and planning plans.

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.

The City of Sartell has a dedicated Park Fund to finance park maintenance and management activities. The project area will become part of the City's Park system. The long-term maintenance and management of the park and habitat area will be financed through the park Fund and the city's annual budget.

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

As the project is designed and prepared for bidding, consideration will be given to project splits and possibilities for the City to contract with Conservation Corps of Minnesota to complete certain/native plantings.

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.

Following restoration activities proposed with this project, evaluations will occur to analyze improvements to the parcel, identify any potential implementation problems, and identify findings for future restoration efforts. A similar evaluation will occur three years after the project has been completed.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [4e6cff48-8e6.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Grant Overview Map...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
City of Sartell 2023 Financial Statements	878ed90c-ac0.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
City of Sartell Resolution	0080b098-49b.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Phase II ESA Mill Site	47adbe56-051.pdf
Capital Construction Budget Addendum	6621f37e-728.xlsx
Riverwalk Plans	8b14056b-8e6.pdf
Site Photos	9ea7635c-c03.pdf
Letters of Support	523892f3-936.pdf
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	93ac5e3d-bda.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?

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

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:

Anna Gruber

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