



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-077

Proposal Title: Restoration Park Expansion - Acquisition

Project Manager Information

Name: Melissa DeVetter

Organization: Dodge County

Office Telephone: (507) 635-6253

Email: melissa.devetter@dodgecountymn.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Acquisition of adjacent quarry/private properties containing high-quality wetlands, forests, and grasslands proposed for development. Acquired land will be restored, enhanced and protected as part of Restoration Park in perpetuity.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$1,251,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

Project Location

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

Region(s): SE

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

Region(s): SE

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 'Stussy Quarry' is a limestone quarry in Dodge County, adjacent to Restoration Park, the county's 32-acre nature park located between Kasson and Mantorville. Dodge County seeks to expand the park by acquiring approximately 176 acres of quarry and private land to restore, enhance, and permanently protect the forests, prairies, and wetlands on site. The quarry is at the end of its operational life, and the owner has provided the county an opportunity to obtain funds to purchase the property by June 30th 2027, after which the land may be sold for residential or commercial development. The properties contain diverse habitats, a tributary to the South-Fork, Middle-Branch of the Zumbro River, and a 13-acre high-quality wetland complex which is part of a larger wetland corridor that extends along Restoration Park's western edge to the southern boundary. Protecting this site is critical given the county's extensive historic wetland loss. Post-restoration, when dewatering ceases, a 50+ acre groundwater-fed lake will be created, providing new habitat and water-based recreation opportunities. Given the proximity of the land to the cities, schools and residential areas, the acquisition presents a rare opportunity to preserve an ecologically significant landscape while expanding recreational, educational, and community benefits.

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 County proposes to acquire approximately 176 acres of land outlined in Attachment A, affecting six parcels. The land will be restored, enhanced, and permanently protected as an expansion of Restoration Park, Dodge County's existing 32-acre nature-based park, and preserved as 208 acres of public parkland in perpetuity.

The lands proposed for acquisition contain mature stands of trees, shrubs, limestone faces, grasslands, a stream, and a diversity of wetlands; important habitats that would be fragmented, degraded, and eliminated should the development occur. Protection of these natural features is critical. With appropriate restoration, cessation of quarry dewatering will result in the formation of a 50+ acre groundwater-fed lake creating significant new habitat and recreational opportunities.

This project aligns with the 2019 Dodge County Comprehensive Plan, which identifies parks and trails as the top recreational opportunities. The quarry property is specifically noted in the plan for its parkland potential. Acquisition and restoration of the site will offer unique educational, recreational, and environmental stewardship opportunities for a wide range of users, particularly local schools. Dodge County schools and community groups have been active partners in Restoration Park through supporting park development and maintenance, underscoring the community's strong commitment to preserving these natural areas

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?

The acquisition will protect a high-quality wetland complex, habitat corridors, grasslands, forests, and streams in perpetuity. Future restoration of the pit will create a 50+ acre lake, expanding fish, invertebrate, wildlife and waterfowl habitat while introducing water-based recreational opportunities currently unavailable in the area. Residents and visitors will enjoy a variety of diverse natural habitats within a protected 208-acre nature area close to home, rather than traveling to a state park. The time in which the county needs to secure funding is limited, so acquisition is urgent. Protecting it now will secure permanent public parkland and protection of natural resources.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Pre-Acquisition Activities

Activity Budget: \$100,000

Activity Description:

Several tasks must be completed before the properties are acquired, as required by the LCCMR, the DNR, and the County’s own processes. SHPO review will occur. The Dodge County Surveyor will survey the properties to define the agreed upon park boundaries and develop legal descriptions of the parcels to determine the total acres proposed for acquisition. The surveys will be reviewed and approved in accordance with the process of Chapter 3 of the Dodge County Zoning Ordinance. Environmental Site Assessments and Restoration and Management Plan will be completed which will be provided to the appraiser. Quotes for the appraisal have been obtained from appraisers listed on the DNR’s approved list. A formal appraisal will be completed to determine the value of the proposed parcels. County staff and the County Attorney will negotiate the purchase price and terms with the landowners. Once an agreement is reached, the properties will be formally split through the county’s Land Records Department process. Any pre-acquisition terms of the purchase agreement regarding restoration and or mitigation shall be completed. All DNR and LCCMR pre-closing requirements will be completed. The outcome would be properties that meet the terms of the purchase agreement and are ready for transfer.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Field Work -Survey, SHPPO review, descriptions, ESA(s), Restoration and Management Plan, DNR Appraisal	September 30, 2028
DNR Appraisal Review, Negotiations, Purchase Agreement	November 30, 2028
Split properties through Dodge County Land Records/Zoning and Finance process	December 31, 2028
Complete Pre Purchase Terms or Mitigation	August 31, 2029
Pre-closing documentation to DNR, LCCMR & approval to proceed with closing	September 30, 2029

Activity 2: Acquisition Activities

Activity Budget: \$1,150,000

Activity Description:

The objectives of Acquisition Activities are to complete tasks for the formal transfer of ownership to the county. Tasks include transfer of the DNR appropriation permit, title searches, insurance, closing, title transfer, payment to landowner(s) and recording of the deeds. All aspects of closing will be addressed by the Dodge County Attorney. Payment to the landowner would be addressed by the Dodge County Finance Department and Land Records staff would complete the recording of the deeds. LCCMR/DNR required use restrictions would be recorded. The outcome would be county ownership of the land and property that is permanently protected as public parkland and included as expansion of Restoration Park. Post-closure notification and documentation sent to LCCMR, DNR, and all other parties.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete land purchase through closing, title transfer and recording	November 30, 2029
Required post-closing documentation and payment confirmation to DNR and LCCMR within defined timeframes	January 31, 2030

Activity 3: Post-Acquisition Activities- Will utilize Non-ENRTF Funds

Activity Budget: \$1,000

Activity Description:

The objectives of Post-Acquisition Activities are to ensure immediate habitat goals are achieved, verify soil and slope stability, satisfy/close-out permits, complete final grant reporting and acknowledgement. Tasks include verifying vegetation establishment on slopes and graded areas, and closing out permits. Signage will be posted recognizing the preservation of the woods, wetlands, and unique landscape features was made possible through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. The county's media contractor will create newspaper articles and social media posts regarding the project. Initial trails will be mowed and resting benches will be placed. Dodge County will continue to seek grant funding for future habitat enhancement projects and the addition of other park amenities. The LCCMR grant system gave an error if I didn't enter in a round thousand dollar figure. These tasks will be completed as in-kind under Non-ENRTF

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Inspection and verification of successful stabilization, permit termination	May 31, 2030
Install required signage, mow trails and install benches, open to the public	May 31, 2030
Final Grant Reporting and Closeout	June 30, 2030

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

The county will comply with ERTF acknowledgement requirements. The county maintains a GIS StoryMap for Restoration Park efforts and the logo, along with pertinent information will be included as part of this StoryMap. Permanent signs acknowledging funding from the ENRTF will be displayed in a prominent location at the main entrance to the site/parking area located on County Road 21. Dodge County will work with contracted media for a news release, articles and posts for the county's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) highlighting the project and recognizing the funding source.

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?

After acquiring the properties, Dodge County will work towards proper restoration of the land. Trails, benches, educational signage, and other improvements to enhance recreation may be added while protecting and improving natural habitats. Long-term plans include a fishing pier and beach on the lake's north side, creating a defined area for water-based recreation while preserving most of the land in a natural state for wildlife, pollinators, and passive nature-based experiences. Maintenance will be handled through existing county staff, partnerships, volunteers, and workforce programs, with additional funding sought for future amenities as needed.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Melissa DeVetter

Job Title: Melissa DeVetter, Project Manager

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

Melissa DeVetter joined Dodge County in 2007 as a Land Use Compliance Officer. During the 10 years previous, she worked for counties and the Department of Natural Resources in both Wisconsin and Minnesota administering DNR protected waters rules, the Wetland Conservation Act, and serving as the Project Manager for development of a complex Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed mine in northern Wisconsin. Since joining Dodge County she has served in various positions related to land and water use regulation and management. For the past 5 years she has been Dodge County's dedicated Comprehensive Plan Project Manager, completing various projects and initiatives to further goals and priorities of the county identified in the 2019 Dodge County Comprehensive Plan. She is currently administering the 2.1 million dollar grant between Dodge County and the Minnesota Historical Society for the Wasioja Seminary Ruins Stabilization project, as well as administering several grants from numerous state agencies, non-profits, educational institutions, and private foundations for wide variety of comprehensive plan related projects.

Organization: Dodge County

Organization Description:

Dodge County Environmental Services (ES) is a Department of Dodge County, a local governmental unit located in southeastern Minnesota. ES administers programs that protect the public health, safety and welfare through education, technical services and regulatory programs. ES also operates the Dodge County Transfer Station and Recycling Center and Renovation ReUse. Staff are engaged in various initiatives to protect and restore the environment, as well as projects that address community needs, priorities and long-term goals of the county based upon the 2019 Dodge County

Comprehensive Land Use Plan. ES and Parks currently manage Restoration Park and ES is also responsible for park development projects.

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	Appraisal of the properties by an appraiser from the DNR List utilizing criteria				0		\$12,000
TBD	Service Contract	Environmental Site Assessment(s)				0		\$50,000
TBD	Service Contract	Preparation of the Restoration and Management Plan				0		\$20,000
DNR Land Appraisal Unit	Acquisition services	DNR staff will review the appraisal of the property competed by an appraiser from the DNR approved list				0		\$9,000
TBD	Service Contract	Level 1 and Level 2 delineation				-		\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$101,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 176 Parcels: 6						\$1,150,000
							Sub Total	\$1,150,000
Travel In Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,251,000

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				
In-Kind	Local County Budget	Dodge County in-kind costs for Pre-Acquisition and Acquisition Activities by County Attorney and Land Records staff	Secured	\$16,000
In-Kind	County Budget	Dodge County Surveyor in-kind services (surveying, legal descriptions)	Secured	\$7,000
In-Kind	Local County Budget	Post-Acquisition Activites	Secured	\$30,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$53,000
			Funds Total	\$53,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,304,000

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
13.021.0100	Dodge	Contains part of proposed lake, stream w/adjacent floodplain forest wetlands, grasslands, mature trees and shrubs	Fee Title	80	-	\$620,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
13.021.0201	Dodge	Contains former native grassland planting, located on north side of lake	Fee Title	13.42	-	\$64,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
13.021.0600	Dodge	Contains part of lake, eastern lakeshore and screening berm	Fee Title	29.73	-	\$192,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
13.021.0900	Dodge	Contains southeast lake shore area	Fee Title	4.76	-	\$5,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
13.021.1000	Dodge	Contains northeast corner of lake slope	Fee Title	10	-	\$39,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
13.028.0200	Dodge	Contains high quality wetland complex, transitional uplands and grasslands	Fee Title	50.75	-	\$230,000	Private	Dodge County	Has Not Begun
Totals				188.66	0	\$1,150,000			

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.

The Stussy quarry properties proposed for acquisition were identified in the 2019 Dodge County Comprehensive Plan, a publicly developed document identifying the county's goals and priorities. Through the planning process, citizens identified parks and trails as the top recreational opportunities. Within the plan, the land upon which the current Restoration Park is located, as well as the Stussy quarry properties adjacent to the north, are specifically identified for parkland potential in Section 7: Recreation Opportunities and Tourism, Item 7.2 Parks and Attractions, pages 71 and 72. In addition, #2 under Item 7.10 Ten-year Implementation Plan an action specifically identifies working with the property owner, cities and township for restoration of the quarry and associated public recreational opportunity. Dodge County initiated conversations with the property owners and they are willing to sell to the county for the purpose of parkland. However, this opportunity is time-sensitive as the property will be sold for commercial or residential development should funding not be secured by June of 2027.

The quarry properties are unique in that they already have a diversity of natural habitats, a stream and an undisturbed high quality wetland complex on site. Dodge County falls into a category of having a high degree of historic wetland loss as it is in the prairie region of southeast Minnesota where it is estimated that up to 90% of the pre-settlement wetlands have been eliminated, altered or impacted, mostly through agricultural drainage practices. Protection of the wetland complex is an extremely high priority as it is a high quality wetland that connects to, and is part of, a larger series of wetlands and water features on the Restoration Park's western edge, forming a natural hydrologic and habitat corridor of approximately 28 acres that extends from the parks southern boundary to South Branch of the Middle Fork of the Zumbro River, located to the north. Should development occur, the wetland and other habitats will be negatively impacted or eliminated.

In addition to the various forests, shrubs, grasslands, prairies, and wetlands on the site, a new, rare natural habitat will also be created. In a lake-less county, within an area of the state that is dominated by rivers and streams, a 50+ acre, groundwater fed lake will be formed once dewatering of the quarry ceases. The goal of restoration of the pit area is to provide new habitat for fish, wildlife and waterfowl and increase water based recreational opportunities in the area.

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.

The proposed project aligns with the 2019 Dodge County Comprehensive Plan, a publicly developed document identifying the county's goals and priorities. Dodge County Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2019): Section 7: Recreation Opportunities and Tourism, 7.2 Parks and Attractions, Pages 71 -72 & Page 75, 7.10 Ten Year Implementation Plan #2. Below is the link to the plan

<https://cms4files.revize.com/dodgecountymn/Comprehensive%20Plan%20Final%20Adopted%20Version.pdf>

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.

Dodge County will procure and contract Ecological Restoration specialist(s) to complete the Restoration and Management Plan. The plan will evaluate the site, including soils, geology, topography, hydrology, existing habitats, flora and fauna to guide restoration design and improve long-term success.

Based on the evaluation, the plan will be developed to achieve the desired ecological community and why that outcome is appropriate for the site. The plan would include an implementation schedule covering site preparation, establishment of a diverse mix of native plant species, that not only supports wildlife but offers species diversity to support pollinators throughout the growing season. It will also include any additional enhancements needed to achieve restoration goals, as well as long-term management needs. The Restoration and Management Plan will be kept on file in the Environmental Services and Highway/Parks Departments to guide and prioritize future restoration efforts and

maintenance of the site. The county will contact the Conservation Corp of Minnesota to determine their availability for restoration implementation projects. Other future restoration efforts will be funded through a combination of local funds and grants from state, federal, private and non-profit entities. Restoration Park is currently managed and maintained by Environmental Services and Highway/Parks staff, Workforce Development employees, community volunteers, the local schools, and civic groups and this partnership will continue in the newly acquired park area.

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.

Not applicable

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.

Dodge County will comply with the terms of Minnesota Statutes 116P.17. Written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition. This is included as Milestone #4 under Activity 1: Pre-Acquisition Activities.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [bef64325-eef.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map of area proposed for acquisition to expand Restoration Park. The acquisition would include approximately 176 acres of 6 identified parcels....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Dodge County MN 12-31-2021 FS Final	bd7b1466-fdb.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dodge LCCMR Support letter 022426	17748ee4-1dc.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Future Concept Map	30725e88-ce5.pdf
Dodge Capital Construction Project Budget Addendum	9041b15b-f50.pdf
Dodge Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	50ea9d13-de2.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee 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?

No

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?

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:

Staci Williams- Bolton & Menk: Phase 1 ESA and Restoration & Management Plan cost estimate
Paul Kiltinen - Dodge County Attorney: Provided information for all aspects of title work and closing
Jeff Eckblad- Dodge County Surveyor: Provided information for all survey and legal description work
Brent Pederson (Patchin Messner Valuation Counselors) & Richard Johnson(Johnson Appraisal Company, LLC)- DNR Appraisers providing estimates of appraisal
Ryan DeCook- Dodge County Land Records: Provided information for property value, property splitting and recording

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