



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-121

**Proposal Title:** Strengthening the Lake Steward Program: It's Shore Important!

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Lily Carr

**Organization:** Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Protection and Education

**Office Telephone:** (612) 751-2479

**Email:** lily@mnlakesandrivers.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Expanding the Lake Steward Program from 65 lakes to an additional 30 lakes, increasing awareness of natural shoreline loss and encouraging new norms around shoreline development and stewardship.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$204,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Small Projects (G)

**Secondary Category:** Water (B)

## 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 and In the Future

## Narrative

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

Our lakes are in trouble. Over half of Minnesota’s natural shorelines have already been lost to development and another 154 miles—equivalent to the length of Minnesota’s North Shore—are lost every two years. This rapid loss of natural shorelines degrades water quality and fish habitat, because a heavily-manicured lawn allows 7-9 times more pollutants to enter a lake than a natural shoreline (Vanishing Natural Shorelines, NSP, 2022). The status quo is simply not working. State shoreline vegetation standards and local government regulations have failed to adequately protect our natural shorelines.

After listening to key leaders and organizations about protecting and restoring shorelines, important themes emerged: lakeshore property owners need support and guidance on shoreline stewardship, and community leadership can shift social norms towards protecting and restoring natural shorelines.

### **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.**

Since the Lake Steward Program began in 2019, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR) has found that a community-driven approach to natural shoreline preservation and restoration is more effective and less intrusive than similar government-run initiatives. Since the program's inception, we have certified over 700 Lake Stewards across 64 different lakes, from Grand Marais to Mankato. This makes Lake Steward the largest shoreline restoration program in Minnesota.

Over the next two years, this project will continue addressing the gaps in natural shoreline preservation and restoration:

1. MLR will train lake association members on 30 new lakes to evaluate shoreland properties and provide support to lakeshore property owners seeking to preserve or restore natural shoreline, improving water quality and fish habitat.
2. MLR will work with lake associations and the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership to raise awareness of the importance of natural shorelines. This includes:
  - Sustaining consistent messaging across all partner organizations.
  - Providing outreach and training for key audiences including lakeshore property owners, businesses, and contractors.
3. MLR will recruit new stakeholders to participate in shoreline stewardship, including businesses, schools, and local governmental entities like Watershed Districts or Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

### **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?**

Expanding the Lake Steward Program will protect and improve water quality and clarity, preserve fish habitat, prevent soil erosion, and enhance recreation on Minnesota’s lakes and rivers. It also engages private landowners in protecting public resources.

Based on current adoption rates, when 30 new lakes adopt the Lake Steward Program there will be at least 315 new Lake Stewards across Minnesota. The average shoreline lot is 150 feet, meaning the Lake Steward Program will restore or protect around 47,250 feet, or nine miles, of shoreline over the next two years (Vanishing Natural Shorelines, Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership, 2022).

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Raising Awareness of Vanishing Natural Shorelines

**Activity Budget:** \$32,800

**Activity Description:**

MLR is in regular communication with over 500 lake associations and 50,000 households including shoreline property owners, recreationalists, and anglers.

The first goal of the Lake Steward Program is to reshape social norms around shoreline development—pivoting away from golf-course-style lawns towards natural buffer zones that capture runoff, prevent erosion, and provide habitat. This starts with lakeshore property owners and lake association members.

To raise awareness about the importance and increasingly rapid disappearance of natural shorelines, MLR will work with the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership to execute a strategic communications plan including blog posts, articles for lake association newsletters, print, radio, and digital media campaigns reaching over 352,000 people. MLR will also use the Project WET (Water Education Today) curriculum to teach students about water stewardship. MLR’s Sami Selter is one of very few Project WET Facilitators in the state who can teach the curriculum.

This program works directly with local government units like soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, and county resource managers, by connecting them with people interested in shoreline restorations. This saves them a great deal of time and effort and allows them to utilize existing funding for these projects.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Produce and promote shoreline digital media series - year one	July 31, 2027
Produce and promote shoreline digital media series - year two	July 31, 2028
Two articles for lake association annual newsletters about natural shorelines and Lake Steward	June 30, 2029
Distribute 24 monthly newsletters to over 30,000 recipients, highlighting issues including natural shorelines	June 30, 2029
Visit five events to teach students about the water cycle and water stewardship	June 30, 2029
Visit 20 lake association meetings to educate about natural shoreline loss	June 30, 2029

### Activity 2: Developing and promoting educational tools for shoreline evaluators and the border public to shift social norms

**Activity Budget:** \$27,500

**Activity Description:**

Education is required to build awareness of the need to protect and restore natural shorelines. MLR will create new tools to educate the public about the need for natural shorelines:

Implementing a new shoreline evaluation tool with the Minnesota DNR, including diagrams, written text, and rankings that leads evaluators through a standardized assessment of shoreland practices, gathering data and generating useful feedback for property owners.

Promoting the second edition of the Shoreland Guide to Lake Stewardship, which supports the online survey tool and serves as a useful guide for evaluators and supports property owners in taking next steps.

Developing games like "It's Shore Important" to be used by partners as street fairs, festivals, and the MN State Fair.

Expanding the contractor training produced by the Stearns Conservation District, a member of the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership (NSP), to educate landscape architects, lake service providers, and other stakeholders about alternatives to riprap.

MLR staff will also provide regional, in-person training to support the volunteer shoreline evaluators and give them the skills and confidence to educate their neighbors. Educating them on how to use the new tools at festivals, community events, and conferences.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Host two contractor trainings to educate lake service providers about natural shorelines	June 30, 2029
Develop two new educational games to teach children and adults about shoreline stewardship	June 30, 2029
Distribute 4,500 copies of the second edition of the Shoreland Guide to Lake Stewardship	June 30, 2029

**Activity 3: Coordinate the Statewide Lake Steward Program**

**Activity Budget:** \$143,700

**Activity Description:**

Lake Steward is a peer-to-peer social organizing effort. It is built on relationships; between MLR and lake associations, between lake associations and their volunteer shoreline evaluators, and between evaluators and their neighbors.

- Organizing the program and building relationships will include:
- Meeting with shoreline evaluators to identify strengths and weaknesses and improve the program,
- Organizing local government resource managers and lake service providers (landscaping companies, landscape architects, and others) to support Lake Steward efforts and facilitate protection and restoration,
- Speaking at lake association meetings and presenting at regional workshops,
- Leading the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership,
- Writing case studies and presentations for policy forums and public policy venues,
- Providing informational testimony to the Clean Water Council, Board of Water and Soil Resources, county resource managers, and more,
- Training new evaluators, lake associations wanting to adopt the program, and lakeshore property owners interested in becoming a Lake Stewards,
- Collecting and recording data from shoreline evaluators.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Add 30 new lakes to the Lake Steward Program	June 30, 2029
Train 30-45 new Shoreline Evaluators on 30 new lakes	June 30, 2029
Organize 12 bi-monthly meetings of the Natural Shoreline Partnership (NSP)	June 30, 2029
Produce one new whitepaper with the Natural Shoreline Partnership	June 30, 2029

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Amy Grady	Bay Lake Improvement Association	Lake Steward Lake	No
Douglas Cook	Lake Alexander Property Owners Association	Lake Steward Lake	No
Dorothy Whitmer	Gull Chain of Lakes Association	Creator of Lake Steward/Lake Steward Lake	No
Sue Hage	Green Lake Improvement District	Lake Steward Lake	No
Larry Montan	Hungry Jack Lake Homeowners Association	Lake Steward Lake	No
Tara Solem	Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District	MN Natural Shoreline Partnership Member	No
Alexandra Zerzan	Metro Blooms	City of Lake Stewards Partner	No
Jacqueline Nguyen	Blue Thumb	City of Lake Stewards Partner	No
Dan Brennan	Ruth Lake Improvement District	Lake Steward Lake	No
Richard Gallea	Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association	Lake Steward Lake	No
John Maile	Stearns Conservation District	MN Natural Shoreline Partnership Member	No
Steve Corbin	Fox Lake Association	Lake Steward Evaluator	No
Tom Nelson	MN Natural Shoreline Partnership	MN Natural Shoreline Partnership Member	No
Leighton Media	Leighton Media	Producing shoreline digital PSA campaign	Yes
Alicia Nelson	Cedar Lake Association	Lake Steward Lake	No
Steve Slatten	West Battle Lake Lakeshore Association	Lake Steward Evaluator	No
Jackie Anderson	Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District	President, Board of Managers	No

Jay Sieling	Douglas County Lakes Association	President	No
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## Dissemination

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

Digital Media Series – Using targeted IP addresses through Leighton Engage, campaigns will educate Minnesotans on the importance and benefits of natural shorelines. The ENTRF logo will be placed largest next to sponsors who will support production to maximize reach. The digital ads will appear on websites, social media, and streaming.

Lake Steward Signs - The ENTRF Logo will be included on Lake Steward signs installed through this project and materials produced will be attributed to ENTRF.

Shoreline Webinars – Annual shoreline webinars will provide timely education, highlight outcomes, and engage partners statewide - ENTRF will be attributed in presentations related to this project.

Statewide Lake and River Summits – Yearly statewide summits held by MLR will present program results, share best practices, and provide networking opportunities for lake associations, resource managers, and other civic partners. The ENTRF logo will appear as a sponsor on all materials and websites.

Lake Association Outreach – Summer outreach visits (~50 annually) will directly engage local communities, encouraging them to adopt the program and preserve/restore natural shorelines through presentations and flyers with the ENTRF logo.

## 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?**

By expanding the Lake Steward Program to 30 new lakes, we will surpass MLR’s previous goal of engaging 75 of Minnesota’s 500 lake associations in Lake Steward. This is significant because trends becoming self perpetuating at 15% adoption (Rogers, 2004, Diffusion of Innovations).

Ongoing efforts will be funded through donations to Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Protection and Education, and contracts for MLR to administer the Lake Steward Program in support of soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) and watershed districts.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Lily Carr

**Job Title:** Lake Steward Program Coordinator

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

Lily Carr has run the statewide Lake Steward Program since 2023, and in that time she expanded the program from 35 lakes to over 65 throughout Minnesota. In doing so, Ms. Carr has developed an extensive network of local government resource managers, businesses, and lake association leaders ranging from Faribault County to Cook County. Ms. Carr works in the nexus of local government units, academia, state agencies and local civic groups to address shoreline

issues.

Ms. Carr is also the lead organizer of the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership (NSP), which includes representatives from the Department of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources, watershed districts, lake associations, businesses, and nonprofits, brought together to collaborate on shoreline policy, communications, and stewardship across Minnesota.

In 2025, Ms. Carr spoke at over a dozen lake association meetings, workshops, and conferences. Ms. Carr also presented about shoreline issues at the DNR Roundtable in 2024 and 2026.

As the Lake Steward Program Coordinator, Ms. Carr leads a team of 83 volunteer Lake Steward Evaluators across over 65 lakes, and oversees program administration, communications, and expansion.

**Organization:** Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Protection and Education

**Organization Description:**

For three decades, MLR has used science, education, and civic leadership development to strategically catalyze systems change in public institutions and organize the civic capacity necessary to advance clean water outcomes that preserve the vitality of Minnesota’s lakes and rivers for future generations.

The degradation of Minnesota’s water quality, shorelines, and habitats is accelerating due to pollution, aquatic invasive species, and overdevelopment. To combat these challenges, MLR has invested in communications, educational programs, and community organizing through programs like Lake Steward and the Minnesota Natural Shoreline Partnership. These programs align existing resources to break down silos and make conservation efforts more effective, and they also work to change the community norms around water stewardship.

MLR P&E, working with partners, has set four strategic priorities:

- Invest in and support scientific inquiry to develop solutions to the problems facing our waters,
- Design and lead on-the-ground programs to educate, encourage, and organize public engagement around water,
- Motivate MLR members and stakeholders to initiate public policy initiatives,
- Support the capacity of lake associations across the state.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
MLR Lead Organizer		Overseeing project implementation, coordination of Lake Steward Program, and ensuring milestones and reporting requirements are met.			20%	2		\$110,000
MLR Admin		Managing all grant administration, financial tracking, invoicing, and compliance with LCCMR reporting requirements.			19%	0.1		\$4,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$114,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Leighton Media/LB Video Productions	Service Contract	Producing and distributing three episode video and digital marketing campaigns, May - July, estimated 352,000 impressions: One :30 video plus digital ads will be delivered monthly. Each month will be a different theme. Delivered to lake home owners via list provided by MN Lakes and Rivers.				2		\$28,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	1,270 Lake Steward award signs, metal, high quality paint, sun and weather coating. This is 10 signs per previously-participating Lake Steward lake (67), and 20 signs per new Lake Steward lake (30 lakes).	Demonstrating a property has met Lake Steward criteria, they also serve as an incentive for property owners to make positive changes and a peer-to-peer marketing tool to get neighbors interested in shoreline protection and restoration. If funding is provided, these signs will show the ENTRF logo next to MLR's logo (see attachments).					\$57,200
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$57,200</b>
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-

<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Promotion/education at lake association meetings, local festivals, and workshops. 4250 miles at \$0.72 each.	By attending these meetings, MLR staff is able to recruit new lakes to adopt the Lake Steward Program, give hands-on advice for organizations running and promoting the program on their lake, and educate lake association members and community members about shoreline issues.					\$3,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Lodging (nights) 8 overnight stays for late meetings or two day trips at \$98 per night.	A					\$800
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Per diem for 16 days or 8 overnight trips at \$59 per day.	A					\$1,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$4,800</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$204,000</b>

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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Lake Steward Evaluators - 83 volunteers across Minnesota	Lake Steward Evaluators donate an average of 1,577 hours per year, which we estimated to be worth at least \$25 per hour.  This is spent on initial onboarding and training, coordinating with potential lake stewards, evaluating lakeshore properties, and ordering and awarding Lake Steward signs.	Secured	\$79,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$79,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$79,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$283,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [722bc8cb-ef8.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Across the state there are 700 Lake Stewards. This image shows just a handful of them, young and old, men and women, all united for one goal: clean water and healthy habitats....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
2024 MLR P&E Form 990 EZ	<a href="#">82015ce2-50f.pdf</a>
MLR P&E Certificate of Good Standing 2025	<a href="#">ce443b20-924.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
MLR P&E Board Resolution and Authorization Letter	<a href="#">45a0e263-2bd.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Support letter from Sauk River Chain of Lakes	<a href="#">0c9ebd38-e03.pdf</a>
Support Letter from Clark Lake Conservation Association	<a href="#">eb8311d6-a03.pdf</a>
Source: Vanishing Natural Shorelines Whitepaper	<a href="#">9be3a272-eeb.pdf</a>
Douglas County Lakes Association Support Letter	<a href="#">148e413e-9ee.pdf</a>
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District	<a href="#">10fdbda8-147.pdf</a>
West Battle Lake Lakeshore Association Support Letter	<a href="#">3ad221a9-5e7.pdf</a>
Map of all 67 Lake Steward Lakes across MN	<a href="#">8de12edc-440.pdf</a>
Cedar Lake Association Support Letter	<a href="#">2ef99ed4-624.pdf</a>
Bay Lake Improvement Association Support Letter	<a href="#">188f0283-5e4.pdf</a>
Lake Alexander Property Owners Association Support Letter	<a href="#">e76d0572-393.pdf</a>
Gull Chain of Lakes Association Support Letter	<a href="#">dc7f9cf8-68b.pdf</a>
Green Lake Improvement District Support Letter	<a href="#">205e6064-615.pdf</a>
Hungry Jack Lake Homeowners Association Support Letter	<a href="#">51faa83f-172.pdf</a>
Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District Support Letter	<a href="#">ed0739ea-058.pdf</a>
Blue Thumb Support Letter	<a href="#">362aebc3-940.pdf</a>
Metro Blooms Support Letter	<a href="#">aed023af-4ec.pdf</a>
Ruth Lake Improvement District Support Letter	<a href="#">a07b1bfd-3bd.pdf</a>
Sauk River Chain of Lakes Association Support Letter	<a href="#">f8966ede-8fd.pdf</a>
Stearns Conservation District Support Letter	<a href="#">b9cbbffa-f86.pdf</a>
Steve Corbin/Fox Lake Support Letter	<a href="#">5ea76b04-5bb.pdf</a>
Tom Nelson Support Letter	<a href="#">57c1dcd8-ed6.pdf</a>
2026 Shoreline Video Series Info	<a href="#">f00f9b05-656.pdf</a>

### Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

**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?**

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

**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")?**

Yes

**Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?**

Yes

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:**

Dylan Kinny, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Protection and Education

**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