



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-217

Proposal Title: Forest and Savanna Management Through Silvopasture- Phase 3

Project Manager Information

Name: Jennifer Grommes

Organization: Great River Greening

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Demonstrate, evaluate, and increase the adoption of silvopasture - integrating livestock with trees - as a method to restore and manage oak savannas across Minnesota.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$516,000

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?

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.

Oak savanna is one of Minnesota's most imperiled ecosystems, supporting high biodiversity by blending prairie and woodland species. Historically, frequent fire and grazing by large herbivores maintained open structure, promoted oak regeneration, and limited shrub encroachment. With the loss of grazing herds, restrictions on fire, and widespread land conversion, Minnesota's oak savannas have declined dramatically. Once covering nearly 5.5 million acres, they have been reduced by approximately 99.8%, making oak savanna restoration and long-term management an urgent natural resource need.

Climate change increases the stakes. Elevated temperatures, more intense storms, and longer duration droughts challenge both habitat management and farm viability. Silvopasture, the intentional management of trees, grasslands, and livestock, offers a practical pathway to restore and maintain savanna conditions on private lands while supporting working landscapes that can be more weather-resilient and productive.

Silvopasture is being successfully implemented in parts of Minnesota, but adoption remains limited. There is also a need for Minnesota-specific evidence about when livestock grazing can suppress invasive shrubs and reduce reliance on labor-intensive and herbicide-heavy management, especially when paired with complementary practices like prescribed fire and targeted woody control.

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.

This proposal represents Phase 3 of the ENRTF-supported work "Promoting and Restoring Oak Savanna Using Silvopasture" (M.L.2019) and "Restoring Forests and Savannas Using Silvopasture, Phase 2" (M.L.2022). Phase 3 will expand adoption and strengthen Minnesota-specific evidence for when silvopasture is an effective tool for restoring and managing oak savanna.

We will deliver three connected strategies. First, we will increase outreach and demonstration through workshops, field days, webinars, and online resources that equip landowners and producers with practical guidance on savanna restoration, grazing rotations, and stocking rates. Second, we will deepen evaluation of environmental outcomes through monitoring at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, tracking vegetation, pollinators, and soil health while focusing on brush regrowth suppression and oak regeneration when grazing is used alongside complementary woody management practices. Third, we will support the reintroduction of prescribed fire on private lands by building landowner knowledge in fire ecology, elevating new prescribed burn associations, and increasing capacity to plan and implement burns as part of long-term savanna management.

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 Minnesota's savannas and forests by expanding proven management practices that restore native habitat and support long-term stewardship on both public and private lands. Outcomes include increased adoption of silvopasture paired with complementary tools such as prescribed fire and targeted woody management to improve oak regeneration, suppress invasive brush regrowth, and maintain open savanna structure. Monitoring at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge will generate Minnesota-specific results on vegetation, pollinators, and soil health to guide future restoration. Outreach and demonstrations will equip landowners with grazing practices that increase biodiversity, improve forage resilience, and expand pollinator habitat.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Scale up oak savanna restoration and enhancement on public and private lands through landowner education and demonstrations

Activity Budget: \$240,700

Activity Description:

In Phase 3, Great River Greening and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota will expand this activity to broaden our outreach from a primarily farmer audience to include more non-operator landowners and public land managers. The focus of our educational events and activities will be to expand their capacity to restore and manage oak savanna using silvopasture alongside complementary practices, with tailored best management practices for savanna restoration and long-term stewardship. Topics will include brush management, tree thinning and oak protection, native seed selection and establishment, rotational grazing, and monitoring indicators.

We will continue efforts to build engagement with the Silvopasture Learning Network and to add new case studies and educational resources to Farm Maps that are relevant to farmers, landowners and public land managers.

Outputs will include six on-farm demonstration workshops and field days featuring real-world practices such as buckthorn removal, thinning, rotational grazing, and native seedlings and plantings, with emphasis on native plant communities, pollinators, wildlife habitat, and soil health. Two webinars or podcasts will address questions and barriers raised by Learning Network members and extend reach statewide.

We will evaluate outcomes through attendance tracking, participant feedback, and follow-up surveys to document practice adoption and intended next steps.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Host 2 demonstration workshops/Field days	June 30, 2028
Host two demonstration workshops/ field days and one webinar or podcast	June 30, 2029
Ongoing sharing of best management practices on the Silvopasture Learning Network	June 30, 2030
Host two demonstration workshops/ field days and one webinar or podcast	June 30, 2030

Activity 2: Monitoring of oak savanna establishment and management success through varying grazing methods at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge.

Activity Budget: \$211,900

Activity Description:

To advance the practice of restoration with silvopasture and improve the distribution of data, Great River Greening (GRG) and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota will monitor sites at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge. The monitoring sites will be cleared of all unwanted shrub vegetation prior to incorporating varying grazing methods across survey plots. Monitoring of vegetation, pollinators, and soil health is essential for establishing baseline data for proper grazing methodologies when working within oak savanna ecosystems. Baseline data will be collected before livestock is incorporated into the study, with annual monitoring to follow. It is important to monitor how native plants, such as oak trees and pollinator species, recover and thrive in these systems when proper grazing practices are implemented, while allowing trials on oak tree protection within grazing paddocks. Soil health surveys will evaluate microbial activity, carbon, organic matter, compaction, and aggregate stability and will follow protocols established during phase one. Previous studies focused on plots with established shrubs and the impact livestock had with different

grazing intensities/durations, while this data will focus on the ability to suppress the regrowth of brush as a long term management tool.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Baseline vegetation, pollinator, and soil surveys	June 30, 2028
Ongoing annual vegetation, pollinator, and soil surveys	June 30, 2030
Develop report of data analysis	June 30, 2030

Activity 3: Expanding knowledge, understanding, and adoption of prescribed fire on both private and public lands

Activity Budget: \$63,400

Activity Description:

Prescribed fire has effectively been used as a management tool on public lands though state and federal agencies for decades. With over 17 million forested acres of land in Minnesota being under private ownership, this had limited the adoption of prescribed fire and accelerated the encroachment of woody species on oak savanna ecosystems. Developing community lead Prescribed Burn Associations (PBAs) are looking to offer landowners assistance with burning on private lands and promote fire ecology knowledge and acceptance.

In Activity 3 GRG and SFA will assist Pheasants Forever (PF) in the creation of a video promoting proper execution of prescribed fire and introducing viewers to the expanding network of MN PBAs. We will also conduct a burn plan and permitting workshop/webinar and present at one conference geared towards private landowners and producers.

Due to the increased impacts of wildfires across the world, fear of fire has increased, while knowledge about the value of properly managed prescribed fire has diminished. This outreach will assist in offering fire ecology knowledge, support local PBAs establishment and acceptance, and advance the implementation of prescribed fire across private lands in Minnesota.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Video promotion for PBAs	June 30, 2030
Burn plan/permitting workshop/webinar	June 30, 2030
Conference presentation	June 30, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lucinda Winter	Sustainable Farming Association of MN	SFA is a farmer to farmer network of about 1,200 family farmers, small business people, agricultural professionals, educators, and food advocates who are dedicated to protecting farming resources by advancing sustainable farming practices. They will conduct outreach activities through hosting workshops, webinars, training sessions, and resource development.	Yes
Dean Current	CINRAM- UMN	The University of Minnesota Extension will survey farmers and landowners, identifying barriers and limitations for adoption of silvopastoral methods and techniques. They will foster the nascent learning network fostering outreach and supporting farmers and landowners	Yes
Josh Pommier	Pheasants Forever	Pheasants Forever will collaborate with Great River Greening by providing staff to assist in the field days and workshop portion of this proposal. Pheasants Forever will also promote these events on our social channels and through out network of partners.	No
Jessica Gutknecht	UMN	The Gutknecht lab at the University of Minnesota will analyze soil data and produce reports in a format that will be able to be integrated into other outreach materials and presentations produced throughout this project. She and her personnel will work with Great River Greening staff	Yes

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.

Great River Greening, Sustainable Farming Association and UMN will analyze the results of the surveys and prepare a final report of findings that will be disseminated to internal and external partners as well as shared through the Farm Maps app and the Silvopasture Learning Network(SLN). Interactive materials such as promotion of the prescribed fire video, podcasts, and webinars will be shared through the SLN as well as through external partner online channels. Landowner guides incorporating new data findings and best management practices will be created throughout the project and shared with interested landowners and partners.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines.

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 research and demonstration events conducted through the initial two phases of funding have created knowledge and guidance for landowners looking to implement livestock as a management tool for brush control.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Restoring Forests and Savannas Using Silvopasture - Phase2	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$674,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jennifer Grommes

Job Title: Grant Manager

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

Jennifer Grommes received her Masters from Miami University-Ohio in Biology. She has extensive experience studying and working in the fields of prairie and wetland restoration, urban forestry (certified ISA arborist), fire ecology, stream stabilization, agriculture best management practices and community-based conservation. As Great River Greening's Southern Minnesota program manager, Jennifer oversees both the agriculture and southern Minnesota conservation teams along with collaborating with partners to restore and manage hundreds of acres of natural areas and offering guidance and consulting with farmers to establish cover crops and perennial grains.

Organization: Great River Greening

Organization Description:

Great River Greening's mission is to inspire, engage and lead local communities in conserving and caring for the land and water that enrich our lives.

Great River Greening as a non-profit has been restoring, adapting, and sustainably managing ecosystems to address climate change, providing benefits for both people and the environment since 1995. To achieve our vision of healthy, climate change resilient ecosystems throughout MN, Great River Greening leans into the practices and projects that can truly impact our shared climate future. Our land-based restoration centers on three pillars of impact: (1) Restoring resilient landscapes, (2) Addressing critical biodiversity loss, and (3) Increasing carbon sequestration and storage.

Environmental stewardship is one of our core commitments. We partner with the communities we serve to increase environmental connection, teach environmental restoration, and ultimately empower committed individuals to join us in caring for our shared natural resources, engaging 8,000+ volunteers annually.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Manager/ Ecologist		Manages day to day project execution, contractors, project deliverables, budget and timeline. Leads vegetation, pollinator, and soil surveys; analyzes data; evaluates demonstration sites and assists with field days and webinars.			21%	0.99		\$149,100
Field Crew		Conducts demonstration site work to support project deliverables and performs plant, pollinator, and soil surveys			21%	0.03		\$3,000
Grant Administration		Tracks grant budget, project budgets, develops status reports and amendments and processes reimbursement requisitions			21%	0.12		\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$167,100
Contracts and Services								
Enhancement contracts following state bidding rules	Service Contract	Enhancement activities, seeding, invasive removals				0.48		\$60,000
Communications Provider	Service Contract	Videographer				0.24		\$35,000
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota	Subaward	Provide farm consults and on-site assistance to support farmers and landowners who are adopting silvopasture; lead silvopasture demonstrations; host webinars and field days; assist with network outreach and material development; Funds for personnel, travel, mileage, supplies, and other: event expenses include handouts, healthy food/beverages, and toilet/tent rental.		X		0.6		\$76,200
Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management -	Subaward	Conduct landowner surveys and analysis to understand barriers and limitations for implementation of brush management and Silvopasture practices. Adapt Farmmaps professional networking tool to include prescribed fire case studies. Funds for personnel, travel,				1.05		\$70,000

University of Minnesota		mileage, supplies, and tool development for one faculty and one undergraduate student.						
Department of Soil, Water, and Climate- University of Minnesota	Subaward	Expert consultation and assistance with soil health surveys across Sherburne Wildlife Refuge by UMN staff who designed the soil monitoring protocols in Phase 1 and phase 2 of the project. Funds for supplies, soil testing and services, faculty and staff.				0.66		\$61,400
Soil testing laboratory contract	Service Contract	Soil sample submission to a soil-testing laboratory. Costs include shipping and laboratory processing fees. Processing fees are estimated to be approximately \$60/sample for basic total carbon/nitrogen analysis				0.6		\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$317,600
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Seed, plants, plugs, and tools necessary for enhancement activities	Planting					\$20,000
							Sub Total	\$20,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging		Mileage to Sherburne Wildlife Refuge for annual surveys, demonstration workshop setup, demonstration workshop events, farmer meetings					\$10,300
							Sub Total	\$10,300
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Printing educational materials and displays	Printing educational materials and displays for distribution at workshops and conferences					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$516,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Contracts and Services - Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota	Subaward	Provide farm consults and on-site assistance to support farmers and landowners who are adopting silvopasture; lead silvopasture demonstrations; host webinars and field days; assist with network outreach and material development; Funds for personnel, travel, mileage, supplies, and other: event expenses include handouts, healthy food/beverages, and toilet/tent rental.	Demonstration workshops will include supplies and rentals as a standard recruitment tool and safety item: healthy food, beverages, tables, chairs, portable toilets, and tent rentals for 25-50 attendees. We do not want attendees hungry or thirsty while gaining hands-on experience on likely remote properties. Standard food items and beverages include selections of fruit, granola bars, juice, water, coffee, and sandwiches (Food and rentals: \$4,000/6 events).

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	GRG	GRG contribution for expenses related to this project not covered by the grant	Pending	\$84,800
Cash	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	Match dollars for expenses related to this project not covered by the grant	Secured	\$75,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$159,800
			Funds Total	\$159,800

Total Project Cost: \$675,800

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [4593bf57-66b.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

An overview of the project is described, along with a photo of goats browsing buckthorn, a photo of an open savanna after management activities, photos from previous events and a description of the partners...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
GRG Good Standing	9f436ca7-837.pdf
2024 GRG 990	912a625a-18b.pdf
2024 GRG Audit	4bb32b97-2f8.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Great River Greening 2027-217 Silvopasture 3 Board Authorization Letter	a2025b27-43e.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support- Savanna Institute	b0afffb8-21c.pdf
Letter of Support UMN extension	aea798a0-a08.pdf
Letter of Support- Pheasants Forever	7faeb258-b9f.pdf

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?

Yes

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")?

No

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

Melissa Greenwood

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