



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2027 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-559

**Proposal Title:** Chisago County TH 8 Wildlife Crossing Project

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Joe Triplett

**Organization:** Chisago County

**Office Telephone:** (651) 213-8708

**Email:** joe.triplett@chisagocountymn.gov

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** The Project will construct culverts and fencing along the Trunk Highway 8 corridor between Forest Lake and Chisago City to provide habitat connectivity for Blandings Turtles and other wildlife.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$3,000,000

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

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Fish and Wildlife (D)

#### Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

**When will the work impact occur?**

In the Future

## Narrative

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

The TH 8 corridor between Forest Lake and Chisago City bisects habitat used by several small animal species, including the state-listed threatened Blandings Turtle. Documented occurrences within the corridor highlight an ongoing conflict between transportation infrastructure and sensitive wildlife populations such as turtles. Blandings Turtles are protected under Minnesota law due to declining numbers driven by habitat fragmentation, roadway mortality, and low reproductive success. Each June, turtles migrate from wetlands to sandy upland areas to nest, often crossing TH 8 in the process, where vehicle strikes pose a significant threat to long-term population viability. Beginning in 2027, the TH 8 Corridor will undergo reconstruction, with the reconstruction project widening the roadway from two-lanes to a four-lane divided highway. During this Project, multiple intersections will also be reconfigured to improve safety and operations. Without mitigation, the expanded roadway footprint could increase barriers to wildlife movement and elevate mortality risk. However, the reconstruction project presents a timely opportunity to integrate purpose-built wildlife crossings and wildlife fencing into the roadway's design where none currently exist. Incorporating these features during reconstruction is a cost-effective and proactive strategy to reduce turtle mortality and maintain habitat connectivity while also balancing transportation improvements with environmental stewardship.

**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.**

As part of the Project, eleven box culverts will be constructed beneath Trunk Highway 8 to provide safe passage for small wildlife species, including the state-listed threatened Blandings Turtle. The culverts will be appropriately sized to encourage use by turtles and other small animals and will also incorporate drop inlets with grates connected to the roadway surface to allow natural light and moisture into the structures. This expanded sizing and introduction of daylight have been shown to improve wildlife utilization rates by creating conditions that more closely resemble natural travel corridors. In addition to the culverts, the Project will install 20,392 linear feet of exclusion fencing to guide wildlife toward the designated crossings, reduce at-grade roadway access, prevent animals from entering travel lanes, and reinforce the effectiveness of the system. Site selection has been informed by documented turtle movements, mapped wetland and upland habitats, and coordination with state resource agencies to ensure crossings are located in areas of highest need. Funding from ENRTF will support materials, construction, and construction oversight to integrate these features into the scheduled 2027 highway reconstruction project, ensuring that wildlife accommodations are delivered concurrently with the broader corridor improvements.

**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 Project will advance the protection and conservation of Minnesota's natural resources by minimizing roadway mortality and improving habitat connectivity for sensitive wildlife, including the state-listed threatened Blandings Turtle. By integrating wildlife crossings and exclusion fencing into the reconstruction of TH 8, the Project will preserve migration routes between wetlands and upland nesting areas as well as sustain essential life-cycle functions. These measures will decrease habitat fragmentation and strengthen long-term population resilience, while enhancing ecological continuity across the corridor. The Project embeds environmental stewardship directly into a major transportation improvement, aligning infrastructure investment with public safety and resource preservation goals.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Complete Predesign Review Through the Department of Administration

**Activity Budget:** \$1,000

**Activity Description:**

Chisago County and its project partners will prepare a predesign package in accordance with the Department of Administration's Predesign Manual AND the LCCMR Predesign Addendum. This predesign package will be submitted to the Department of Administration for review and recommendation prior to ENRTF funds being released for project construction.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description                                                             | Approximate Completion Date |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Predesign Package Submitted                                             | December 31, 2026           |
| Predesign Package Reviewed and Approved by Department of Administration | February 28, 2027           |

### Activity 2: Construction

**Activity Budget:** \$2,999,000

**Activity Description:**

culverts, three 44" RCP arches, three 59" RCP arches, one 65" RCP arch, and 20,392 linear feet of fencing. In total, 11 wildlife crossing tunnels and associated wildlife fencing will be constructed after this activity is completed. The construction process for this Project is complex and will require a partial road closure, excavation of existing embankment, placement of pipe bedding material, placement of large pipes, and backfilling with suitable grading materials. In total, the Project will cost \$3,000,971 with approximately \$2,250,729 coming from ENRTF funding and the remaining \$750,242 coming from the overall funding secured for the larger TH 8 Reconstruction Project. This \$750,242 represents Chisago County's required 25 percent match for ENRTF funding.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description                                        | Approximate Completion Date |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Construction, Oversight, and Administration Begins | April 30, 2027              |
| Change Orders                                      | July 31, 2029               |
| Construction, Oversight, and Administration Ends   | November 30, 2029           |

## Project Partners and Collaborators

| Name                                           | Organization       | Role                                      | Receiving Funds |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) | State of Minnesota | Primary Construction Lead / Administrator | 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.**

Chisago County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will acknowledge the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications and outreach. Any site-specific signs and / or social media posts relating to the Animal Crossings on TH 8 will include the relevant attributions.

## 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?**

Project results will be implemented through construction of wildlife crossing infrastructure as part of the broader Trunk Highway 8 (TH 8) Reconstruction Project scheduled for 2027. Funding for the overall TH 8 Reconstruction Project is secured through a combination of state legislative appropriations, Minnesota Department of Transportation trunk highway and district funds, federal programs including HSIP and Congressionally Directed Spending, as well as local contributions from Chisago County. The 25 percent match for the wildlife crossing components being pursued via this ENRTF Grant will come from these previously described sources. Long-term maintenance will be incorporated into routine highway system maintenance.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Joe Triplett

**Job Title:** County Engineer / Director of Public Works

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

Mr. Triplett serves as the County Engineer and Public Works Director for Chisago County, where he is responsible for the administration and technical oversight of the county's transportation and public infrastructure systems. He directs all phases of public works projects, including planning, environmental review, design coordination, right-of-way acquisition, construction administration, and long-term asset management. His portfolio includes roadway reconstruction, bridge replacement, drainage systems, and facility improvements, ensuring projects are delivered on schedule, within budget, and in compliance with state and federal requirements. Mr. Triplett leads multidisciplinary staff in developing and implementing the county's capital improvement plans and transportation priorities. He also oversees consultant selection and management, procurement processes, and contract administration, while maintaining strict adherence to applicable engineering standards and regulatory frameworks. His role requires regular coordination with local municipalities, state and federal agencies, and community stakeholders to align infrastructure investments with regional goals and public safety objectives. In addition to delivering new capital projects, Mr. Triplett manages the maintenance and preservation of existing assets, including bridges, roadways, and public facilities, to ensure long-term performance and safety. His leadership emphasizes proactive planning and fiscal responsibility. In 2026, Mr. Triplett was recognized

by the Minnesota Engineers Association as the Outstanding County Engineer of the Year for 2025, reflecting his professional excellence and commitment to public service. As a licensed Professional Engineer, he maintains rigorous continuing education requirements and upholds the ethical and technical standards of the profession. His extensive experience of more than 20 years and demonstrated leadership position him to successfully manage and deliver the proposed Project.

**Organization:** Chisago County

**Organization Description:**

Chisago County is a county government which operates under the County Administrator form of professional management. The Administrator is the head of the county for the management of the county's 13 different departments and 400 employees. The Administrator reports to the County Board of Commissioners, a five-member elected body which serves as the chief legislative and policy making body of the county. Chisago County was created by the State of Minnesota to serve, to protect, and to enhance the quality of life for those it serves. The County performs its duties and obligations in an ethical, democratic, and respectful manner.

## Budget Summary

| Category / Name                       | Subcategory or Type | Description                                                                                                     | Purpose | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount   |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|-------------|
| <b>Personnel</b>                      |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Contracts and Services</b>         |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
| To be Determined (TBD)                | Service Contract    | Purchase of construction materials, construction of wildlife crossings and fencing, and construction oversight. |         |                 |            | 0     |                   | \$3,000,000 |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | \$3,000,000 |
| <b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b> |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Capital Equipment</b>              |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>   |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Travel In Minnesota</b>            |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |
| <b>Printing and Publication</b>       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       |                   |             |
|                                       |                     |                                                                                                                 |         |                 |            |       | Sub Total         | -           |

|                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |             |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|----------------|-------------|
| Other<br>Expenses |  |  |  |  |  |  |                |             |
|                   |  |  |  |  |  |  | Sub<br>Total   | -           |
|                   |  |  |  |  |  |  | Grand<br>Total | \$3,000,000 |

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

| Category/Name | Subcategory or Type | Description | Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|

## Non ENRTF Funds

| Category         | Specific Source                    | Use                                                                                                             | Status                     | Amount           |
|------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| <b>State</b>     |                                    |                                                                                                                 |                            |                  |
| Cash             | Trunk Highway Funds, C68 A2 Subd 9 | Purchase of construction materials, construction of wildlife crossings and fencing, and construction oversight. | Secured                    | \$750,000        |
|                  |                                    |                                                                                                                 | <b>State Sub Total</b>     | <b>\$750,000</b> |
| <b>Non-State</b> |                                    |                                                                                                                 |                            |                  |
|                  |                                    |                                                                                                                 | <b>Non State Sub Total</b> | -                |
|                  |                                    |                                                                                                                 | <b>Funds Total</b>         | <b>\$750,000</b> |

**Total Project Cost: \$3,750,000**

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

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [e1804a53-a2b.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Shows Project termini of I-35 in Forest Lake to Karmel Avenue in Chisago City...

#### *Financial Capacity*

| Title                       | File                             |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Chisago County Audit Report | <a href="#">73f46fa2-956.pdf</a> |

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

| Title        | File                             |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Board Letter | <a href="#">0dd2527d-3f0.pdf</a> |

### Supplemental Attachments

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

| Title                                                                | File                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ENRTF Capital Construction Project Questionnaire                     | <a href="#">3422c0b8-322.pdf</a>  |
| Capital Construction Budget Addendum                                 | <a href="#">b1870ddc-7f3.xlsx</a> |
| TH 8 Reconstruction Project Environmental Assessment Signature Pages | <a href="#">f3e4d86c-4f6.pdf</a>  |
| TH 8 Wildlife Crossings Project Cost Estimate                        | <a href="#">6f31b1da-7ae.xlsx</a> |
| TH 8 Reconstruction Project Layouts                                  | <a href="#">307f85c8-fa4.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?**

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:**

Malachi Petersen, SRF Consulting Group

Brian Johnson, SRF Consulting Group

Paul Chellevoid, SRF Consulting Group

**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