



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-120

Proposal Title: Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza and Shoreline Restoration

Project Manager Information

Name: Tony Wotzka

Organization: Dakota County

Office Telephone: (952) 891-7966

Email: tony.wotzka@co.dakota.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza, loop trail connections, interpretive signage to honor Native American veterans, enhancing wetland habitat, new bioretention basin for stormwater and pond, shoreline, and prairie restorations.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$495,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): 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 Veterans Memorial Greenway is a three phased design and construction regional trail and open space corridor linking Lebanon Hills Regional Park and the Mississippi River in Dakota County. Phase 1 was constructed in 2024-2025, with phase 2 currently in final design and construction to begin in Summer 2026. The Greenway provides opportunities to connect to activity centers, schools, and gathering spaces. The 5-mile greenway is planned to honor Dakota County Veterans and to share their stories. The completed corridor will honor and recognize the sacrifice made by Veterans and provide a place for healing through memorials, as well as provide stories that inform and inspire visitors about military services through interpretation.

Details of the planned trail nodes are included in the Dakota County Veterans Memorial Greenway Interpretive Memorial Plan (adopted in 2023). The Native American Veterans memorial, to be located adjacent to Lakeside Park, is one of eight memorial nodes planned, and intended to serve as the first memorial plaza for the Greenway corridor. Dakota County is home to 25,000 Veterans; interpretive subthemes for the memorial will focus on 'Who Veterans Are' and 'Service Experience'. This will be accomplished through creating high-quality spaces for gathering, reflection, and passive

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 Veterans Memorial Greenway Native American Veterans plaza and restoration project is located within Dakota County Park Conservation property and Eagan's Lakeside Park. The plaza will serve as one of eight military-themed interpretive nodes, and will be the first memorial plaza along the 5-mile Veterans Memorial Greenway, a regional trail within Dakota County. This project aims to connect people to the cultural history of Veterans in Dakota County, while also expanding the regional trail network and enhancing natural resources within the corridor.

The project will create a dedicated plaza honoring Native American veterans while restoring critical natural resources and enhancing the surrounding park landscape for community use and reflection. The project will also include approximately 1,000 linear feet of wetland shoreline restoration, improving water quality, and enhancing aquatic and wildlife habitat. In addition, approximately 7 acres of prairie and woodland restoration will be implemented to reestablish native plant communities, increase biodiversity, and improve the long-term ecological health of the site. These restoration efforts will help manage stormwater, reduce invasive species, and support pollinators and other wildlife.

Together, these improvements will strengthen the Veterans Memorial Greenway as both a natural resource corridor and a place of cultural significance.

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 aligns with the LCCMR's constitutional purpose by investing in the protection and restoration of areas near trailheads. Planned restoration activities include:

- 7 acres of herbaceous areas to native prairie
- Installation of native shrubs to expand bird habitat and increase vegetative diversity
- Enhance wetland habitat with turtle basking logs, floating waterfowl platforms and standing snags
- Bioretention basin to treat stormwater runoff from neighborhoods
- Woodland buckthorn management

The Native American Veterans Plaza will provide a culturally meaningful space along the Veterans Memorial Greenway where visitors can recognize and reflect on their service and contributions.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Bidding and Pre-Construction

Activity Budget: \$10,000

Activity Description:

Once the design and construction documents are finalized, the first activity of this project will address the bidding process and contractor preparation for construction. Tasks include contractor selection, acquiring all necessary permits and funding, and construction preparation.

County Park staff will oversee the selection of contractors during the bidding process and help as agreed upon with construction administration and oversight. Contractors will complete pre-construction tasks including site preparation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Selection of Contractors for pre-construction and construction of project	June 30, 2027
Pre-construction processes, construction preparation, permit acquisition, all funds secured	September 30, 2027

Activity 2: Construction

Activity Budget: \$455,000

Activity Description:

This activity brings the proposed improvements through construction to project completion. Tasks include construction, construction oversight and administration, and project close-out.

Construction of the Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza will involve clearing and grubbing of vegetation, including invasives, grading for the connector trail and plaza, and performing shoreline, prairie and woodland restoration activities.

Construction of improvements includes trail loop connections, Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza, interpretative elements and signage, and installation of site furnishings. All improvements will be ADA-accessible.

County Park staff will help as agreed upon with construction administration and oversight. Contractors will complete construction tasks.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Plaza Construction, Oversight and Administration Begins	October 31, 2027
Restoration work begins	October 31, 2027
Plaza Construction, Oversight and Administration Ends	November 30, 2028
Project closeout, signage with ENRTF logo and open for us	December 31, 2028

Activity 3: Restoration Maintenance

Activity Budget: \$30,000

Activity Description:

Up to three years of establishment maintenance of the native seeding, shrub plantings and buckthorn management

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Objectives for restoration maintenance defined	September 30, 2027
Restoration maintenance work complete	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.

Information about this project and ENRTF funding will be presented on Dakota County's parks website, during interpretive programs, with interested media and to natural resource and land management professionals using either the ENRTF logo or attribution language. In addition, Dakota County will display the ENRTF logo at the plaza and on interpretive signage.

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 elements of this grant will be accomplished within a Dakota County Park Conservation Area and adjacent to Lakeside Park. Funding is requested for the construction of the plaza, interconnecting looped trails, interpretive signs, and an accessible public space for education, remembrance, and community gathering. Funds will also address pond shoreline restoration and additional prairie and woodland restoration. Ongoing implementation efforts will include regular maintenance of these amenities to be funded through county resources such as the Capital Improvement Plan, Environmental Legacy Funding, and community partnerships.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Reintroducing Bison to Spring Lake Park Reserve	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q	\$560,000
Completing the Mississippi River Greenway: Dakota County	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$657,000
Spring Lake Park Reserve Restoration and River Access	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$2,925,000
Cannon River Preservation and Access	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$2,717,000
Lake Byllesby Regional Park Restoration and Recreation	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09i	\$1,120,000
Thompson County Park Restoration and Accessibility Improvements	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$867,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Tony Wotzka

Job Title: Greenways Manager

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

In Tony's current role as the County Greenways Manager and previous positions, he has had a wealth of opportunities to work with internal and external stakeholders on projects from planning to post-construction maintenance. Tony's primary role has been to provide leadership, supervision, and support of project teams, and coordination with project partners to deliver the Greenway program and projects for the County. In these roles Tony has been responsible for developing project plans, budget needs, project schedules, agreements, and communications strategy; and for providing project management oversight to ensure the plans align with the project scope, risk, and complexity. In these positions,

Tony has led various projects and agency initiatives that involved project management and technical design oversight including budgeting, project stakeholder meetings, construction plan development and administration, as well as asset management planning and coordination. These roles have required coordination with multiple stakeholders; from the local volunteer group and city council to the consultant project managers, technical design staff, maintenance staff, project managers, senior leadership, and other agency leaders.

Organization: Dakota County

Organization Description:

Located in the southeast corner of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Dakota County Park System serves the state's third most populous county. With more than 5,000 acres and a rapidly growing network of greenways, Dakota County Parks is a nature-based system that exists to help meet the needs of over 400,000 county residents. Dakota County Parks has an active and professional capital development program that oversees park development to provide residents with facilities to enable natural resource-based recreation, a natural resource program that is restoring, maintaining, and enhancing hundreds of acres of prairie, forest and woodland, and a professional outdoor education program that manages and interprets the cultural sites within the Dakota County Park System.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Resource Conservationist		Project Oversight - Restoration			25%	0.45		\$31,500
							Sub Total	\$31,500
Contracts and Services								
Restoration Contractor	Service Contract	Performing restoration work				6		\$202,000
Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza Contractor	Service Contract	Construction of the Memorial Plaza				0.25		\$261,500
							Sub Total	\$463,500
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$495,000

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				
Cash	State Appropriations (SF24 General Fund Grant Agreement)	Construction	Secured	\$165,000
			State Sub Total	\$165,000
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$165,000

Total Project Cost: \$660,000

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
Dakota County Park Conservation District	Dakota	Prairie, Wetland, Pond Shoreline	Restoration	5	-	-	Public	Dakota County	Has Not Begun
Lakeside Park	Dakota	Prairie, pond shoreline	Restoration	2	-	-	Public	Eagan	Has Not Begun
Totals				7	0	-			

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

All restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land that is in public ownership by the City of Egan or by Dakota County.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

The Veterans Memorial Greenway project will include comprehensive shoreline and habitat restoration around the pond to enhance ecological function, improve water quality, and support diverse wildlife.

- Restore approximately 7 acres of herbaceous areas to native prairie, including removal of existing vegetation, site preparation, native seeding, erosion control, and three years of establishment maintenance.
- Install native shrub plantings to expand bird habitat and increase vegetative diversity, while observing height restrictions near overhead utilities.
- Enhance wetland habitat by adding features such as turtle basking logs, floating waterfowl platforms, and standing snags to provide bird perching and nesting opportunities.

- Construct a bioretention basin to treat stormwater runoff originating from the neighborhood to the north.

- Conduct woodland buckthorn management on approximately 1 acre along the western edge of the wetland.

Additional considerations: Removal of cattails and replacement with transitional native vegetation is not recommended due to the difficulty of long-term management and the high ongoing maintenance costs associated with this approach. Dakota County is in the process of developing a Veterans Memorial Greenway Natural Resources management and shoreline restoration plan that will include an inventory of existing resources and development of a plan for the greenway that is supported by this project. The plans will include sections on existing natural resources, priority features and recommendations, restoration efforts and work plans, and strategic partnerships. Plans are kept on file electronically and are available to the public on the Dakota County website. The County's Natural Resources Program includes 7.5 full-time restoration project managers who work together to identify and conduct projects based on natural resources management plan priorities.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

Dakota County utilizes and follows the guidelines of BWSR's "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in all restoration and enhancement efforts in the County parks, greenways, conservation easements, and projects lead by Dakota County on other publicly-owned land. We will continue to restore and enhance these proposed projects in accordance with these guidelines. For instance, we will be in keeping with the guidelines for seed and plant source, diversity levels, cultivar use, protecting plant communities, preventing the introduction of invasive species, and planting and management strategies for climate change.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

Dakota County is committed to supporting long-term maintenance and management efforts along County greenway corridors, regardless of land ownership. The Dakota County Natural Systems Plan and Dakota County Greenways Plan, both currently under development, will explore cost share and other funding mechanisms to support public land managers in maintaining restored areas.

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

Dakota County plans to notify the Conservation Corps of Minnesota about this project opportunity and will give

consideration to employing a crew from Conservation Corps of Minnesota to work on this project where it aligns with their skills, mission, and equipment.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

The County has a robust monitoring and evaluation program that is utilized for restoration and enhancement project sites. After the proposed project is completed, the County and City of Eagan will make an initial evaluation of whether the activity was successful or not. If something was not successful, the County will work to uncover the issue and then remedy the situation in the future. Land managers will continue to intentionally monitor and evaluate the sites annually. Dakota County staff will provide assistance as needed in alignment with the Natural Systems Plan and Greenway Systems Plan (currently under development).

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [1983b94c-f9f.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Project map highlighting different restoration areas by type and the location of the Native American Veterans Memorial Plaza. Also indicates location of the Veterans Memorial Greenway, Lakeside Park, and ownership of relevant parcels....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report	3bc15ae0-3e9.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Dakota County Board Authorization to Submit Grant Applications to LCCMR	fbc61b0c-0f4.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Veterans Memorial Greenway Interpretive Memorial Plan (2023)	85dfaba1-6c7.pdf
Veterans Memorial Greenway Master Plan (2017)	b2bccd09-c54.pdf
Vet MG Native American Vet_Budget Addendum	1bc8444a-183.pdf
Resolution of Support, Dakota County	2df2377b-114.pdf
Native American Veterans Plaza & Restoration Project Description	17aefef4-9c9.pdf
City of Eagan Letter of Support	59a82870-dfd.pdf
Vet MG Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	0d5211d7-eb0.pdf
Project Summary	e1fe55b3-3cc.pdf
SHPO Environmental Review Submittal	2a0bb364-227.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

Yes

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

No

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

Niki Geisler (Dakota County)

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