



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-139

Proposal Title: Mississippi River Learning Center - Peninsula Restoration

Project Manager Information

Name: Anne Gardner

Organization: City of St. Paul

Office Telephone: (651) 266-6421

Email: anne.gardner@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Peninsula restoration including earthwork, habitat creation, native plant establishment, and introduction of outdoor learning elements including a forest classroom, Indigenous education space, and river overlooks.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$2,901,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 31, 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?

Statewide

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 Mississippi River Learning Center project envisions a unique hub to attract national, regional, and local visitors to experience the land, river and culture along the edge of the Mississippi River at a nexus of cultural and environmental significance. The site is located within Bdote, the sacred birthplace of the Dakota people, near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers across from Historic Fort Snelling and Pike Island (Wita Tanka) and within the Mississippi Flyway, an important migratory path for hundreds of bird species. Partner organizations including National Park Service, Mississippi Park Connection, and Wilderness Inquiry will operate the site in partnership with the City of Saint Paul and focus programming to welcome school children, families, people with disabilities, and underserved communities. Indigenous and Tribal leaders are engaged with the project to determine plant restoration approaches and identify space for gatherings and outdoor education. Located within the popular Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park, the site requires restoration and remediation to address long-term flood impacts, soil contamination, and human disturbance, allowing for upgraded, accessible programming. This project critically restores the connection between the Mississippi River, its floodplain forest ecosystem, and park visitors.

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 Peninsula restoration will address the severe degradation of approximately 5-acres of the 25-acre Mississippi River Learning Center site and restore access to the river for recreational programming and learning. Decades of dumping spoils on the site have raised the ground surface over 20 feet and effectively disconnected this section of floodplain from the river. Environmental testing has confirmed contaminants and debris in soils that will be remediated using non-ERNTF funding. Large scale soil disturbance is the seminal event that shaped the present-day ecology of the site and altered the successional path of vegetation resulting in a forest dominated by exotic woody species as compared to the neighboring 'undisturbed' floodplain parcels. The site is ranked "poor" from a Natural Resource analysis. ERNTF funding will support a 'rewilding' restoration approach that will increase biodiversity by restoring natural processes and re-engaging society with nature. The approach will incorporate ecological dynamics into managing and restoring ecological functions, taking inspiration from the past and adapting to current conditions. Trails and outdoor classroom spaces on site will create opportunities for diverse park visitors to learn about the dynamic floodplain, migratory species, site ecology, and the cultural significance of the Mississippi.

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 Mississippi River Learning Center Peninsula restoration project is a site within the floodplain of the Mississippi River, an invaluable cultural and ecological resource to the state and region, contributing to the successful migration of species across the North American Continent. Soil remediation, regrading and restoration of specific plant species will restore habitat for a variety of snakes, forest interior birds, shoreline birds, migrating songbirds, raptors, fish, mussels, amphibians, and bats. Site design and construction methods will be sensitive to water quality and reduce erosion and slope degradation while creating places for learning to foster conservation values in visitors.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Site Assessment and Preparation - First phase of site work to remediate and remove invasive species to reinstate floodplain ecology

Activity Budget: \$244,300

Activity Description:

Site assessment work including wetland delineation, rare species surveys, and soil testing has been completed using non-ENRTF funding, providing information on existing conditions and for construction and restoration approach. The objective is to reestablish historic floodplain elevations on the lower peninsula and replicate characteristic floodplain topography. Soil remediation and regrading will be a preliminary step and include environmental oversight using non-ENRTF funding. Remediation efforts using non-ENRTF funding will include removal of large debris and soil. Significant tree removal is required to eliminate invasive vegetation while protecting federally endangered species. Site preparation will begin by cutting and treating all buckthorn and black locust stems to systemically kill their root systems and prevent regrowth. Treated stumps and other woody invasives will be removed during grubbing. Invasives removal will prioritize mechanical over chemical use wherever possible. Herbicide use will focus on cut stump treatments and foliar spray and be timed when native pollinators are not active or near potential foraging areas. Additional treatment will capture escapees or sprouting seeds. Decompaction, bed preparation, and stabilization of slopes with native vegetation cover and erosion control will limit sedimentation in adjacent water bodies. Sequencing will be least disruptive to the floodplain environment and monitored during construction.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Wetland Delineation and MN Board of Water & Soil Notice of Decision (Non-ENRTF funds)	September 30, 2025
Rare Plant Species Survey, Species Avoidance Plan (Non- ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2025
Consultation with State Historic Preservation Office (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2025
Environmental Assessment Worksheet (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2025
Environmental Site Assessment Checklist and Records Check/Phase I (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2025
Phase II and Response Action Plan (Using Non-ENRTF funds)	May 31, 2026
Department of Administration Pre-design Review	December 31, 2026
All Construction Funds Legally Secured	December 31, 2026
Site Clearing, Demolition, Preparation, and Remediations (Non-ENRTF funds)	June 30, 2027
Invasive Species Removal	December 31, 2027
Soil Clean Up: Investigation and Remediation (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2027
Environmental Oversight and Screening (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2027
Native Vegetation Cover and Erosion Control	December 31, 2027
Follow Up Treatments, Monitoring	October 31, 2029

Activity 2: Construction - Implementation of site elements to support park users, learning programs, and Indigenous education along the Mississippi River

Activity Budget: \$1,751,500

Activity Description:

The objective of the Mississippi River Learning Center project is to create a physical space for park visitors to experience the land, water, and culture of the Mississippi River. The construction activity will define spaces for recreation, learning, observation, and contemplation along the river. The site is within the Minnesota National River and Recreation Area, a ‘partnership’ National Park, comprised of public lands owned and managed by a cooperation of agencies. The City of Saint Paul will continue to own and manage the land with partner organizations leading programming for school groups,

community members, and national visitors. The outdoor classrooms will accommodate up to 30 individuals. Paved and accessible trails funded by partners will connect to the shoreline and outdoor learning environments, each of which will include seating and program space. The forest classroom will focus on the remnant floodplain forest and educate visitors about the vegetation of a floodplain forest. The Hahawakpa Landing will have multiple levels to accommodate the fluctuating river and serve as an indigenous classroom space to support community gathering and education about the sacredness of Bdote. The river overlooks will hover above the river with opportunities to study vegetation type and significance of water quality.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construction of Forest Outdoor Classroom	December 31, 2028
Construction of Hahawakpa Landing Indigenous Education Space	December 31, 2028
Construction of East Bay Landing	December 31, 2028
River Trails (Non-ENRTF funds)	December 31, 2028
Construction of Hahawakpa Overlook	December 31, 2028

Activity 3: Vegetation Establishment - Restoration of native plant communities for habitat, restored ecological function and educational opportunities

Activity Budget: \$905,200

Activity Description:

Vegetation establishment will stabilize the site and begin to restore the full native diversity to the floodplain forest and raise the habitat quality ranking as the forest regenerates. Following site preparation, soil remediation, and construction activities, planting and seeding will reintroduce the associated native plant communities, including a small seasonal wetland, mesic and floodplain forests. Species selection will reference the BWSR’s Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, the MDNR’s Native Plant Community guides, and climate-adaptive native species to enhance the resilience of the forests. As plants adapt and grow, management is necessary to prevent re-colonization by invasives during the establishment of the native plant communities. Restoration will utilize native pollinator friendly practices at all stages. Establishment will start with a forb-heavy herbaceous seeding and plug planting to stabilize slopes and provide forage throughout the growing season. Shrub and tree species selection will include appropriate-sited early season blooming species such as basswood, willow, and chokecherry; partner agencies will fund the tree planting for restoration. Propagules will be sourced within 150 miles. During establishment, maintenance will focus on burning and mowing to reduce competition from non-native weeds.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Seeding and Plug Planting	October 31, 2029
Implementation of soils for seeding and planting	December 31, 2029
Tree and Shrub Planting (Tree planting funded by partner agencies)	December 31, 2030
Closeout - Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded, COI, Signage Installation, Open Facility	December 31, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Paul Sawyer, Grants Manager	City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation	Grant Management	No
Francesca Sifferlin, Grants Associate	City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation	Grant Management	No
Jodi Massey, Director - Great River Passage	Saint Paul Parks Conservancy	Project Partner	No
Maggie Lorenz, Executive Director	Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi	Project Partner	No
Ellen Reed, Executive Director	Mississippi Park Connection	Programming Partner	No
Matthew (Tucker) Blythe, Superintendent	National Park Service	Programming Partner	No
Willy Tully, Director of Strategy and Programs	Wilderness Inquiry	Programming Partner	No

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.

We will share with Minnesotans, in a variety of accessible formats, all project work accomplished with help from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). We will accomplish this by using the trust fund logo or attribution language on printed project materials (event invitations and educational pamphlets), electronic media (City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation and project websites, newsletters, social media posts, local media releases, advertisement of events), signage (temporary and permanent), and public meeting materials, communications and outreach. Attribution language and social media tags will comply with the ENRTF Acknowledgment Requirements and Guidelines and will provide Minnesotans with project information, highlight project milestones, and share results.

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?

Implementation of the project includes design and planning for a phased restoration of a part of the peninsula area. Selective vegetation and remediation are initial steps prior to re-grading the land to reintroduce the historic floodplain elevation and natural shoreline of the Mississippi. The River Learning Center Facility is a City of Saint Paul owned and operated site with agreements in place with partners for the site's long-term operations and maintenance. Landscape implementation will require a 5-year maintenance and establishment period to monitor and ensure establishment for native species. Adaptive management techniques will be applied for habitat and plant communities.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Anne Gardner

Job Title: Lead Landscape Architect

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

Anne Gardner is a Landscape Architect with a breadth of experience in private, public, and non-profit work in the field of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design. She has worked for the City of Saint Paul in the Design and Construction section of the Department of Parks and Recreation since 2010 as a professionally licensed landscape architect. She has been a project manager for numerous projects to oversee Long-Range Plans, site design, and construction for park projects, in addition to serving on technical advisory committees for planning projects in Saint Paul. She has a particular passion for integrating natural systems into the urban environment as well as a love of community engagement in the design process. Anne is the project manager for the Mississippi River Learning Center project; a complex 25 acres site along the Mississippi River. She is leading a robust consultant team for the engagement, planning, and design of the site and buildings. The project endeavors to carry out the vision from the Great River Passage Master plan to connect people to the land, water, and culture of the Mississippi River by restoring the floodplain environment and constructing outdoor learning spaces for park visitors. Anne holds a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Minnesota and a bachelor's degree of liberal arts from St. Olaf College.

Organization: City of St. Paul

Organization Description:

Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Saint Paul

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Invasive Species Removal, Treatments, and Monitoring - Remove the non-native species of the restoration areas				0		\$91,000
TBD	Service Contract	Construction of Forest Outdoor Classroom - Outdoor space for learning about the floodplain forest				0		\$331,500
TBD	Service Contract	Construction of Hahawakpa Landing Indigenous Education Space - Implementation of an outdoor learning space along the Mississippi River				0		\$1,248,000
TBD	Service Contract	Construction of East Bay Landing - Construction of a small space at the Mississippi River edge near the marina on the east side of the peninsula				0		\$40,600
TBD	Service Contract	Vegetation Establishment - Shrub Planting with Supplemental Soil and Mulch				0		\$180,000
TBD	Service Contract	Earthwork, Soil Enhancements and Stabilization - Regrading and stabilization to prevent erosion				0		\$153,300
TBD	Service Contract	Construction of Hahawakpa Overlook - Construction of an outdoor classroom overlooking the river				0		\$131,400
TBD	Service Contract	Implementation of Soils for Seeding and Planting - Restore soil organics and soil health for improved vegetation				0		\$165,200
TBD	Service Contract	Vegetation Establishment - Seeding and Plug Plantings				0		\$560,000
							Sub Total	\$2,901,000
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	\$2,901,000

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 General Obligation Bond Funds	Design of the Mississippi River Learning Center	Secured	\$8,000,000
			State Sub Total	\$8,000,000
Non-State				
Cash	Local Option Sales Tax	Site Clearing, Demolition, Soil Preparation, Soil Remediation and Environmental Oversight and Screening for Soil Contamination Clean Up	Secured	\$2,500,000
In-Kind	Mississippi Park Connection	Tree Planting Assistance	Secured	\$300,000
In-Kind	National Park Service - Federal Highway Project	River Trails on Peninsula	Pending	\$253,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$3,053,000
			Funds Total	\$11,053,000

Total Project Cost: \$13,954,000

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
				-	-	-			
Totals				0	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.

The peninsula is owned and managed by the City of Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation as a part of the Hidden Falls-Crosby Farm Regional Park. All restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land where the City of Saint Paul will retain ownership into the future.

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.

Restoration plans have been developed for project parcels to be restored by the City of Saint Paul. The site is currently characterized as a disturbed forest and ranked "poor" from a Natural Resource analysis. A 'rewilding' restoration approach will increase biodiversity by restoring natural processes and habitat for a variety of wildlife. Vegetation establishment will stabilize the site and begin to restore the full native diversity to the floodplain forest and raise the habitat quality ranking as the forest regenerates. Planting and seeding will reintroduce the associated native plant communities, including a small seasonal wetland, mesic and floodplain forests. Species selection will be guided by the BWSR's Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, the MDNR's Native Plant Community guides, and climate-adaptive native species to enhance the resilience of the forest. Restoration will utilize native pollinator friendly practices at all stages. A rare species survey, state listed species avoidance plan, and federally listed species habitat assessment has been completed in consultation with regulatory agencies and are included in construction documents to ensure that sensitive species will be minimally impacted during construction activities. Establishment will start with a forb-heavy herbaceous seeding and plug planting to stabilize slopes and provide forage throughout the growing season before trees and shrubs are added. Program partners, including Tribal leaders, have informed restoration approaches. Management plans are a guiding document when prioritizing natural resources enhancement and future projects. They are referenced as funding becomes available to prioritize natural resources enhancement projects.

The River Learning Center Facility is a City of Saint Paul owned and operated site with agreements in place with partners for long-term implementation and management of the restoration plans. These partners will support monitoring species, and as native plant communities adapt and grow, follow-up to prevent re-colonization by invasives. During establishment, co-managed maintenance will focus on burning and mowing to reduce competition from non-native weeds.

Restoration and management plans are kept digitally in a dedicated project folder on a secure electronic document management system. These files are retained in accordance with the Minnesota Records Retention Schedule for Municipalities. The Project Manager keeps hard copies of restoration plans securely at the main office that are accessible to Natural Resources staff to access.

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.

Vegetation establishment will stabilize the site and begin to restore the full native diversity to the floodplain forest and raise the habitat quality ranking as the forest regenerates. Planting and seeding will reintroduce the associated native plant communities, including a small seasonal wetland, mesic and floodplain forests. Species selection will reference the BWSR's Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, the MDNR's Native Plant Community guides, and climate-adaptive native species to enhance the resilience of the forests. Restoration will utilize native pollinator friendly practices at all stages. Establishment will start with a forb-heavy herbaceous seeding and plug planting to stabilize slopes and provide forage throughout the growing season. Shrub and tree species selection will include appropriate-sited early season blooming species. Propagules will be sourced within 150 miles. During establishment, maintenance will focus on burning and mowing to reduce competition from non-native weeds.

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.

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation operate a dedicated maintenance fund which includes a weekly, monthly, and yearly maintenance plan. All assets in the park system are inventoried centrally, and deferred maintenance is tracked and budgeted for. When parkland is developed, redeveloped, or restored, additional funding is identified in the parks budget to address the increased operational need. An operations and maintenance plan is available for this project site to guide and inform plans for funding and staffing needs in the future.

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

The City of Saint Paul will engage the Conservation Corps of Minnesota (CCMI) to assess their availability for this project. The City will provide them with the project's restoration plans and consider contracting with them for restoration activities including seeding and plug planting, shrub planting, and peninsula trail maintenance. If competitive, the City will prioritize engaging CCMI for these tasks provided their timeline aligns with project milestones. The City has experience contracting with CCMI on restoration projects. The City has a Joint Powers Agreement in place with CCMI that allows the City to contract them directly without going out to bid.

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.

Following restoration activities proposed within this project, evaluations will occur to analyze improvements, address any potential implementation challenges, and utilize findings for future restoration efforts. A similar evaluation will occur three years after the project has been completed. Landscape implementation will require a 5-year maintenance and establishment period to further monitor and ensure establishment for native species.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [a1389fdf-40c.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

The site plan shows the entire MRLC Project and proposed development of the 25-acres. The 5-acre peninsula project is identified within the pink boundary and includes outdoor learning spaces, overlooks, and trails. The area will be reclaimed by removing invasives, restoring native vegetation, and grading accessible connections to the river....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Third Party Audit, Comprehensive Financial Review	73db706f-033.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
City of Saint Paul Resolution	3d43d8ec-fb5.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Existing Site Images	d346fef4-19a.pdf
Regional Context	51b2c889-19e.pdf
Capital Construction Budget Addendum	b0bb92cb-bdc.pdf
Regional Indigenous Communities Map	95b0438d-685.pdf
Plan Enlargement - Grant Extents and Restoration Zone	5f35a3fc-d20.pdf
Aerial View	f7b94b14-7ad.pdf
Capital Construction Questionnaire	4870c31e-5aa.pdf
SHPO Letter	dd24b723-41d.pdf
Letter of Support, Friends of the Mississippi River	cb632be3-b2f.pdf
Letter of Support, Capitol Region Watershed District	f3e7e322-681.pdf
Letter of Relevance, National Park Service	7d4c9dcf-9a1.pdf
Letter of Support, Mississippi Park Connection	14c5227f-19d.pdf
Letter of Support, Wakaŋ Tīpi Awaŋyaŋkapi	68e77fc3-4b6.pdf
Letter of Support, Saint Paul Parks Conservancy	fa76ade5-c17.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:

Anne Gardner, City of St Paul, Department of Parks and Recreation

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