



# ENRTF and LCCMR Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2031

November 13, 2024



# Statutory Requirement

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## **Minnesota Statutes 116P.08, Subdivision 3**

(a) The commission shall adopt a strategic plan for making expenditures from the trust fund, including identifying the priority areas for funding for the next six years. The strategic plan must be reviewed every two years. The strategic plan must have clearly stated short- and long-term goals and strategies for trust fund expenditures, must provide measurable outcomes for expenditures, and must determine areas of emphasis for funding.

# Strategic Planning Process

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- LCCMR decided to:
  - Build from draft goals and strategies developed during the 2019 strategic planning process.
  - Collect additional input.
  - Develop additional goals and strategies related to LCCMR communications and outreach and the proposal solicitation, review, and recommendation process.
- LCCMR appointed a 7-member subcommittee with two alternates to develop a draft strategic plan for consideration by the full commission.

# Subcommittee on Strategic Planning

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- Subcommittee met 11 times from December 2023 to November 2024 to develop the recommended strategic plan.
- Subcommittee gathered additional input from March to May through the following:
  - Public Survey (1,641 responses)
  - Subject Matter Expert Survey (360 responses)
  - Public Listening Sessions – St. Paul, Brainerd, Detroit Lakes, St. Cloud, Virtual (101 participants)
- All subcommittee recommendations required at least four subcommittee members' support.

# Recommendations

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- New Vision and Mission Statement
- Seven Goals and Strategies for Future Expenditures from the ENRTF
  - Goals: Land, Water, Fish and Wildlife, Resiliency, Education and Outdoor Recreation, Energy, Emerging Issues
  - Strategies: Research, Demonstration, Monitoring, Environmental Education, Planning, Restoration, Land Acquisition, Evaluation, Implementation of Management Practices, and Development of Outdoor Recreational Opportunities
- Seven Goals and Strategies for the LCCMR
  - Communication and Outreach
  - Proposal Solicitation, Review, and Recommendation Process
- Updated Evaluation and Selection Criteria
- Outcomes
- Updated ML 2026 Request for Proposals (RFP)

# Recommended Vision and Mission Statement

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## Vision

Minnesota's lands, waters, fish, and wildlife are plentiful, healthy, resilient, and appreciated for their intrinsic value as well as the benefits they provide us all.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is to fund environmental and natural resource projects that best protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.



# Recommended Goals and Strategies for Expenditures from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## Goal 1: Minnesota's public and private lands – including forests, grasslands, wetlands, and agricultural lands – provide long-term benefits to fish, wildlife, and people.

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### Fund projects that:

1. Develop, demonstrate, and/or evaluate new and innovative practices and processes on public and private lands, including agricultural and forest land, that provide multiple, long-term environmental benefits and economic considerations, including benefits related to habitat, water quality and quantity, soil health, and carbon sequestration.
2. Enhance education, technical assistance, or public outreach to promote the application of practices beneficial to the environment, natural resources, and all Minnesotans.
3. Acquire and conserve minimally disturbed lands that provide the greatest capacity for multiple conservation benefits to humans, fish, wildlife, and water resources.
4. Restore and enhance lands to provide high-quality natural resource, ecological, or recreational value.
5. Foster collaboration among diverse groups, demonstrate the support of multiple stakeholders, and/or incorporate outreach to local and tribal communities to better protect lands.



## Goal 2: Minnesota's water resources are better managed for both water quantity and quality to support aquatic life, drinking water, recreation, and other uses.

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### Fund projects that:

1. Research impacts of runoff, stormwater, or contaminants on surface water or groundwater quality and develop practical solutions to prevent or address these impacts.
2. Research current and future water supply and use to support planning efforts and implementation of best management practices and ensure the state's water resiliency and sustainability.
3. Increase understanding and awareness of weather and climate patterns and their potential impact on water resources.
4. Demonstrate innovative practices, strategies, and/or partnerships that prevent or reduce water issues in urban, suburban, or rural regions.
5. Implement measures to improve water quality and/or restore or enhance habitats, shoreline, or natural hydrology in lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other surface waters, with an emphasis on efforts that incorporate coordination and collaboration among tribal, state, and local agencies and community partners.
6. Provide educational opportunities or technical assistance programs for teachers, students, state and local decision-makers, landowners, or the public on how to improve and protect water resources, including groundwater, surface water, and stormwater systems.
7. Monitor and assess the condition of groundwater or surface water, including lakes, rivers, and wetlands, on a regular cycle and provide a long-term data set to support decision-making and evaluate efforts.

## Goal 3: Minnesota has healthy and diverse aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and plant populations that sustain and enhance the state's environment, economy, and quality of life.

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### Fund projects that:

1. Research species or ecosystems and develop strategies to effectively manage, maintain, protect, and restore healthy habitats and populations.
2. Monitor the health of natural systems to support and improve species management and conservation strategies.
3. Support and provide technical assistance and/or planning support to private landowners on cost-effective, proven strategies and technologies to develop and restore diverse, native habitat.
4. Promote public awareness on the importance of diverse wildlife and plant populations through comprehensive education programs.
5. Prevent the introduction, reduce the spread, or develop and demonstrate alternative control techniques for invasive species.
6. Develop plans and/or implement conservation actions to protect, conserve, or restore species, with a priority on efforts that maintain or create connected, continuous habitat or address the needs of vulnerable, declining, poorly understood, or sensitive species.
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of current management practices and past investments to sustain and enhance wildlife and native plant populations.

## Goal 4: Minnesota's environment, natural resources, and communities are resilient in the face of climate change, land use changes, and extreme weather events.

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### Fund projects that:

1. Research, demonstrate, and/or promote comprehensive and viable solutions for reducing the impacts of climate change, land use changes, or extreme weather events on the environment and natural resources, through both engineered and natural solutions targeted at critical areas.
2. Broaden understanding and implementation of effective climate adaptation management practices for natural resources among landowners through education, outreach, technical assistance, and/or the development of collaborations and networks to share and learn about new and innovative practices.
3. Support the development of local climate resiliency and adaptation plans for natural resources.
4. Implement land and water management practices and/or protect and restore wetlands, forests, prairies, and other critical systems to enhance biodiversity and provide multiple community resilience benefits.

## Goal 5: All Minnesotans, especially young people, have access to and take advantage of opportunities to connect to the lands and waters of Minnesota, including through culturally relevant and innovative approaches.

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Fund projects that:

1. Address social, economic, or physical barriers to natural resource-based outdoor recreation through programs that encourage inclusivity and address inequities so that public lands and waters are accessible to all.
2. Assess programs, activities, or physical spaces for their accessibility and effectiveness and/or implement changes to adapt and retrofit them to welcome more people.
3. Provide evidence-based, hands-on, and engaging curriculum, programs, or natural resource-based outdoor events to bring a diversity of students and/or adults to outdoor experiences.
4. Create mentorship programs, leadership opportunities, and/or learning experiences for a diversity of young people to explore and pursue careers in the environment and natural resources.
5. Enhance environmental education initiatives by integrating diverse cultural perspectives, experiences, and partnerships that foster environmental stewardship in all communities.
6. Develop local or regional plans to enhance natural resources-based outdoor recreational opportunities in communities across the state.
7. Collaborate or partner with indigenous, local, BIPOC, or underserved communities to develop culturally relevant, inclusive, and accessible environmental, natural resource, or natural resource-based outdoor recreation programs, practices, curriculum, or facilities.
8. Design and/or develop culturally relevant, accessible, resilient, and environmentally friendly outdoor recreation facilities and infrastructure – including recreation areas, parks, trails, fishing piers, or shelters – that create new natural resources-based experiences.
9. Expand networks of trails, parks, or natural areas to protect and connect green spaces seamlessly, improve accessibility and safety, and/or encourage all Minnesotans to recreate in and engage with nature.

## Goal 6: Minnesota achieves reliance on renewable energy in all sectors, including transportation, building, industry, agriculture, and others.

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### Fund projects that:

1. Research and develop new and innovative renewable energy or fuel technologies with environmental considerations, including biofuels, e-fuels, sustainable aviation fuels, and energy storage.
2. Evaluate, demonstrate, and/or assess renewable energy systems or fuels for economic viability, compatibility with other land uses, and environmental and natural resource impacts over the full lifecycle of the technology.
3. Develop and/or implement plans that identify, prioritize, and coordinate efforts to reduce energy consumption and to transition to renewable energy through land use planning, infrastructure, education and awareness, and other methods.
4. Encourage and support the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency in agriculture, mining, industry, utilities, transportation, homes, or businesses.
5. Ensure equitable access to renewable energy and/or energy efficiency programs in all communities.
6. Provide inclusive education and experiential learning programs to build a skilled and diverse workforce for the renewable energy sector.

## Goal 7: Minnesota responds quickly and proactively to emerging environmental and natural resources issues.

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Fund projects that:

1. Identify, assess, and/or prioritize potential threats to the environment and natural resources.
2. Research and/or develop technologies and measures to detect or address emerging or emergency threats to the environment and natural resources.
3. Create collaborations and build partnerships among all parties – including academic institutions, government agencies, non-government organizations, communities, and the private sector – to foster innovation and leverage resources and expertise to better address emerging threats to the environment and natural resources.
4. Enhance coordination and interagency collaboration among federal, state, tribal, and local governments to ensure a unified response.
5. Implement proactive measures to prevent or minimize the impacts from emerging environmental or natural resource issues.
6. Implement natural resource corrective actions where delay will be detrimental to the environment and natural resources.
7. Restore impacted ecosystems to minimize the loss of benefits provided by these systems to people, fish, plants, and wildlife.

In addition, the LCCMR will work to:

1. Explore revised processes for requesting, evaluating, and awarding funds for emerging issues to ensure funds are available on a timely basis throughout the year.



# Recommended Goals and Strategies for the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

## Goal 1: The LCCMR recommends projects that will provide the most benefit to the environment and natural resources.

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### Strategies:

1. Develop a process for project managers to provide clear and measurable outputs and outcomes to assess project success.
2. Apply evaluation criteria consistently and review which priorities from the strategic plan are contained in the request for proposals (RFP) every funding cycle.
3. Require applicants provide data, citations, and/or letters of recommendation to support problem statements and proposed solutions in their proposal.
4. Explore options for periodic, rigorous, independent evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of past ENRTF investments.



## Goal 2: The public is aware of and understands the purpose of the LCCMR and the ENRTF and their shared mission.

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### Strategies:

1. Explore ways to maximize and expand the impact of social media and other online content, such as:
  - a) Assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.
  - b) Ensuring a regular flow of engaging written, audio, video, or other content is produced and communicated throughout the year on a variety of social media and other online platforms.
2. Engage with the Community Grant Program and other ENRTF-funded grant programs to explore opportunities to collaborate, coordinate, and, if needed, differentiate among programs.
3. Cultivate and amplify traditional media opportunities.
4. Establish a presence at events, including:
  - a) Events hosted by ENRTF-funding recipients to highlight and amplify others' communications about the ENRTF and LCCMR.
  - b) Public events like the ag expo or the state fair to directly communicate with the public who may not regularly follow the LCCMR and the ENRTF.

## Goal 3: The public is aware of ENRTF funding opportunities and understands the funding application and recommendation process.

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### Strategies:

1. Provide direct and regular communication on multiple platforms to the public about the LCCMR process, meetings, and decisions.
2. Provide direct and regular communication to applicants that keeps them informed about every step of the RFP and recommendation process and the status of their proposal.
3. Explore ways to maximize and expand the impact of social media and other online content, such as assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.
4. Bolster RFP outreach to reach more potential applicants, such as:
  - a) Hosting and attending meetings and events – regional, topical, organizational – to directly communicate funding opportunities and answer questions about priorities and how to apply.
  - b) Cultivating and amplifying traditional media opportunities, including paid advertising.
5. Create new materials and opportunities to clearly and simply explain current LCCMR priorities and processes to the public and assist applicants.

## Goal 4: The LCCMR process for selecting and recommending proposals is transparent, understandable, fair, and accessible for all Minnesotans.

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### Strategies:

1. Continue to provide special consideration for small projects or organizations.
2. Review and update guidance on allowable expenses to make sure they are clear and align with commission expectations.
3. Evaluate on a regular basis the proposal application process and the LCCMR Proposal and Grants Management System to make it as accessible and simple as possible for users to submit proposals.
4. Explore alternative processes for selecting and recommending proposals to handle the increasing number of applications and to ensure the process is easy to communicate and for the public and applicants to understand.
5. Explore options to reduce the amount of time between proposal submittal and the availability of funding.
6. Develop a process for providing constructive feedback to applicants not recommended for funding.
7. Develop a process to receive regular feedback from applicants on the application, selection, and recommendation process.

## Goal 5: LCCMR staff are timely and effective in responding and communicating to applicants, project managers, and LCCMR members.

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### Strategies:

1. Ensure appropriate staffing levels to manage the LCCMR proposal request, evaluation, and recommendation process and oversight of approved projects as funding levels and number of projects increase.
2. Hire nonpartisan staff dedicated solely to outreach, engagement, and communications efforts.
3. Implement standardized protocols for staff communication and coordination with LCCMR members and applicants on processes, meetings, and expectations.

## Goal 6: Groups and organizations that have not traditionally participated in the LCCMR process understand the purpose of the ENRTF and LCCMR and how to apply for funding.

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### Strategies:

1. Contact leaders, leverage existing connections and networks, and build relationships with communities and organizations that have not traditionally participated in the LCCMR process – including communities of color, tribal communities, and small nonprofits – to determine the best ways to communicate and conduct outreach with them.
2. Carry out targeted outreach to groups and organizations that have not traditionally been aware of the ENRTF and LCCMR to help them understand the purpose of the ENRTF and LCCMR and how to apply for funding.
3. Produce ENRTF and LCCMR-related outreach materials, including written, audio, and video content, that may be more accessible to groups and organizations that have not traditionally participated in the LCCMR process.

## Goal 7: The public knows how ENRTF money is being spent and what benefits the public is gaining from those expenditures.

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### Strategies:

1. Generate new, creative, varied, accessible, interesting, and comprehensive content that communicates the accomplishments of the ENRTF and the LCCMR, such as:
  - a) Focusing on technical information and storytelling.
  - b) Gathering content, including photos and videos, related to active and completed projects for use in regular communications.
2. Ensure full participation by all project managers in acknowledging the source of funding for their work in their communication efforts and signage.
3. Create clear and consistent brand for the LCCMR and ENRTF that connects all communications and outreach materials.
4. Explore new opportunities and assess existing communications channels to identify the most effective platforms to communicate the accomplishments and benefits of ENRTF-funded projects to our varied audiences, such as:
  - a) Assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.
  - b) Hosting and attending events that communicate ENRTF accomplishments, such as lunchtime lectures, events hosted by ENRTF-funding recipients, or public events like the state fair or ag expo.
5. Cultivate and amplify traditional media opportunities.
6. Communicate accomplishments and benefits of ENRTF-funded projects through existing LCCMR communications channels.

# Recommended Evaluation and Selection Criteria

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- Tiered Approach
- Overarching Consideration
  - Eligible for funding and meets the constitutional purpose
- Primary Criteria
  - Funding Priorities
  - Environmental or Natural Resources Benefit
  - Outcomes/Results
  - Capacity
  - Completeness and Clarity

# Recommended Evaluation and Selection Criteria (Continued)

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- Additional factors
  - Information and Dissemination
  - Innovation
  - Timeliness and Readiness
  - Leverage
  - Collaboration/Coordination
- Final Consideration
  - How the proposals as a whole provide benefits to and address needs in all areas and communities of the state.



# Recommended Outcomes

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- Purpose: Track progress and success in meeting goals and constitutional purpose of the ENRTF.
- Six Recommended Metrics:
  1. Number of acres or miles acquired, restored, or enhanced broken down by region, land type (e.g., forest or shoreline), and purpose (e.g., preservation/conservation, restoration, or recreation).
  2. Number of youth and adults participating and directly interacting with ENRTF-funded projects broken down by activity type (e.g., technical assistance, education program, or recreation facility use).
  3. Reduction in greenhouse gas and other emissions.
  4. Number and percentage of projects funded under each goal and strategy.
  5. Total number of proposals received and projects funded per region.
  6. Number of projects funded protecting, conserving, preserving, or enhancing air, water, land, fish, and wildlife by resource.
- Work to develop additional metrics and indicators that can be collected from project managers as well as explore options for periodic, rigorous, independent evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of ENRTF expenditures.

# Next Steps

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- Public Comment (Nov. 15 to Dec. 1)
- Commission Action (Dec. 4 or 11)\*

\*Approval requires a supermajority (11 members)

