



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-170

Proposal Title: Completing the Mississippi River Greenway: Dakota County

Project Manager Information

Name: John Mertens

Organization: Dakota County

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Restore and enhance 54 acres of natural areas, five miles of linear natural signature plantings and install seven EV charging stations along the 27 mile Mississippi River Greenway.

Funds Requested: \$675,000

Proposed Project Completion: November 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

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?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

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

While the recreational trail part of the Mississippi Greenway is nearing completion, significant work is still needed to achieve the full greenway vision. Through this LCCMR grant request, Dakota County is proposing implementation of two goals that further complete the greenway vision.

Goal 1 – Green the greenway by restoring and establishing habitat along the corridor

The greenway extends from Dakota/Ramsey County boundary to the City of Hastings. The landscape within this greenway corridor ranges from highly altered industrial areas in the north, transitioning to relatively high-quality natural communities in central part of the corridor, which then trends to a more agricultural landscape as it approaches Hastings. This presents the opportunity to restore and enhance the ecological health along the river in the south metro, providing important connectivity for species that utilize this internationally significant river as a migration corridor. This river serves as the natural frame upon which habitat improvement can be developed, helping to restore natural resource connectivity in an otherwise fragmented and highly altered urban area, to the benefit of local, statewide, and continent-wide ecosystem.

Goal 2 – Integrate EV charging at parks and trailheads

Improve access to EV charging locations for a growing number of EV owners.

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.

Dakota County is proposing to conduct habitat restoration and enhancement activities, often in collaboration with other public landowners, to improve the natural resources along the Mississippi River corridor. This project will restore and enhance 54 acres, five miles of focused native plant signature plantings and seven EV charging stations. This project will enable the County to partner with public landowners along the Mississippi River Greenway to restore and enhance prairies and woodlands that are adjacent to or in the vicinity of the greenway. Specific activities include exotic invasive plant control, soil preparation, seeding, plant installation and long-term vegetation maintenance on publicly owned land in the corridor.

Our proposal will also support the installation of seven level 2 EV chargers spaced along the 27 mile corridor at existing parks and trailheads. These chargers will support people travelling to and along the river in electric cars, bikes and personal mobility devices. As a national/state/regional facility, EV charging will further encourage and support cleaner transportation alternatives.

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?

Restoration of this section of the Mississippi River Greenway corridor will increase acres of diverse natural communities that will provide the following: broaden habitat for an array of wildlife species, especially pollinators in high-potential Rusty Patched Bumblebee zones, improved water quality by reducing soil erosion and sediment pollution, reduced storm water runoff by increasing the capacity for water infiltration, and enhanced experiences for people using the Mississippi River Greenway. Providing charging facilities in conjunction with parks and trails further promotes the transition to cleaner transportation options and provides opportunity to market the Mississippi River Greenway as a "Green" recreational corridor.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Restore and establish habitat along the Mississippi River Greenway

Activity Budget: \$306,000

Activity Description:

Dakota County is proposing to conduct habitat restoration and enhancement activities on eight identified areas comprising 54 acres along greenway. Dakota County has a robust natural resource program with staff that have expertise in natural resource management. This project will restore and enhance the habitat condition along the Dakota County side of the river corridor within existing public owned properties. Dakota County has a history of effectively working with cities to restore and enhance natural areas on city properties. Specific activities include exotic invasive plant control, soil preparation, seeding, plant installation and long-term vegetation maintenance on publicly owned land in the corridor.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Assess condition of eight identified restoration areas along greenway	July 31, 2025
Restoration of the 8 identified areas totaling 54 acres	November 30, 2027

Activity 2: Establish native plantings along 5 miles of greenway within existing road right of way

Activity Budget: \$243,000

Activity Description:

This activity will focus on creating a natural signature along 5 miles of the greenway that have limited opportunity to incorporate larger restoration areas. Based on a native landscaping plan this activity will integrate linear tree planting, pollinator plantings and native prairie seeding. The goal is to provide a consistent natural signature along the greenway sections that follow roads. Plantings will be determined based on soil types, space availability and durability along road corridors.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Prepare native planting landscape plan.	July 31, 2024
Implement full 5 mile native planting plan via contracted services	November 30, 2027

Activity 3: Install 7 EV charging stations along the Mississippi River Greenway

Activity Budget: \$126,000

Activity Description:

Our proposal will fund the installation of 7 level 2 chargers spaced along the 27 mile corridor at existing parks and trailheads. These EV chargers will support people travelling to and along the river in electric cars, bikes and personal mobility devices. As a national/state/regional facility EV charging further encourages and supports cleaner transportation alternatives. Installation of EV Charges would occur in the following locations:

- Kaposia Landing – South St Paul
- Wakota Bridge Trailhead – South St Paul
- Swing Bridge Trailhead – Inver Grove Heights
- Pine Bend Bluffs Trailhead – Inver Grove Heights

- Spring Lake Regional Park Reserve – West Trailhead – Rosemount
- Spring Lake Regional Park Reserve - Scharr’s Bluff Visitor Center
- Lake Rebecca Park - Hastings

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Assess individual sites for charging location existing utility	July 31, 2024
Install 7 EV charging stations	December 31, 2024

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?

Dakota County has a robust natural resource program with staff that have expertise in natural resource management who will lead implementation of the proposed habitat elements of the project. The EV charging elements will be implemented and managed by our Capital Facilities staff with ongoing operations and maintenance likely managed through contracted services. As part of the regional greenway system Dakota County assumes ongoing maintenance and operational costs related to proposed improvements along the greenway. Funding for ongoing operations and maintenance will be programed in our capital improvement program.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Reintroduction Of Bison To Spring Lake Park Reserve	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q	\$560,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: John Mertens

Job Title: Principal Planner

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

As principal planner I help oversee planning and implementation of the Dakota County Regional Greenway System. Over the past 15 years I have helped manage all aspects of greenway projects including natural area restoration, water quality and trail and trailheads. Dakota County has a full natural resources and land conservation department dedicated to managing restoration projects within our parks, along our greenways and on our conservation easements.

Organization: Dakota County

Organization Description:

Dakota County is part of the 7 county metropolitan area with an operating budget of \$308 Million in 2023. Dakota County employs approximately 2,000 staff at three primary service center locations. Approximately 1/3 of the land area is considered developed as urban/suburban and 2/3 remain as rural/agricultural. Dakota County is the third most populous County in the state estimated at 442,038 in 2021. Dakota County is bordered by 3 rivers including the Minnesota River on the west, Mississippi River of the east and the Cannon River on the south.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Land restoration services - phase 1				1.5		\$153,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Land restoration services				1.5		\$153,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Landscaping and planting services				1		\$243,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	EV Charging Equipment and Installation				1.5		\$126,000
							Sub Total	\$675,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							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	\$675,000

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				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Dakota County Capital Improvement Plan	10% match to requested LCCMR funds	Secured	\$75,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$75,000
			Funds Total	\$75,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Ernster Park	Dakota	Invasive vegetation management, replanting, ash tree management	Restoration	2	-	\$12,000	Public	City of Inver Grove Heights	Has Not Begun
Heritage Park Floodplain Forest	Dakota	Manage invasive vegetation and ash tree removal with selected replanting	Restoration	6	-	\$32,000	Public	City of Inver Grove Heights	Has Not Begun
Kaposia Oak Savanna	Dakota	Part of Kaposia Ravine area of South St. Paul - with creek draining directly to Mississippi River	Restoration	9	-	\$48,000	Public	City of South St. Paul	Has Not Begun
Levee Prairie Strip	Dakota	Turf conversion of levee slope along Mississippi River/Greenway	Restoration	2	-	\$8,000	Public	Dakota County, City of South St Paul/Corp of Engineers	Has Not Begun
Pine Bend Elementary School - Woodland	Dakota	woodland restoration	Restoration	13	-	\$64,000	Public	School District 199	Has Not Begun
Simons Ravine	Dakota	Bottom of Ravine within Kaposia Park in South St Paul	Restoration	17	-	\$80,000	Public	City of South St Paul	Has Not Begun
South Kaposia/Bryant Ave	Dakota	Prairie restoration on land within Kaposia Park	Restoration	3	-	\$20,000	Public	City of South St Paul	Has Not Begun
Wakota Trailhead Levee	Dakota	Turf to prairie restoration on levee next to Mississippi River/greenway	Restoration	2	-	\$12,000	Public	City of South St Paul/Corp of Engineers	Has Not Begun
Totals				54	0	\$276,000			

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.

Yes. All restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership. All infrastructure related to the EV charging will be maintained and operated by Dakota County for its useful life.

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.

Dakota County develops Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMP) for each of its parks and greenways. Each plan includes information on historic conditions, current conditions, target conditions/natural communities, timelines, budget and maps. The River to River Greenway NRMP was completed in 2020 and includes key restoration projects within the area in scope for this application. Additionally, the NRMP for the Mississippi River Greenway is scheduled to be completed in 2024 and it will guide the specific actions and goals for all areas along the greenway. These documents are used guides by project managers for specific restoration projects. The NRMPs are living documents that updated every 5- 10 years. Dakota County's Natural Resource staff are responsible for implementing these plans and implementation commences upon their completion. All natural resources projects are documented with GIS files for ongoing monitoring and documentation of ongoing restoration efforts.

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.

This project will use native seed and plant material sourced from the local region, as much as possible, to ensure that the plants are viable and adapt to the conditions of the site. Seed selection will include a high diversity of species that provides functions of pollinator habitat, foraging habitat for wildlife species, floodplain management, and soil stability.

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 Parks Department will be responsible for the long-term maintenance and management needs of the project sites. Funding will be available through its annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

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

Dakota County will consider contracting with the Conservation Corps Minnesota to conduct some of the activities associated with this project. Dakota County's partnership with CCMI has been successful in the past for establishing initial plantings within the project area, which will be expanded upon with the activities outlined in this proposal.

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.

Dakota County Natural Resource Staff will complete evaluations during and after the project is completed, monitoring will be completed throughout the growing season annually into the future and a summary of our monitoring data will be completed three years after the initial habitat installation.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [7c12e9a1-cb7.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map representing the location of project elements....

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
County Board Resolution	c3de7f67-404.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Linear Native Planting Illustration	aba94790-bcf.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

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

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 design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?

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?

No