Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-066

Proposal Title: Planning for Long-Term Natural Resources Protection, Hennepin County

Project Manager Information

Name: Kristine Maurer

Organization: Hennepin County

Office Telephone: (612) 235-1251

Email: kristine.maurer@hennepin.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: We will implement a vision to protect, connect, and manage natural systems through a collaboratively sourced interactive mapping mechanism, centralized clearinghouse for data and best practices, and strategic training program.

ENRTF Funds Requested: $250,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)
    Secondary Category: Methods to Protect or Restore 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.

Within Hennepin County, natural areas are rapidly declining as land development pressure increases. By 2040, the Metropolitan Council estimates open space in the county to decline by 14,000 acres.

Protecting and connecting natural resources requires a suite of tools and data that is up-to-date, flexible to a variety of land-use and planning scenarios, and readily accessible. This is not currently the case for decision-makers across the county.

During initial research, we learned:

- Less than half of the 45 cities in Hennepin have locally specific natural resource data,
- Most organizations rely on the same publicly available or outdated datasets,
- Communities experiencing the most development pressure have the least planning and management capacity,
- There is broad need for tools, maps, and data to assist with natural resources planning.

Localizing existing map data requires engagement of natural resource professionals, residents, and decision-makers. We will provide expertise in GIS mapping, communications and facilitation of workshops, and a publicly available repository to house the data.

We see the need for this implementation ahead of the 2050 comprehensive plan cycle. If this problem is not addressed, our cities will be left without the resources to address threats to remaining natural resources.

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.

To address gaps in local data and natural resource planning expertise, we will develop a publicly available interactive map of natural systems, create a centralized clearinghouse of data and best practices, and provide documentation and ongoing technical assistance.

We are currently mapping locations of natural significance through engagement with stakeholders across the county. This new data will be merged with existing public GIS data to develop a map that is interactive, readily accessible, and regularly maintained. The interactive map will help decision-makers prioritize projects and preserve land as they navigate development pressure. Hennepin County, as the local soil and water conservation district, is uniquely positioned to facilitate this through existing trusted relationships.

The centralized clearinghouse and best practices toolkit will support the interactive map by keeping data updated, maintained, organized, and relevant. We will develop training resources, communications materials, and workshops to support stakeholders as they use this tool for the upcoming 2050 comprehensive planning cycle.

Our streamlined approach will help local communities better prioritize natural resources in planning documents, decision making, and implementation. This work addresses preservation of natural resources and concurrent gaps in data related to climate change, water quality, critical habitat, flood storage areas, and more.

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?

This project will guide long-term planning and development by improving natural resources outcomes through an interactive mapping tool, shared and accessible natural resources data, and user-friendly tools and resources. Our goal is to increase preservation, connection, and access to nature through a unified, deliberate county-wide vision to protect,

restore, and manage natural resources. This work will streamline planning efforts, remove inefficiencies in implementation, foster consensus, and spur innovation across stakeholders and geographic boundaries. In providing data-driven collaboration opportunities, we will improve local decision-making capacity to address complex challenges of climate mitigation and adaptation, clean water, tree canopy, and habitat.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Interactive Map of Natural Systems for Planning, Management, and Prioritization in Land Use Decision-Making

Activity Budget: $100,000

Activity Description:
We will develop an interactive, web-based map to aid stakeholders in comprehensive and development planning, prioritization, and natural resources protection, restoration, enhancement, and management efforts. Through surveys and workshops, we will collaborate with local jurisdictions to identify specific locations of natural significance that are not captured in existing publicly available datasets.

The map developed from this data will be available to the public. We will build broad awareness of the locations and state of our natural resources, provide data that is consistent and updated, and increase efficient coordination across jurisdictional boundaries. This will provide the basis for a shared natural resources vision across Hennepin County.

Our partnership has already begun the engagement process to collect map data of local sites of importance. Combining this new data with existing public data from resources such as the Minnesota Geospatial Commons, our project will:

- Ensure natural resources are considered consistently in development and comprehensive planning by providing readily available natural resources data,
- Classify natural resources importance based on priorities (climate resiliency, water quality, cultural value, etc.),
- Identify areas with high restoration potential or ecological connectivity value,
- Ease burden of local entities to understand and prioritize natural resource actions.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Collect locally specific geospatial data from experts, the public, and relevant stakeholders across Hennepin County	September 30, 2025
Draft an interactive online map combining existing public and private data with newly collected data	December 31, 2025
Solicit feedback from relevant stakeholders.	March 31, 2026
Release final tool to a publicly accessible website, with accompanying documentation for ease of use.	November 30, 2026
Provide opportunities for iterative feedback and implement updates to the map as needed.	June 30, 2027

Activity 2: Create a Centralized Data and Toolkit Clearinghouse to support the use of the tool across a range of expertise

Activity Budget: $150,000

Activity Description:
On the same publicly available website as the interactive map, we will build a centralized data clearinghouse. We will make regular updates to the geospatial data, organize and maintain the host website, and dedicate staff to assisting local stakeholders with integrating the map with their existing natural resource data.

A toolkit will address challenges and information needs of natural resource professionals, decision-makers, landowners, and other stakeholders. We will develop a suite of resources that meet the needs of individuals with different levels of expertise. This will include guiding documents, best practices, fact sheets, issue briefs, inventory templates, calculators and other planning and decision aids.

The toolkit will also include case studies illustrating how the data and mapping application can be used by cities of varying sizes in their comprehensive planning. This will enhance natural resources planning efforts and align natural resource goals across jurisdictional boundaries.

We will provide ongoing training, technical assistance, and support for stakeholders to integrate the map, data, and best practices into everyday operations. Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District are uniquely positioned to support local jurisdictions due to our ongoing engagement with residents, partners, and systems that influence natural resource decisions in the county.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Launch website to house geospatial data. Identify support staff to collect and clean new data.	December 31, 2025
Create an engagement strategy and roll-out plan for the toolkit	March 31, 2026
Release clearinghouse and toolkit – including informational documentation, one-pagers, and best practices for use.	November 30, 2026
Host trainings and workshops to build awareness about the tool and how it can be used.	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Karen Galles	Hennepin County	Vision, Planning, Oversight, Engagement and Feedback	No
Jami Markle	Three Rivers Park District	Vision, Planning, Oversight, Engagement and Feedback	No
Kelly Grissman	Three Rivers Park District	Vision, Planning, Oversight, Engagement and Feedback	No
Bryan Runck	University of Minnesota	Planning, Oversight, Technology Execution Management, Convening	Yes
Audrey Robeson	Hennepin County/ University of Minnesota	Planning, Engagement and Feedback, Technology Execution Management, Convening, Project Management	Yes
Research Assistant 1	University of Minnesota	Technology Execution Management	Yes
Research Assistant 2	University of Minnesota	Technology Execution Management	Yes

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?
Prior to the start of this LCCMR request, our coalition committed $120,000 to support initial engagement with local stakeholders and geospatial mapping. The funding from LCCMR will support further engagement, an interactive map of this data, and staff capacity to create the clearinghouse and toolkit. We anticipate a match of $100,000 from project partners, if awarded LCCMR support. This match and ongoing resources from project partners will help support staffing, long-term data maintenance needs, costs associated with web hosting, and stakeholder training and engagement.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Kristine Maurer

Job Title: Land and Water Supervisor

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.
Kristine is a Land and Water Supervisor at Hennepin County and program manager of the Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program which facilitates land and water protection through conservation easements and improves habitat on permanently protect natural areas. She also manages several grants, leads database and application development, oversees design and implementation of biological monitoring efforts, develops strategic plans and organizational structures, is active in cross-organizational collaboration groups, and participates in a variety of inter-agency working groups focused on data and application improvement. Kristine is also active in helping landowners meet their conservation goals through a variety of conservation programs and development of outreach and educational materials. Kristine holds Co-master's degrees in Natural Resource Ecology and Environmental Science from Iowa State University and a Biology degree from the University of St. Thomas. Kristine has 10 years of experience in the natural resources sector across private, public, and nonprofit sectors and is knowledgeable in terrestrial and aquatic plant and wildlife identification and natural history of the upper Midwest, is a published expert with skills in research design and implementation, local, state, and federal environmental compliance and permitting, GIS mapping and modeling, and data management and statistical analysis.

Organization: Hennepin County

Organization Description:
Hennepin County is home to nearly 1.2 million people (more than 22 percent of the state population), covering 45 cities and 611 square miles. It is the largest unit of government in the state of Minnesota.

The county, operating under the authority of the state of Minnesota, is responsible for such functions as social and health services, library services, road building and maintenance, registration of deeds and titles, tax collection, election supervision, licensing, and law enforcement.

Hennepin County also serves as the county Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). As the SWCD, Hennepin County strives to protect and enhance the quality of natural habitats, soil, and water resources for current and future generations.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	$ Amount
Personnel								
Grant and Project Manager		This position will coordinate across project staff and partner organizations, perform reporting functions, track progress on milestones, and manage the full lifecycle of the project			62.09%	1		$80,000
Toolkit Coordinator		This position will work with the data staff and project manager to facilitate the development of toolkit content.			62.09%	1		$69,850
							Sub Total	**$149,850**
Contracts and Services								
University of Minnesota	Sub award	0.74 FTE graduate students (Activities 1 - data maintenance, app/map development, Activity 2 support) for the duration of the project with stipend and tuition benefit. This team will be overseen by .1 UMN co-PI.				0.84		$100,000
							Sub Total	**$100,000**
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								
	Printing	$0.30 per page, estimated total number of pages: 500. Materials for distribution across workshops and facilitated meetings	To provide information and documentation for individuals to learn about the project and share with interested stakeholders					$150
							Sub Total	$150
Other Expenses								
-							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	$250,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

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

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
-			**State Sub Total**	-
Non-State				
Cash	Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District	Pre-application support from coalition partners - Initial engagement and development of geospatial maps	Secured	$120,000
In-Kind	Hennepin County	Anticipated Staff Leverage - Project Supervision and Oversight	Secured	$28,000
Cash	Hennepin County and Three Rivers Park District	Contracting for data	Pending	$100,000
			Non State Sub Total	**$248,000**
			Funds Total	**$248,000**

Total Project Cost: $498,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments
Visual Component
File: 55e4dbf7-2ac.pdf

Alternate Text for Visual Component
Concept graphic of layered datasets to create a full picture of natural resources in Hennepin County. We will combine local expert knowledge with publicly available datasets to create an interactive map of the county. Layers can be toggled and will include land use, water, tree cover, climate vulnerability, and more....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Most Recent Audit Report	d8cb4b0d-ae8.pdf
Current financial statements	917a961a-616.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Authorization for proposal submission	3c749ff6-e38.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support - Metropolitan Council	8e185379-c24.pdf
Letter of Support - Minnetonka	c6d85550-8d8.pdf
Letter of Support - MWMO	1fed4e6d-999.pdf
Letter of Support - NMCWD	466fb42f-d71.pdf
Letter of Support - City of Dayton	299877cc-073.pdf
Letter of Support - Greenfield	6d6d8b24-f62.pdf
Letter of Support - MPRB	7d01bf30-e73.pdf
Letter of Support - MCWD	eb8c31fb-244.pdf
MCWD Support Letter	63e8fe13-894.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?
> No

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?

    No

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:

    Audrey Robeson (Hennepin County, University of Minnesota)

Bryan Runck (University of Minnesota)

Karen Galles (Hennepin County)

Jami Markle (Three Rivers Park District)

Kelly Grissman (Three Rivers Park District)