



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-085

Proposal Title: Prairie Oaks: Establishing Minnesota's Center for Pollinator Conservation

Project Manager Information

Name: Wendy Caldwell

Organization: Monarch Joint Venture

Office Telephone: (612) 208-3741

Email: wcaldwell@monarchjointventure.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Our project will establish MJV's public-facing work at Prairie Oaks, inaugurating this campus as Minnesota's center for pollinator conservation. Activities include habitat demonstration sites, educational workshops, and a walking trail.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$173,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

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.

The Monarch Joint Venture (MJV) has advanced partnerships and conservation action for monarchs and pollinators in the Twin Cities areas since 2008; however, there is no established physical home for pollinator conservation efforts in the state and opportunities for on-the-ground learning, demonstration sites, and in-person connections across the urban-to-rural gradient are limited. Without such opportunities, we are neglecting key audiences and are missing out on potential widespread conservation benefits.

In January of 2024, the MJV acquired the gift of Prairie Oaks, a 20-acre farm and nature center campus nestled within the city limits of Belle Plaine, MN. The Prairie Oaks campus will provide natural opportunities for interested parties to meet, plan, demonstrate monarch habitat and research, offer workshops and trainings, and engage a wide variety of audiences in educational programming. Establishing the MJV's headquarters at Prairie Oaks will create Minnesota's very own center for pollinator conservation and advance positive environmental outcomes across the state.

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.

This proposal seeks to establish MJV's public-facing work at Prairie Oaks as we inaugurate this campus as Minnesota's center for pollinator conservation through three main activities.

Activity one is the planning and development of five habitat demonstration sites of various sizes and styles. This will include a container garden, schoolyard garden, rain garden, bee lawn, and restored prairie.

Activity two is a series of eight free pollinator conservation workshops hosted at the Prairie Oaks Campus. Participants will include Minnesota educators, local landowners from the surrounding agricultural community, and members of the public interested in pollinator gardening and monarch community science.

Activity three is the design and development of an interpretive, self-guided walking trail through the campus that visits each habitat demonstration site. Sites will feature an interpretive sign with information about the habitat, how to install a similar project, and QR codes with links to further free resources.

Essential to the smooth coordination and management of this project and public engagement at Prairie Oaks is the addition of a Prairie Oaks Site Coordinator. This would be a new full time staff member of MJV. Two years of salary for this position is also included in our proposal.

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?

5 habitat demonstration sites installed, totaling 2.5-3.5 acres of high quality pollinator habitat; improved pollinator habitat management on 20 acres.

At least 1 established Monarch Larva Monitoring Project site for long-term monitoring data.

8 workshops, averaging 20-30 participants at each; 160-240 people reached through training events.

Increased conservation stewardship implemented by Belle Plaine and surrounding areas through volunteer opportunities, student participation, local organization engagement, habitat implementation, and other community events.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Establishing habitat demonstration sites

Activity Budget: \$70,228

Activity Description:

The Site Coordinator and Habitat Manager will select sites throughout the Prairie Oaks campus that will be developed and maintained as habitat demonstration areas for educational purposes. These sites will include:

- A container garden to demonstrate small-scale and apartment-friendly habitat
- A small pollinator garden that can be used as a schoolyard garden example and as a Monarch Larva Monitoring Project site
- A rain garden to demonstrate multiple benefits of pollinator habitat
- A bee lawn to demonstrate alternatives to manicured lawns and encourage participation in the Lawns to Legumes program
- A larger prairie to demonstrate how agricultural land can be transformed into pollinator habitat.

The different habitat areas will be implemented by MJV’s local staff in collaboration with various community volunteers and organizations. For example:

- Members of the public will work with MJV staff to plant the container garden as a part of free public workshops
- Educators participating in our professional development workshops will receive hands-on experience implementing a schoolyard garden
- We will collaborate with Metro Blooms to implement the rain garden as a part of a public workshops
- The prairie site will be planted in collaboration with local organizations and volunteers

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Select Sites	September 30, 2025
MJV Staff Prepare All Sites for Planting	October 31, 2025
MJV Staff Prepare and Plant Bee Lawn Site (Lawns to Legumes example)	October 31, 2025
Establish Container Garden with Workshop Participants	June 30, 2026
Plant Schoolyard Garden with Educator Professional Development Workshop Participants	June 30, 2026
MJV and Metro Blooms Staff Prepare Rain Garden Site	July 31, 2026
Plant Rain Garden with Workshop Attendees	August 31, 2026
Plant Prairie Habitat with Local Volunteers	October 31, 2026

Activity 2: Pollinator Conservation Workshops

Activity Budget: \$84,118

Activity Description:

The MJV will offer 8 free workshops to relevant stakeholders and the public, serving as an example of the programming we plan to continue hosting at Prairie Oaks into the future. Workshops will include the following:

Two full-day Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) training workshops and two half-day community science participatory events (tagging and oe testing/parasite sampling) for community members interested in community science.

One half-day container gardening workshop. Community members who live in apartment buildings or have limited outdoor space will be especially encouraged to participate as they learn how anyone can support pollinator habitat.

One 3-day teacher professional development workshop for Minnesota educators. Our long-standing workshop model promotes a standards- and inquiry-based approach to science, in which participants learn to utilize schoolyard habitats and outdoor spaces as a learning environment with their students. During the workshop, educators will have the unique opportunity to apply their new skills and knowledge by helping plant a small pollinator garden.

One partial-day sustainable agriculture habitat demonstration workshop taught in collaboration with local farmers and habitat practitioners will engage the local agricultural community in pollinator habitat projects.

One full-day rain garden demonstration and planting workshop in collaboration with MJV partner Metro Blooms.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Community Science Event #1	September 30, 2025
Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) Workshop #1	May 31, 2026
Container Gardening Workshop	June 30, 2026
Educator Professional Development Workshop	June 30, 2026
Sustainable Ag Demonstration Workshop	July 31, 2026
Rain Garden Workshop	August 31, 2026
Community Science Event #2	September 30, 2026
Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) Workshop #2	May 31, 2027

Activity 3: Implementing an Interpretive Walking Trail

Activity Budget: \$18,654

Activity Description:

As the demonstration habitats are established, our Site Coordinator will design a self-guided interpretive walking trail throughout the property. The trail will allow visitors to explore the nature campus and engage with all of the demonstration sites. Each habitat site will include interpretive signage and QR codes that link to more resources including free how-to guides that can be downloaded from MJV’s website. Additional signs will be included throughout the meandering trail with general information about monarchs, pollinators, and the important role these practices can play in protecting Minnesota's natural resources and water quality. The site coordinator will work with volunteers and local organizations from the surrounding community to help implement the trail. We envision basic groomed trails that are either grassed/mowed, mulched, or cleared dirt trails.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Map the trail’s path through the site	September 30, 2025
Work with volunteers to establish the trail	September 30, 2026
Design and install interpretive signs	May 31, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Laura Scholl	Metro Blooms	As Executive Director, Laura coordinates Metro Blooms' collaboration on the Prairie Oaks campus, in particular, the design and implementation of a rain garden and demonstration workshop. Metro Blooms is an official partner of the Monarch Joint Venture.	Yes
Dan Shaw	MN Board of Soil and Water Resources	As Senior Ecologist/Vegetation Specialist, Dan collaborates with MJV staff so we can champion Lawns to Legumes at the Prairie Oaks campus.	No
Cynthia Smith Strack	City of Belle Plaine	As Community Development Director, Cynthia champions MJV's work in Belle Plaine and makes connections to local organizations, schools, youth groups, and volunteers for active community engagement at the Prairie Oaks campus.	No

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 entirety of this project will be managed by the new Prairie Oaks Site Coordinator with support from MJV habitat and education staff. Metro Blooms staff will also be contracted to lead the rain garden demonstration workshop. Workshop participants and local volunteers will work with staff to implement the habitat sites and interpretive walking trail. The ongoing maintenance of the installed pollinator habitats will be managed by the site coordinator. Continued funding for the site will be sought through additional grant sources, private donations, and future program registration fees.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Wendy Caldwell

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Caldwell brings fifteen years of professional experience in monarch conservation. While pursuing environmental science and entomology at the University of Minnesota, she worked as a coordinator for several initiatives at the University's Monarch Lab. In 2013, she became the coordinator of the national Monarch Joint Venture partnership based at the University. In this role, she successfully grew the partnership from 30 organizations nationwide to over 130 today, and increased staff capacity for the program from one half-time position to 22 full-time employees, and 8 seasonal/part-time positions. From 2017-2019, she led the MJV through a period of growth and transition and facilitated the extraction of the program from the University to become a standalone nonprofit. Caldwell led the transition from the University while managing staff to maintain program operations as usual, and while simultaneously setting up the 501c3 nonprofit. In directing the efforts of the MJV and its staff, she has a rich history with building relationships and driving collaboration with many different stakeholders in Minnesota and across the country. Growing up on a farm in west central Minnesota, she also brings a history and understanding of Minnesota's landscape and farming culture, an important aspect in building diverse partnership and collaboration across the state. A well-balanced career of partnership building, coordination and facilitation, research, education, habitat development, and administration makes Caldwell an ideal manager to lead this effort. Caldwell will hire and oversee the new Prairie Oaks Site Coordinator to ensure this project's success.

Organization: Monarch Joint Venture

Organization Description:

Since 2009, MJV has led a nationwide network of organizations committed to monarch and pollinator conservation. This

diverse partnership includes government agencies, NGOs, businesses, and academic institutions that implement science-based conservation actions through education, habitat conservation, science and monitoring, and collaboration. As the leading authority for monarch conservation in the U.S., MJV maintains a Monarch Conservation Implementation Framework, which serves as a guide to conservation planning for stakeholders nationally. Extending beyond the benefits to monarch butterflies, the MJV's mission includes leveraging the charisma of the monarch butterfly to build collaboration and bring together efforts to address a variety of environmental concerns through grassland conservation.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Prairie Oaks Site Coordinator		Coordinates all activities at the Prairie Oaks Campus, including workshops, habitat development and maintenance, and volunteer days			26%	2		\$131,040
Habitat Manager		Supports the Site Coordinator in habitat site selection and implementation of the prairie and bee lawn habitat projects			26%	0.08		\$6,300
Education Manager		Leads the education workshop, MLMP workshops (2), and community science events (2)			26%	0.08		\$6,300
Outreach Coordinator		Supports MLMP workshops (2), community science events (2), and coordinates volunteers for interpretive trail development			26%	0.1		\$6,300
Education Specialist		Supports the education workshop, MLMP workshops (2), and community science events (2)			10%	0.08		\$4,400
Communications Coordinator		Designs the interpretive signs			26%	0.04		\$2,520
							Sub Total	\$156,860
Contracts and Services								
Metro Blooms	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Rain Garden Design, Preparation, Implementation, and Workshop				0		\$6,575
							Sub Total	\$6,575
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Seed mix and plant materials	For 2-acre prairie habitat project (site prep, planting, and 1st year maintenance)					\$900
	Tools and Supplies	Seed mix and plant materials	For 1-acre Bee Lawn project (site prep and planting)					\$400
	Tools and Supplies	500 milkweed and nectar plant plugs	For schoolyard garden project					\$950

	Tools and Supplies	10 straw bales	For schoolyard garden project					\$50
	Tools and Supplies	10 planting containers / pots	For container garden					\$500
	Tools and Supplies	25 nectar plant plugs	For container garden					\$250
	Tools and Supplies	10 gardening gloves, 5 trowels, 2 shovels, 3 watering cans	For garden projects with volunteers					\$206
	Tools and Supplies	1 digital microscope	For community science events					\$200
	Tools and Supplies	2 sets of 200 tagging and oe testing kits (1 set per workshop)	For community science workshops					\$100
	Tools and Supplies	30 copies of the "Monarchs and More" curriculum guides	For education workshop					\$1,050
	Tools and Supplies	5 large interpretive signs and stands	For the interpretive walking trail					\$1,750
	Tools and Supplies	200 bags of mulch	For walking trail creation and maintenance					\$700
	Equipment	1 chainsaw, 1 brush cutter/weed wacker, 2 shears/pruners	For walking trail creation and maintenance					\$580
							Sub Total	\$7,636
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage reimbursement at the current IRS rate of \$0.67/mile, 440 miles per year	For 2 Prairie Oaks site visits from MJV's Habitat Manager (based in Dent, MN)					\$590
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	6 nights of lodging at \$107/nights	Lodging for Habitat Manager while visiting Prairie Oaks, 2 3-night visits per year					\$642
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Standard MN per diem rate of \$59/day for 8 days	Per diem (meals and incidentals) for Habitat Manager during Prairie Oaks site visits					\$472

							Sub Total	\$1,704
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	750 pages at \$0.30/page	Workshops resources including agendas, MLMP data sheets, handouts, etc.					\$225
							Sub Total	\$225
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$173,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$173,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [bae1744d-797.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

An aerial view of the 20-acre Prairie Oaks campus shows a draft site plan mapping out the locations for habitat demonstration areas and the interpretive walking trail...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2022 990 Monarch Joint Venture	4b3eb459-748.pdf
2022 Financial Audit Monarch Joint Venture	14fc368a-a15.pdf
Certificate of Good Standing for Monarch Joint Venture	56e1c606-df1.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Monarch Joint Venture Board Letter	6f8305e7-244.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support from the City of Belle Plaine	0143d6e6-e87.pdf
Letter of Support from Metro Blooms	fafc55f1-eb3.pdf
Letter of Support from Dr. Karen Oberhauser	863964c4-565.pdf
Letter of Support from United States Forest Service International Programs	2a14ded8-5ef.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:

The following Monarch Joint Venture staff assisted in the completion of this proposal: Wendy Caldwell, Christine Sanderson, Jacob Koenig

