



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-091

Proposal Title: PLSS Preservation to Protect Public Lands

Project Manager Information

Name: Kory Thurnau

Organization: Minnesota IT Services - Minnesota Geospatial Information Office (MnGeo)

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Provide funding to Minnesota Counties to perpetuate the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). This funding, if awarded, would focus on PLSS preservation projects that benefit public land management.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$5,464,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

LCCMR Funding Category: Foundational Natural Resource Data and Information (A)

Project Location

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

Statewide

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 PLSS is the foundation of landownership in Minnesota. Rural counties have conflicting characteristics of vast and remote areas, significant public lands vs. limited tax base and low population. Because of limited funding counties have not been able to maintain the PLSS adequately. This neglect results in ambiguity when private individuals and public land managers need to make management decisions. This situation is further complicated by the fragmented public vs. private land estates in these counties.

Because of the lack of known PLSS corners, surveys to protect both private and public land rights are 10-15 times more expensive in rural counties. Many times these prohibitive survey costs mean critical boundary surveys are not completed. This has resulted in trespasses on private lands; as well as private landowners unauthorized use of adjoining public lands.

Many public land management agencies such as the DNR use Land Record Systems (LRS) which inventories and spatially depicts the states land interest to the "40" or quarter-quarter level of a section. So, spatially accurate PLSS information is critical for planning. The accuracy is particularly needed for emergency management situations like wildland fire response.

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.

Leveraging MnGeo's established PLSS Monument Grant Program we would make funding available to Minnesota counties to restore, maintain, and or update PLSS corners in areas with significant public lands.

Counties will use grant funding to hire licensed land surveyors to perform PLSS restoration work.

In turn the data derived from this work will be used to update and improve the accuracy of foundational geospatial datasets used to analyze and conserve natural resources and result in improved confidence in land stewardship.

To facilitate this outcome we will develop a statewide public PLSS point dataset that will be available for facilitating vertical integration of land ownership data.

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?

An increase in certified and spatially attributed PLSS corners will increase the spatial accuracy of foundational land ownership datasets allowing for accurate and critical resource management. An increase in known PLSS positions will allow for the alignment and update of county boundary and state boundary datasets and layers. Future land surveys to determine private and public boundaries will be more cost effective. This will protect the private and public land estate. Further more emergency response, particularly wildland fire response, will be improved and ensure appropriate resources are allocated to emergencies.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Develop a Request For Proposal (RFP) and Grant Process

Activity Budget: \$2,607,000

Activity Description:

Leveraging currently developed PLSS Monument Grant Program, the PLSS Preservation Committee of the Geospatial Advisory Council (GAC) will develop RFPs for projects to restore, maintain, and or update PLSS corners in areas with significant public lands managed for natural resources, conservation, and tourism.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
RFP Completed	September 30, 2025
Develop Grant Process in GLM	October 31, 2025
Advertise and Outreach RFP	January 31, 2026
Advertise and Outreach Second RFP	January 31, 2026
Second RFP Completed	September 30, 2026
Second Grant Process in GLM Developed	October 31, 2026
Third RFP Completed	September 30, 2027
Third Grant Process in GLM Developed	October 31, 2027
Advertise and Outreach Third RFP	January 31, 2028

Activity 2: Administer LCCMR funded PLSS Grant Program

Activity Budget: \$2,607,000

Activity Description:

Utilizing the PLSS Monument Grant Program process we will award grants to counties to address PLSS restoration needs in areas with significant public lands. We will incorporate and use workflows that have been developed for our statewide PLSS grants.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Award First Round of Grants	February 28, 2026
Award Second Round of Grants	February 28, 2027
Award Third Round of Grants	February 28, 2028
Monitor and then Closeout First Round of Grants	March 31, 2028
Monitor and then Closeout Second Round of Grants	March 31, 2029
Monitor and Closeout Third Round of Grants	March 31, 2030
Closeout and Report to LCCMR	June 30, 2030

Activity 3: Statewide PLSS Dataset and Web Application

Activity Budget: \$250,000

Activity Description:

MnGeo will utilize its geospatial expertise to develop a plan and framework for generating a statewide PLSS Point Data Standard and Dataset. This data will be available for incorporation into foundational geospatial datasets. This in turn will provide consistency and confidence in PLSS spatial data statewide.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop and Adopt PLSS Point Standard	June 30, 2025
Harvest County PLSS Data	March 31, 2026
Convert County PLSS Data to PLSS Standard	September 30, 2026
Use County Derived Data to Compile Statewide PLSS Dataset	September 30, 2027
Develop Interactive Web Application of Statewide PLSS Data	June 30, 2030

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?

After incorporation into foundational geospatial datasets this data will provide an exponential increase in land information accuracy and provide effective management.

The Minnesota Association of County Surveyors (MACS) has estimated there is a need for \$350 million to complete PLSS remonumentation statewide. During the last legislative session a one time \$9.7 million was appropriated for establishing a PLSS Monument Grant. Based on letters of intent (LOI) received from counties they indicate an ongoing need of \$13.5 million annually statewide. The land surveying and GIS community continue to pursue permanent funding of the PLSS Monument Grant Program through legislation.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Kory Thurnau

Job Title: Survey Coordinator

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

Kory Thurnau is MnGeo's Survey Coordinator and oversees the Minnesota Public Land Survey System (PLSS) Monument Grant Program. He started his land surveying career as a technician in 2003. Since that time, he has gained experience practicing in both the private and federal land management sectors. His experience includes twelve years of providing boundary support to protect critical habitat and natural resources. Kory maintains surveying licenses in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and is a Certified Federal Surveyor (CfedS). He has had the opportunity to do "field-to-finish" survey work in just about every corner of Minnesota and seven other Midwest states. He values known, accurate, and accessible geospatial information.

Organization: Minnesota IT Services - Minnesota Geospatial Information Office (MnGeo)

Organization Description:

MnGeo, through the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council and its committees, leverages the talents and passion of the state's geospatial community to forge policies, create standards, and ensure that our state maximizes its potential in using GIS to solve problems.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
MnGeo Survey Coordinator		PLSS Monument Grant Administrator			20%	1	X	\$164,000
							Sub Total	\$164,000
Contracts and Services								
MnGeo or Consultant	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Develop Standardized Statewide PLSS Dataset				5		\$250,000
							Sub Total	\$250,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	6-8 annually over 5 year period	Grant Administration, outreach, and inspections.					\$50,000
							Sub Total	\$50,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Grants to Minnesota County Governments	Funding for Professional Land Survey Contracts to Restore and Perpetuate the PLSS					\$5,000,000
							Sub Total	\$5,000,000
							Grand Total	\$5,464,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Personnel - MnGeo Survey Coordinator		PLSS Monument Grant Administrator	Classified : A current one-time appropriation partially funds the MnGeo Survey Coordinator position to administer PLSS Monument Grants. This funding request would be to administer the LCCMR funded grants.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$5,464,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [c00ecc29-303.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

PLSS Monument Grant Request Summary...

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:

Alison Slaats (GIO), MNIT-Geospatial Information Office(MnGeo)