Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-114

Proposal Title: RTA Maintenance Trail Stabilization Project

Project Manager Information

Name: Karli Wittner

Organization: City of Eden Prairie - Parks and Natural Resources Department

Office Telephone: (952) 949-8463

Email: kwittner@edenprairie.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Retaining wall construction along the maintenance trail at Richard T. Anderson Conservation Area (RTA) to mitigate ongoing erosion, to restore adjacent remnant prairie, and protect native habitat & plant communities.

ENRTF Funds Requested: $500,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Land Acquisition, Habitat, and Recreation (G)

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.

RTA is a conservation area protecting remnant bluff prairies and big woods forest in the Minnesota River Valley. Consisting of steep slopes, primarily of sandy soils that are highly erodible and sensitive to disturbance, particularly from upslope developments that alter stormwater drainage patterns. The main trail entrance leads visitors along the only paved trail that connects to the secondary parking area and is also utilized as a maintenance trail. The trail, a previous farm road, interrupts the natural slope causing seepages that create significant erosion undercutting. The impending threat of a hillside collapse will negatively impact critical habitat, safety of visitors, and access for maintenance. This project seeks to utilize long-term stabilization methods by using a constructed retaining wall and restoring a degraded remnant prairie.

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.

The remedy to the erosion issue will be two-fold. First, a 700’ long retaining wall averaging 8' in height will be constructed to shore up the hillside and regrade above the wall to redirect subsurface flows to a stormwater pond, before entering the nearby stream. The retaining wall will be designed to have minimal impact on the desirable existing ecosystem through prioritizing wall placement at the expense of trail space ahead of natural habitat space. Additionally, strategies include the use of soil from the site, protecting significant trees as reasonable, and installing biodegradable and wildlife friendly erosion control systems. Second, setback from the retaining wall is degraded remnant prairie overtaken by red cedars. Removal of the red cedars and return of the native prairie plants will aid in stabilizing the sandy soils and intercept subsurface flow via the deep root structure. Utilizing both solutions will provide long-term stabilization, while protecting critical habitat, providing safe access for visitors, and access for maintenance.

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?

As a designated conservation area, the purpose behind protecting RTA is first and foremost to preserve remnant ecosystems. After consulting with engineering firms, a retaining wall is the solution that will have the least amount of impact, while protecting sensitive upslope communities. If the erosion is not addressed ecosystems may be irreparably damaged with soil and seed bank loss. By including the restorations of the adjacent remnant plant communities this project aligns with the City’s commitment to protect the natural resources found in RTA.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Development of engineering plans and specifications for retaining wall

Activity Budget: $1

Activity Description:
Pre-design collaboration efforts are underway with the selected engineering firm, Stantec. The current steps taken to begin developing the project is a site evaluation, topographic survey, tree inventory, locating utilities, obtain historical data, and other site features that may be impacted by the work. The next steps are to identify extent of erosion, finalize project budget, design of retaining wall, evaluate construction impact to natural area, and proactively limit scope creep. Ongoing discussions will continue regarding potential solutions to achieve project goals and overall viability and longevity of the selected course of action for the projects return on investment. Collaboration remains ongoing during the development of plans and specifications through the development of 60% plans and specifications as well as 100% plans and specifications. When plans and specifications reach 100%, we post legal notice through publication in the local newspaper and progress through the sealed bid process.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pre-design collaboration	January 31, 2024
Development of 60%, ongoing project collaboration, and approval of draft plans	May 31, 2024
100% construction documents complete, Department of Administration pre-design review, approval of final plans	September 30, 2024
Environmental Review (EAW), DOA design review, SHPO, other permitting review and plan approvals	January 31, 2025
Funding Secured, advertisement for bid, and contractor selection	March 31, 2025

Activity 2: Project implementation & management of retaining wall

Activity Budget: $424,999

Activity Description:
A preconstruction meeting will be held to go over the plans and specifications, discuss the scope of work, and collaborate strategies for successful implementation. No contractor is authorized to break ground until a pre-construction meeting has been held. This meeting will cover existing conditions, fixed assets, or other site features that must be saved and protected and steps to ensure proper protection is put in place. During site preparation ahead of construction desirable native plant species will be transplanted to another location. These will be cared for and replanted during the restoration phase. This will be followed by demolition and removals. Once the area is prepared grade staking will be completed, excavation will commence, and subgrade material will be installed. Following this, construction of the retaining wall, hydrostatic relief system, and rough grading will be done.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pre-construction meeting, set benchmark control points, hold public facing Open House on site.	May 31, 2025
Plant rescue	July 31, 2025
Demolition and removals	July 31, 2025
Grade staking, excavation, sub-grade preparation	August 31, 2025
Construction of retaining wall, drainage system, trail rehabilitation, and rough grading	October 31, 2025
Final Grading, substantial completion, construction ends	November 30, 2025

Activity 3: Native Prairie Restoration

Activity Budget: $75,000

Activity Description:

Prairie restoration efforts will begin with seed collection from remnant prairie on site and nearby, such as Prairie Bluff Conservation Area, with the inclusion of trained volunteers. After the final grading and installation of biodegradable erosion control methods, a systematic removal of red cedars will begin that minimize interim erosion and allow new root systems to stabilize soils. Supplemental diversity will utilize the seed collected from our existing remnant prairies, to protect local ecotype genetics. Supplemental pocket planting of vegetation that was rescued before construction will be utilized to kickstart the restorations of new areas. Targeted invasive species removal will be careful to avoid damaging native plants. Once established, a prescribed burn will take place to aid in reducing non-native species and increase diversity, which will continue on a 3–5-year cycle in perpetuity. This work will be completed by an ecological restoration company and/or Minnesota Conservation Corps.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Remnant prairie seed collection	October 31, 2025
Final grading installation of biodegradable erosion control	November 30, 2025
Red Cedar removals	February 28, 2026
Prescribed Burn	May 31, 2026
Treatment of invasive species	November 30, 2026
Final inter-seeding of remnant prairie	January 31, 2027
Project Close Out	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Sarah Harding	Stantec	Associate Senior Landscape Architect	No
Jason P Goblirsch	City of Eden Prairie	Parks Construction Supervisor	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 project will utilize private contractors and industry professional services for the development of plans and specifications, site preparation and removals, construction, and habitat restoration activities of this initiative. Project implementation will utilize funding from the City of Eden Prairie Capital Maintenance and Reinvestment Fund. Ongoing repair and maintenance efforts will be performed by full-time and seasonal park maintenance technicians as well as Natural Resources staff. Ongoing maintenance and repair work will be funded by the City of Eden Prairie Parks Department General Maintenance Fund.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Karli Wittner

Job Title: Forestry & Natural Resources Supervisor

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

Karli has a bachelor's degree in Ecology and a master's degree in Land Resources and Environmental Science. Karli has more than 10 years' experience in managing ecological restoration projects. This project is in partnership with Jason Goblirsch, Parks Construction Supervisor, who has been in the construction industry for more than 20 years working as a laborer, foreman, project manager, business owner, and now a supervisor. The vast majority of this time has been spent managing projects small to large in scale. He has an extensive background in landscaping and is well versed in carpentry, and masonry. Jason also has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

Organization: City of Eden Prairie - Parks and Natural Resources Department

Organization Description:

Local Government Unit

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	Construction services for retaining wall installation				0		$425,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Restoration of remnant prairie including red cedar removals, prescribed fire, native plant rescue, and inter-seeding.				0		$75,000
							Sub Total	**$500,000**
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	**$500,000**

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	Capital Improvement Fund	Development of construction plans and specifications under a current contract with Stantec	Secured	$21,924
Cash	Capital Improvement Fund	Cash-match for contracted work for retaining wall installation	Potential	$100,000
Cash	Capital Improvement Fund	Contingency and Inflation	Potential	$153,879
Cash	Capital Improvement Fund	Cash-match for remnant prairie restoration	Potential	$25,000
In-Kind	Administrative Expenses	Project management and close-out	Secured	$20,000
			Non State Sub Total	**$320,803**
			Funds Total	**$320,803**

Total Project Cost: $820,803

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Richard T Anderson Conservation Area	Hennepin	This site includes areas of high-quality remnant bluff and mesic prairie systems that includes special concern species, along with remnant maple-basswood forest.	Restoration	3	-	$100,000	Public		Has Not Begun
Totals				**3**	**0**	**$100,000**			

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.

Richard T Anderson Conservation Area is owned and managed by the City of Eden Prairie. The purchase of this parcel was approved through a referendum in 1994, which permanently protects this parcel primary with the purpose of conserving the natural resources. The parcels where the work will be taking place are Property ID Number: 3011622320001 & 3011622330001 and located at Section 30, Township 116N, and Range 22W.

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.

Shortly after the parcel purchase of the property for Richard T. Anderson (RTA), Barr Engineering and Ingraham & Associates conducted a site analysis for a management plan that the City received in 1999. This plan is kept on file at the City in both hard copy and digital file formats. The management plan outlines the plan for paving the existing central farm road to minimize erosion and allow for "most appropriate method to deal with stormwater runoff". The plan also illustrates the need for a retaining wall along this road to address "current" erosion issues on the north end of the trial. The wall constructed for this purpose is performing well to date. After engaging four engineering firms, on site, to identify best practice methods to address the erosion now occurring on the southern end, each firm had a similar suggestion as the advice given in the 1999 Management Plan.

The development, Settler's Ridge, began construction during the same period as the management plan was being developed. The erosion problems occurring now are more than likely due to the increase of impervious surface on the top of the slope, causing an increase in stormwater that infiltrates at the top, flows diagonally downslope and resurfaces along the trail section increasing erosion and slope failure over the last 25 years. Thus, to continue our restoration efforts (see below) our first step must be to address the erosion issues with a retaining wall to ensure any ecological restoration efforts do not exasperate the problem.

In 2019, the City partnered with Hennepin County with their Hennepin County Habitat Conservation Program Phase 1 funded by LSOHC to remove encroaching woody plants and control invasive species within remnant prairies located at RTA. The management plan for this is kept in both hard copy and digital file formats. One of these prairies is located at the top of the bluff directly upslope from where the retaining wall is to be installed with just over 3 acres restored. This area is separate and will not be impacted by the installation of the retaining wall. There are another 3 acres of remnant prairie near the retaining wall that will need to have woody encroachment addressed. The City has waited to further address the woody encroachment due the steep slopes and erosion problems. Removal of the woody plants at this time would cause further erosion on these steep slopes laden with sandy soils.

After the retaining wall is installed, our management strategy is to continue to restore the remaining portions of the adjacent remnant prairies. These efforts will be documented within our Natural Resources Management GIS software. Previous restoration efforts have shown an intact seed bank. Our first step is to conduct a vegetation survey to gather baseline data on the species diversity and abundance on the site, which will begin this summer. Additionally, we want to protect the genetic diversity of this remnant prairie and will be conducting seed collection on neighboring remnant prairies which will be saved and applied during restoration & enhancement efforts after woody removals and construction processes conclude. Cedars will be removed incrementally down the slope to allow new root establishment over a couple of growing seasons. The cedars that are next in line for the following years removal will have crown raising to allow sunlight to penetrate the edge, which should allow for seed germination. This method will allow for soil stabilization to occur on the steep slopes without clearcutting the entire 3 acres and causing erosion issues. The cedars will be piled and burned during the winter months, due to lack of access. If able, we are going to only burn one pile to reduce burn scars. Cedar logs cut from this project, may also be used as erosion control measures, by being secured with

wood lathes perpendicular to the slope. Invasive species such as leafy spurge, buckthorn, and vetch will be treated through best practices. After 2027, the prairie will be included in the City's rotation for prescribed burns that have been conducted at RTA since 2006. These burns will continue to be a management tool for this parcel into the future.

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.
The restoration efforts will ensure the ecological integrity of the remnant prairie by following the Board of Soil and Water Resources recommendations for Remnant Prairie Restoration. First, this restoration will expand upon a previous 3- acre restoration. This will be done by involving project partners, such as Hennepin County, engaging the community, and conserving the diversity both at the species and genetic level. To accomplish this, we will be conducting vegetation surveys to compare species presence and abundance in the previously restored remnant prairie to the current area in which the proposed work will occur. This will help us to know if we are meeting vegetation goals as the project moves forward. We plan to source remnant prairie seed from neighboring sites on RTA or nearby Prairie Bluff Conservation Area to inter-seed areas that have low diversity. A temporary cover crop from recommended list will be used to help stabilize the steep slopes as cedars are removed and invasive species are treated before seeding. Any invasive species will first be controlled through spot mowing followed by spot spraying with herbicide, as needed, during dormant periods for native species. Herbicide use will only be used in situations where burning and mowing have proven ineffective as control methods for an invasive species. Herbicide for buckthorn will by applied via daubers to prevent overspray. Once all cedars have been removed, prescribed burns will begin, and continue, in a 3–5-year rotation perpetually.

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.
The City of Eden Prairie already has a prescribed fire program and has been burning at RTA since 2006. The City budget will also contain any funding for contracted prescribed fire at RTA if City resources do not have the capacity to complete the burn. The Forestry & Natural Resources staff can manage invasive species within the project area by utilizing best practices. Annual, monitoring of the project site will provide updates on site conditions and guide future management. We utilize an online mapping program that contains survey forms to document all inspections and management efforts performed on site. We will also document efforts within an updated RTA Conservation Area Management Plan that will act as a living document to record restorations activities, plans, and historical records.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.
If available, the Conservation Corps of Minnesota can be contracted to remove red cedars and buckthorn during the winter and pile them for burning. They could also participate in seed collection events as part of their volunteer service hours.

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.
The vegetation survey methodology to be used will be the nested frequency protocols developed by Diane Larson from Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, with surveys occurring on a 3-year cycle. During these surveys we will also document any bare ground or erosion concerns to be addressed, along with yearly inspections of project area. Before the project starts, we will be conducting a vegetation survey, this summer, of the project area as well as an adjacent, and previously restored, remnant prairie to obtain baseline data. After the retaining wall is complete and initial cedar removals take place, another vegetation survey will be conducted as an initial project evaluation to help us understand what invasives are present, how the seed bank is responding to management practices, and how much seed will need to be collected from remnant sites. After three years, following project completion, we will perform another vegetation

survey to determine if diversity goals are being met, and if inter-seeding will need to occur. Annual inspections will use photos from the retaining wall project start date to determine visually if erosion is being reduced.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: 7621ece6-e12.pdf

Alternate Text for Map

An aerial map of the work area with the proposed retaining wall area in red and the restorable remnant prairie in translucent yellow along the paved trail in white....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Annual Comprehensive Financial Review	5683684e-9e1.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
City of Council Resolution	1eee94b6-8de.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Budget Supplements	358eac3d-3b3.xlsx
Capital Project Questionaire	4efaf58a-66e.pdf
SHPO Submission	db4722f1-e49.pdf
Hennepin County Letter of Support	00514e2a-6d7.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

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?

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 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:

City of Eden Prairie: Amy Markle, Karli Wittner, Jason Goblirsch