



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-232

Proposal Title: Restoration at Wakan Tipi/BVNS

Project Manager Information

Name: Gabriele Menomin

Organization: Lower Phalen Creek Project

Office Telephone: (651) 370-2106

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Restoration and management of Wakan Tipi (aka Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary), including invasive species removal, disposal and management, prescription burns, site monitoring and data collection, and native seeding & plantings.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$676,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

LCCMR Funding 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

Narrative

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

Wakan Tipi (aka Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, BVNS), a Dakota sacred site, has seen more than 100 years of neglect and mistreatment after Dakota people were exiled from Minnesota and disconnected as stewards of this place. In 2005 BVNS opened as a public nature sanctuary under a conservation easement with three ponds, a small creek and 6 distinct habitats. However, the stewardship of this site was minimal over the next 20 years and became overrun by invasive species. With strengthened partnerships under Native-led Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi (WTA), a 5-year Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) was developed in 2021. Over the last 3 years, major reductions in invasive species and reestablishment of native plant communities have been accomplished. However, there is continued work needed to maintain and manage invasives, establish native plants in lower quality habitat units on site, and continue to increase biodiversity. As WTA enters into a co-management agreement with the City of St Paul in 2024, a stronger focus on the cultural significance of this sacred site and healing of the land from an indigenous worldview are being incorporated into a NRMP refresh.

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.

Our solutions are outlined in the updated task table as part of the current 5 year NRMP for BVNS, which include the final two years of the management plan tasks, as well as an additional year of invasive species monitoring. One activity we are heavily focusing on is the removal of invasive species through methods such as hand pulling and clipping, mowing, and/or spot spraying as well as disposal of these plant materials, such as burning. Another activity that will take place is native seeding and plantings in targeted sections of lower quality prairie and woodlands. Native seedings and plantings in the woodland area will focus on erosion control of the bluff and hillside as we remove and treat the buckthorn in the area. Invasive species that are being targeted for removal include garlic mustard, buckthorn, sweet clover, crown vetch, burdock, mugwort, Siberian elm, purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, white mulberry, giant ragweed, reed canary grass and smooth brome. Additionally, we will be including more robust methods of monitoring and data collection of the site, both on a professional level and citizen science level through an annual BioBlitz beginning this summer (2024).

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?

Project outcomes include restoring high quality native prairie, savanna, woodland and riparian habitats to 27 acres at BVN, as stated in the 2021 NRMP. We will do this by intensive invasive species management and integrating ecologically and culturally important native plants through plantings and seedings, to meet project goals of supporting local and migratory birds, wildlife and pollinators, erosion control, as well as build towards overall ecosystem resilience health with increase biodiversity and increasing localized carbon sequestration in the face of climate change. Another outcome is building a robust database of species on site.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Annual BioBlitz at Wakan Tipi

Activity Budget: \$18,000

Activity Description:

A citizen science data collection event that is run by professionals in different fields to lead community members through education and data collection for the project site. This data will be conducted annually (starting in June 2024) to compliment professional data collection and research already being done on site. Data collection activities for the annual BioBlitz will include bird counts, aquatic invertebrate surveys, water quality surveys, small mammal and fish surveys, dragonfly surveys, bumblebee, pollinator and integrated monarch monitoring, vegetation surveys and tree canopy analysis. The data collected at this annual event will also be compared to other data collected on site from professional partners such as bird counts, bumblebee surveys, vegetation survey and invasive species monitoring, which are collected by both professional partners as well as WTA staff. Data will be analyzed and compiled at the end of each year too see how different species are responding to the restoration on site and to see what other habitat needs may need to be met to support robust wildlife, vegetation, and pollinator populations.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete 2025 BioBlitz	July 31, 2025
Compile data and compare to first year data	December 31, 2025
Complete 2026 BioBlitz	June 30, 2026
Compile data and compare to first two years of data	December 31, 2026
Complete 2027 BioBlitz	June 30, 2027

Activity 2: Habitat Enhancement at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary with Ecologically and Culturally Significant Plants

Activity Budget: \$142,000

Activity Description:

This project will continue the enhancement of grassland to native prairie and savanna, as well as the degraded woodlands on site to upland hardwood communities. This will be done with strategic invasive species management treatments and prescription burns followed by native seedings and plantings. Invasive species management at the project site includes removal, disposal, and monitoring. Invasive species removal is conducted by both professional contractors who can utilize mowers, herbicide applications, and burn piles for removed materials, as well and WTA-led volunteer events which utilize hand-pulling and clipping methods. Seeding and planting native species is mainly done by WTA-led volunteers as part of our regular programs like BIPOC spring and fall plantings, winter seedings, and indigenous K-12 and youth group site visits. There will be supplemental contractor seedings and plantings as well. Seedings and plantings will happen strategically following invasive species removals, prescription burns and establishment mows. Contractors will also be watering newly planted vegetation on site as well. Native vegetation enhancement will include at least 30 species in both the prairie and savanna and woodland that have both strong ecological and cultural significance.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Prairie planting and seeding	November 30, 2026
Prescription burns	November 30, 2026

Invasive woody removal	July 31, 2027
Woodland planting and seeding (after woody removal)	June 30, 2028
Prairie planting and seeding	June 30, 2028

Activity 3: Staff Time

Activity Budget: \$516,000

Activity Description:

Supporting the new Volunteer Coordinator position. This staff member will be tasked with recruiting for and facilitating volunteer events led by WTA. These events will include anything from invasive species removal, native plantings, native seedings and citizen science events and activities to collect data for site monitoring. Part of the Restoration Manager's position will also be covered. This staff member is tasked with managing the whole restoration project at BVNS and is the point of contact for the project. They will be in charge of supervising restoration activities by volunteers and contractors, as well as supervising data collection by professional partners and community data collection events on site. They will also be tasked with continual monitoring of the site and updating restoration tasks as part of the adaptive management strategy. The Environmental Justice Programs Manager will be in charge of supporting the Restoration Manager in supervision of community programs (restoration activities for volunteers), as well as supporting the Volunteer Coordinator in identifying restoration activities based on the recommendations from the Restoration Manager each year. All three positions are essential in ensuring the restoration work on site is being done within an indigenous world-view and respecting the sacred site.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Volunteer Events - Volunteer Coordinator & EJ Program Manager	November 30, 2025
Site assessment and recommended restoration adjustments - Restoration Manager & EJ Program Manager	November 30, 2026
Volunteer Events - Volunteer Coordinator & EJ Program Manager	November 30, 2026
Volunteer Events - Volunteer Coordinator & EJ Program Manager	November 30, 2027
Site assessment and recommended restoration adjustments - Restoration Manager & EJ Program Manager	June 30, 2028

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?

Ongoing efforts will be funded through increased private and public donors as part of the work of our future Development Director. Findings and results will be implemented in an evaluation of the project site to determine additional restoration work needed. During this 3-year period of restoration work, we will also begin development of a new, long-term comprehensive natural resource and cultural resource management plan for BVNS as part of our co-management agreement with the City of St Paul.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Gabriele Menomin

Job Title: Environmental Restoration

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

Gabby Menomin has two bachelor's degrees, a BA in American Indian Studies and BS in Urban Forestry as well as a master's degree in Tribal Natural Resource Management. She has been coordinating and managing the project site for over a year. Her academic and professional work has focused on both the writing and implementation of natural resource and restoration projects, and overseeing restoration tasks such as invasive species management, seedings and plantings. She has extensive experience collecting and analyzing data and utilizing that data in adaptive management practices. Gabby also has extensive experience on integrating traditional ecological knowledge and traditional indigenous land management practices into more mainstream restoration and land management strategies. She has both ecological, identification and cultural knowledge on many different plant species and understands how best to manage for culturally important species while still meeting ecological needs.

Organization: Lower Phalen Creek Project

Organization Description:

Lower Phalen Creek Project, DBA Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, is a Native-Led, East Side environmental conservation nonprofit. Founded in 1997 by community activists, our project area stretches from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River and throughout the East Side River District. Our work is powered by a dedicated board, staff, and community of volunteers. Our mission is to engage people to honor and care for our natural places and the sacred sites and cultural value within them. We do this work in three program areas, Cultural Connections and Healing, Environmental Education, and Urban Restoration and Conservation. We strive to include indigenous leadership, voices and traditional land management practices into the sites we steward and are dedicated to the ongoing stewardship of the sacred site Wakan Tipi cave and the surrounding land, which is known as Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. Our organization has been part of the ongoing restoration of BVNS since the area gain City parkland status under a conservation easement in 2005. Additionally, our organization will be entering into a co-management agreement with the City of Saint Paul in 2024, as part of our goal to restore indigenous leadership and decision-making into the stewardship of the sacred site.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Stewardship Coordinator		Coordinate volunteer stewardship activities			30%	3		\$234,000
Environmental Restoration Manager		Restoration project management			30%	1.5		\$156,000
Environmental Justice Programs Manager		Developing environmentally just indigenous land management methods			30%	1.2		\$126,000
							Sub Total	\$516,000
Contracts and Services								
MNL corp	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Large scale invasive species removal by mowing, hand pulling or clipping, spot spraying and disposal of plants removed. Prescription burns. Watering newly planted vegetation.				129,999.99		\$130,000
							Sub Total	\$130,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Native plant seeds	Purchase native seeds to increase biodiversity and introduce new native species to lower quality habitats onsite.					\$6,000
	Tools and Supplies	Native plant plugs/trays	Continue to maintain and increase biodiversity as well as add new species to the project site.					\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$12,000
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								
		Annual BioBlitz at Wakan Tipi	Annual professional and citizen science data collection event, to monitor species counts from year to year at the project site for 3 years					\$18,000
							Sub Total	\$18,000
							Grand Total	\$676,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$676,000

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
Wakan Tipi (Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary)	Ramsey	The site is home to a Dakota sacred site known as Wakan Tipi (Carver's Cave). This cave is directly tied to the burial mounds on the bluffs above. The site itself was an important trade and inter-tribal delegation site pre-settlement. Currently, there are prairie, forest, wetland, savanna represented on the site. Habitat conditions will provide essential habitat for local and migratory birds and pollinators, as well as support traditional indigenous medicinal plants and traditional foods.	Restoration	27	-	\$676,000	Public	City of Saint Paul	In Progress
Totals				27	0	\$676,000			

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.

The site is currently under a conservation easement owned by the City of St Paul and is currently public land. The public land stated in this project will remain permanently protected, and therefore, the completed restoration activities will also be protected.

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.

WTA strategically focuses on the continued ecological restoration and broader sacred site management of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. As we take on a stronger leadership role with the management and stewardship of the site through a formalized co-management agreement with the City of Saint Paul (expected to be completed July 2024), we will continue management strategies necessary to build robust and healthy prairie, savanna and upland wood habitats. We expect to see the near completion (aside from a final year of prescribed burns in 2029) of the updated task table that is part of the 2020 natural resource management plan which will support quality prairie, savanna and woodland habitat for pollinators, wildlife, and migratory birds. Additionally, we expect 3 years worth of data collection of species counts on site to support adaptive management practices and build a baseline of data for future management planning beyond this project. The health of these habitats ties directly to the overall health and healing of the sacred site, as well as supporting ecological needs of wildlife, pollinators, and water quality. The partnership with the City of Saint Paul will continue beyond the formalization of the co-management agreement and WTA plans to continue to uphold restoration partnership with Friends of the Mississippi River, Urban Roots, and Mississippi Park Connection to continue restoration programs offered to the public and volunteers. Data collection and site monitoring will continue throughout and beyond the project to support adaptive management strategies on the site. All records will be kept in a secured Google Drive, and certain files, such as data collected and event information with partners, will be shareable upon request. Both the completion of the restoration activities and the data collected over the course of this project will ultimately go into the planning and implementation of a long-term natural and cultural resource management plan for Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

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.

WTA will use and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement on our project sites. Our project incorporates these guidelines in numerous ways, including:

- Sites are selected to be strategic in providing ecological benefits for the landscape in which they are a part
- Sites are selected within identified conservation corridors in order to make landscape connections to decrease habitat fragmentation and create habitat linkages across the landscape
- Restoration efforts will incorporate plant communities appropriate to the sites to provide food and habitat for species in need, particularly pollinators and local and migratory birds
- Restoration efforts will include methods to restore and maintain species diversity, including incorporating prescribed fire, removal of invasive plants that displace native vegetation, and strategic native vegetation plantings and seedings
- Efforts are designed to restore habitat complexes and natural corridors
- Efforts include removal of invasive species
- The project practices adaptive management with its focus on regularly monitoring and assessing restoration methods and outcomes

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.

Following the completion of the restoration we will begin a comprehensive long-term cultural and natural resource management plan of the site, as part of our co-management agreement with the City of Saint Paul as part of the co-management agreement. WTA has a long history of engaging with partners and the community to care for the sacred site and land surrounding it. While restoration and habitat enhancement projects are initially larger investments, the cost decreases with time as project goals are met and the habitats can become more self-sustaining. WTA is committed to fundraising from both public and private sources for any future restoration and land management needs, which could include but are not limited to: maintaining the prescription burn cycles, increasing biodiversity through addition of native plants and seeds not included in this project, and continued site monitoring and species data collection.

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

We currently partner with Mississippi Park Connection, who does connect us with Conservation Corps of Minnesota to do some trail maintenance, buckthorn removal and other invasive species removal currently on site. We intend to continue this partnership and expand upon it where needed.

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 project incorporates monitoring, species data collection and evaluation at this site. Currently, invasive species and native vegetation reintroduction is being monitored throughout the year and will continue on a yearly basis. There is also monthly bird counts conducted by Urban Bird Collective and WTA staff that will continue initially after project completion as well as three or more years following project completion. Bumblebee surveys are conducted twice during the summer and will continue to be conducted at least three years after project completion. Additionally, an annual BioBlitz will happen for at least three years following the project completion which will include small mammal, pollinator, dragonfly, bird, vegetation, monarch, and canopy surveys and assessments. Future management and restoration efforts will be implemented based on both site and parcel monitoring and species data collection results. WTA's will continue to stay engaged at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and continue the stewardship of the sacred site and surrounding land, as we have been for the past 20 years.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [432fdaa4-503.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map of the project site as divided by the targeted plant communities, as determined in the 2020 management plan...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2022 LPCP Audit	2d0ece7c-7cc.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
WTA_Board Resolution	6db95094-ac9.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
2020 BVNS Management Plan	0e7e6cc4-955.pdf
FMR Letter of Support	90da03e3-dd3.pdf
Updated Restoration Activity Task Table	c299c37f-fef.xlsx
Project one-pager	16bb2876-5ef.pdf
CSP Letter of Support	54ff1a58-5f0.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?

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:

Gabriele Menomin - Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi