



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-287

Proposal Title: Collaborative All Lands Habitat Restoration Team

Project Manager Information

Name: Marya Johnston-McIntosh

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Office Telephone: (612) 331-0760

Email: Robert.bale@tnc.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The habitat restoration team will support land stewardship across public, private, tribal lands with capacity and equipment to improve habitat through prescribed fire, invasive species management and timber stand improvement.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$810,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

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): Central, NE, NW,

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

Region(s): Central, NE, NW,

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 forests, savannas, and prairies of Minnesota evolved in the presence of fire, a fundamental regenerative disturbance. This phenomenon emerged when Indigenous communities utilized fire as an indispensable cultural practice to survive and thrive on lands they inhabited.

Euro-American settlers rapidly transformed Minnesota through plowing, over-cutting forests, removing Indigenous peoples from the landscape, exterminating buffalo, and outlawing traditional burning. This transformation broke the regenerative relationship between people and the land. The criminalization of traditional burning and over a century of fire suppression has depleted biodiversity and degraded native ecosystems. For example, the absence of fire has caused forest mesophication, curtailed natural regeneration of oak and pine, permitted tree/shrub encroachment in savanna openings and prairies, and enabled widespread tree decline and mortality from forest pests and pathogens. The exclusion/suppression of fire has significantly weakened the resilience of terrestrial habitats across Minnesota.

There is a critical need to restore our native ecosystems with prescribed fire and active land management for the benefit of human and natural communities. There remains a significant need to increase the pace and scale of land management across both public and private lands. Collaborative solutions are needed because no single entity can tackle this challenge alone.

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.

TNC aims to build upon our ongoing work in Central and Northern Minnesota to coordinate and equip a habitat restoration team to conduct prescribed burns, invasive species removal, and timber stand improvement across all lands including public, private and tribal lands. Funding would support this 4-5 person habitat restoration team and the equipment necessary to do this work. The habitat restoration team would engage with many partners including DNR, Camp Ripley, USFS, Tribal Nations, and on private lands under conservation easements. Our goal is to implement land management that will increase the biodiversity, functionality and resilience of natural areas across land ownership types and serve as a model for others to invest in restoration.

What makes this model unique is working across all land ownership types, in collaboration with many partners and working nimbly to meet the highest priority needs. TNC is well-known for managing teams that cross jurisdictional boundaries and implement science-based habitat restoration. This model has proven to promote collaboration and efficiency in land management. When partners, including private landowners, collaborate with shared objectives and practices, impact and efficiency increases. A community of practice is formed through these partnerships, which foster knowledge sharing, confidence, clarity, and momentum.

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?

- 1) Hire a habitat restoration team and purchase necessary equipment to work across state, county, tribal, federal, and private lands, going where the need is greatest, where the best available science leads and where partners have prioritized work
- 2) Prescribed fire implementation across 4500 acres of land. Treatment of these acres will be funded by a combination of grant and leverage funds across the 4-year grant period.
- 3) Complementary fuels reduction/invasive species treatments across 500 acres of land.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Restoration/enhancement on public, tribal and private lands under conservation easement with prescribed fire, invasive species treatments and understory thinning.

Activity Budget: \$810,000

Activity Description:

Work will focus on enhancing fire-dependent native ecosystems across Central and Northern MN. TNC will collaborate with public partners, tribes, and private landowners to identify opportunities and determine priority work areas. TNC will hire and equip a team to conduct prescribed fires, invasive species management and understory thinning across the region to improve habitat resilience. Where invasive species are present, the team will use mechanical and chemical treatments to restore site conditions and make fire management effective.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire habitat restoration team and purchase necessary equipment	August 31, 2025
Prioritize projects, develop burn plans, prep sites for burning, implement Rx burning across 4500 acres	June 30, 2029
Identify and prioritize projects, treat invasive species and reduce understory brush on 500 acres	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Tim Notch	Camp Ripley, MN National Guard	Prescribed burning is an essential restoration practice at Camp Ripley; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Graham Parson	DNR Parks and Trails	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice in various Parks; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Robert Gotchie	Leech Lake Reservation	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice on Reservation lands; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Nick Petrack	Chippewa National Forest	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice in the National Forest; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Paul Priestly	Fond du Lac Reservation	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice on Reservation lands; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Aaron Kania	Superior National Forest	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice in the National Forest; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Nate Thom	DNR Wildlife	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice in various Wildlife Management Areas; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Lane Johnson	U of MN Cloquet Forestry Center	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice on Forestry Center lands; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	No
Jeff Wilson	DNR Scientific and Natural Areas	Prescribed burning is an essential habitat restoration practice in various Scientific and Natural Areas; TNC's Habitat Restoration Team is frequently requested to support burning and complementary habitat restoration activities on these lands.	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?

TNC is highly invested long-term in this critical work, which is core to our mission. Our existing and growing partnerships provide a strong foundation. TNC's is leveraging support from USFS Landscape Scale Restoration funds, USFS cost-share agreements and support from Camp Ripley. TNC is committed to securing diverse funding from federal, state and private sources that will allow us to collaborate, be nimble and effective long-term with all partners. This work contributes to efforts of the MN Prescribed Fire Council, Lake States Fire Science Consortium, UMN Cloquet Forestry Center, and MN Forests Fire Learning Network.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Community Response Monitoring for Adaptive Management	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 03r	\$483,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Marya Johnston-McIntosh

Job Title: Assistant Fire Manager

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

More than twenty years experience as a prescribed fire practitioner. Led prescribed burns in 15 states and managed prescribed fire strike teams in eight states.

Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Organization Description:

Founded in 1951, the Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We are tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. Working in 72 countries and in all 50 United States, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Team Lead		Lead and coordinate activities of All Lands Habitat Restoration Team			44.86%	1.8		\$132,008
Assistant Team Lead		Support leadership of All Lands Habitat Restoration Team			44.86%	1.8		\$105,596
Team Member 1		Team member on All Lands Habitat Restoration Team			44.86%	1.48		\$80,012
Team Member 2		Team member on All Lands Habitat Restoration Team			44.86%	1.2		\$64,021
Team Member 3		Team member on All Lands Habitat Restoration Team			44.86%	1.2		\$64,021
Fire Coordinator		Coordinator for prescribed fire work by habitat team			44.86%	0.8		\$85,342
							Sub Total	\$531,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	PPE, tools, fuel, herbicide	For use by habitat team for proper tools and safety equipment to conduct prescribed fire and other habitat enhancement. No individual item is over \$5K.					\$40,000
	Tools and Supplies	Radios	For use by the habitat team for proper communication and safety in conducting prescribed fires across the work area. No individual radio is over \$5K.					\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$55,000
Capital Expenditures								

		Fire Engine including truck and slip-on pump	For use by the habitat team implementing prescribed fire across the work area	X				\$140,000
		UTV with slip-on pump	For use by the habitat team implementing both prescribed fire and other habitat enhancement activities such as invasive species removal and timber stand improvement across the work area	X				\$24,000
							Sub Total	\$164,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Regular travel for the 4-5 member team across work area. All rates will match guidance from Commissioner Plan promulgated by the Commissioner of Management and Budget.	The habitat team is intended to be flexible to work across land ownerships, with all partners and in the geography of Central and Northern MN to meet the greatest needs. Regular travel for the 4-5 member team is critical. All rates will match guidance from Commissioner Plan promulgated by the Commissioner of Management and Budget.					\$45,000
							Sub Total	\$45,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	TNC Staff Travel from Outside MN	TNC has a network of staff across the US who can travel to fill critical prescribed fire capacity needs. This can be necessary at times if hiring seasonal fire staff is difficult, which TNC has experienced.	X				\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$15,000

Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$810,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Capital Expenditures		Fire Engine including truck and slip-on pump	TNC is committed long-term to the program described in this proposal. The fire engine will continue to be used for prescribed fire needs across land ownership types and in collaboration with partners as described in this proposal for its entire useful life. Additional Explanation : TNC is committed long-term to the program described in this proposal. The fire engine will continue to be used for prescribed fire needs across land ownership types and in collaboration with partners as described in this proposal for its entire useful life.
Capital Expenditures		UTV with slip-on pump	TNC is committed long-term to the program described in this proposal. The UTV will continue to be used for prescribed fire and habitat enhancement needs across land ownership types and in collaboration with partners as described in this proposal for its entire useful life. Additional Explanation : TNC is committed long-term to the program described in this proposal. The UTV will continue to be used for prescribed fire and habitat enhancement needs across land ownership types and in collaboration with partners as described in this proposal for its entire useful life.
Travel Outside Minnesota	Miles/Meals/Lodging	TNC Staff Travel from Outside MN	TNC has a network of staff across the US who can travel to fill critical prescribed fire capacity needs. This can be necessary at times if hiring seasonal fire staff is difficult, which TNC has experienced.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	FY24 USFS Landscape Scale Restoration Grant	The primary purpose of this project is to increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire on state, private and Tribal ownership within fire-adapted landscapes in Minnesota. Grant is pending, but TNC's proposal was ranked #1 in review.	Pending	\$249,795
			Non State Sub Total	\$249,795
			Funds Total	\$249,795

Total Project Cost: \$1,059,795

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [06e69e2c-058.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Map of work area...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2023 TNC Audited FS Final	97033611-e4d.pdf
TNC Certificate of Good Standing - Nonprofit Corporation	0679d6b9-693.pdf
TNC-FY22-2021-Form-990	63d7da66-5bc.pdf
TNC-mblsportal-sos-state-mn-us	c68950a4-c6b.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
TNC Director Letter - Support for Proposals	0269dfc4-a47.pdf
TNC Delegation of Authority from Board to Director	ea7bd041-a41.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support USFS Superior National Forest	bb5224d5-1d7.pdf
Letter of Support UMN	842caee1-dc5.pdf
Letter of Support DNR EcoWaters	6e1a6cd3-85a.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:

Bob Bale and Matt Graeve, The Nature Conservancy