



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-282

Proposal Title: Minnehaha Park South Plateau Oak Savanna Restoration

Project Manager Information

Name: Adam Arvidson

Organization: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Office Telephone: (612) 230-6470

Email: aarvidson@minneapolisparcs.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This project will restore approximately 5.5 acres of urban parkland in the heavily visited and historically significant Minnehaha Park to an oak savanna ecosystem.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$242,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary 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.

Minnehaha Park, which is home to the famous Minnehaha Falls and attracts millions of visits every year, is one of the oldest park spaces in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Originally a state park, this Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board owned and managed site attracts a broad diversity of people from across the region. Many come for the waterfall, but the park is home to a mosaic of landscape types including floodplain forest down by the Mississippi River; wetland seeps under the cliffs that are rich with native perennials; restored prairie in Longfellow Gardens; and grand ancient oaks standing sentinel on the broad uplands flanking the gorge of Minnehaha Creek.

One historic landscape type that is missing is a true oak savanna. Much of Minneapolis prior to European settlement was described as "oak openings and barrens." This landscape type, stewarded for uncountable generations by Indigenous people, featured those stately oaks rising from an understory of low grasses and flowers. Today, Minnehaha Park's "South Plateau" area features only mown turfgrass under the oaks. Some research shows that this could make the oaks more susceptible to oak wilt, but certainly the turf does not provide a full habitat spectrum in the park.

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 proposal seeks to take this turf understory and transform it into a vibrant savanna habitat with grasses and wildflowers, as it may have looked more than 200 years ago. The space can serve not only park visitors, but insects like bees and butterflies, birds, bats, and mammals like the fox. Reestablishing a native savanna is no easy task. It takes weeks or months to prepare the soil, kill off weed species that have been growing on site for decades, and eliminate undesired seed species within the soil itself is essential. The new native plant species must out-compete the old weed species. This is accomplished by robust soil preparation, sowing an annual cover crop to shade out weeds, and by planting not only seed, but grown wildflower and grass plugs. The site is rich with oaks already so tree planting will, not be a part of this work. The primary effort is to create a savanna understory that will thrive under the oaks and allow the oaks (and the overall habitat) to thrive in turn. All restoration activities will be upland habitat types.

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?

This project will provide habitat for numerous animal species, including mammals, birds, and insects and other pollinators. Situated as it is atop the Minnehaha Gorge cliffs, the South Plateau is a critical habitat addition. Many animals travel vertically in gorge areas like this, to take advantage of a variety in food and forage options. In addition, this restoration will invite the millions of diverse visitors to the park to enjoy and begin to understand one of the great and largely exterminated landscapes of our region.

This work continues restoration of this rare landscape type, funded by LCCMR at Bohemian Flats.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Restoration Planning

Activity Budget: \$1,000

Activity Description:

MPRB will hire an ecological restoration professional through a competitive process and work with them to prepare a restoration plan for the site. The restoration plan will become part of the construction plans for the project that will be publicly bid (Activity 2). The restoration plan will guide all construction, the process for ongoing monitoring, and long-term maintenance. Construction plans will be prepared by MPRB staff and will be based on the restoration plan. A very limited ENRTF budget is provided for this Activity because it will be entirely match-funded. The on-line system requires a number be entered here. Local MPRB match will be used to create the restoration plan, while ENRTF funds will be used exclusively for construction.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Selection of Restoration Professional	August 31, 2025
Completion of Restoration Plan	November 30, 2025
Completion of Construction Plans for Bidding	January 31, 2026

Activity 2: Site Preparation and Construction

Activity Budget: \$240,000

Activity Description:

The construction phase will include the hiring of a construction contractor through the public bidding process. Following construction contract award by the MPRB Board of Commissioners, Permitting and Construction Mobilization will commence. The Contractor will complete the restoration under the observation of the MPRB hired consultant and MPRB staff that will oversee Construction Administration activities. Construction will likely include one year of site preparation to remove established turf grass and other invasive species, with seeding and planting taking place in the second year. Demobilization from the site will occur when the contractor has completed the Work as described in the bidding documents.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construction Contract Award	March 31, 2026
Construction Commencement	April 30, 2026
Completion of Site Preparation	November 30, 2026
Completion of Plant Installation	May 31, 2027

Activity 3: Ongoing Monitoring

Activity Budget: \$1,000

Activity Description:

A baseline plant survey will take place after germination in the first growing season after construction. The only existing plant material on site is mown turf grass so a pre-construction survey is not necessary. The area will be monitored for plant health and diversity for three years after construction, with annual plant surveys taking place for that same

duration. Initial survey work will be performed by the same consultant hired by MPRB under a competitive process to create the restoration plan. Ongoing monitoring after the expiration of the grant will be managed by MPRB natural resources staff. The information gained from these studies will be made public on the MPRB website. A very limited ENRTF budget is provided for this Activity because it will be entirely match-funded. The on-line system requires a number be entered here. ENRTF funds for this grant will be used exclusively for construction.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Post-Construction Plant Survey	June 30, 2027
Commencement of Annual Plant Health Surveys and Ongoing Monitoring	June 30, 2027

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?

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as part of its overall natural resources maintenance programs. Such activities do include paid staff work, volunteers, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Maintenance and management activities are funded by the MPRB tax levy and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. Additional work necessary after initial construction will be covered by the contractor's warranty and will not require additional funding. Additional restoration and enhancement work after the warranty period will be funded by MPRB.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Invasive Carp Management Research in Lake Nokomis Subwatershed	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 06g	\$189,000
Expanding Nature Knowledge and Experience with New Interactive Exhibits at North Mississippi Regional Park	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05h	\$500,000
Above The Falls Regional Park Acquisition	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 09q	\$950,000
Bohemian Flats Savanna Restoration	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 08i	\$286,000
Bioblitz Urban Parks: Engaging Communities in Scientific Efforts	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05h	\$198,000
Enhancing Habitat Connectivity within the Urban Mississippi Flyway	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08p	\$190,000
Above the Falls Park Acquisition and Restoration Planning	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09m	\$1,376,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Adam Arvidson

Job Title: Director of Strategic Planning

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

Mr. Arvidson is MPRB's Director of Strategic Planning, in which role he is responsible for large-scale planning of public lands. He is a registered landscape architect with 20+ years of experience in the public and private sector and has worked on numerous habitat and environment projects, including several funded through LCCMR and the Lessard-Sams Council. He was the project manager for the MPRB's Ecological Systems Plan and is also led the agency's effort to create new environmentally sound master plans for each neighborhood park.

Organization: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

Organization Description:

With 185 park properties totaling more than 7,000 acres of land and water, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) provides places and recreation opportunities for all people to gather, celebrate, contemplate, and engage in activities that promote health, well-being, community, and the environment. Each year, more than 20 million visits are made to the nationally acclaimed Minneapolis park system. Its urban forests, natural areas, and waters endure and captivate. Its Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and diversified

programming have made the Minneapolis park system an important component of what makes Minneapolis a great place to live, play and work.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Construction Contractor to be determined	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contractor will be selected by competitive bid and will perform all construction work, as directed by the approved construction plans. Contractor and hired sub-contractors will provide site preparation, planting, erosion control, and other construction tasks.				0		\$242,000
							Sub Total	\$242,000
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	\$242,000

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				
Cash	Parks and Trails Legacy Funds	Alongside this major restoration project, MPRB is also making other improvements throughout Minnehaha Park, including with the South Plateau area. These funds will be used for project management, consulting, and construction of recreational improvements, NOT restoration activities.	Secured	\$1,210,000
			State Sub Total	\$1,210,000
Non-State				
Cash	MPRB Parkland Dedication Fund	These funds will be used for all administrative costs, cost of the restoration professional, and a portion of the total construction budget for the savanna restoration project.	Secured	\$200,000
Cash	MPRB Parkland Dedication Fund	Like the Parks and Trails Legacy Funds, these additional Park Dedication Funds will be used for project management, consulting, and construction of recreational improvements, NOT restoration activities. These have been allocated to the park and will be used for other activities in the South Plateau.	Secured	\$90,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$290,000
			Funds Total	\$1,500,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,742,000

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
Minnehaha Regional Park	Hennepin	The site features an extensive and unbroken canopy of oaks, with only turfgrass as understory. The site is a heavily visited public park.	Restoration	5	0.5	-	Public	Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Has Not Begun
Totals				5	0.5	-			

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.

All restoration activities will occur on land permanently in public ownership (owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board).

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.

Components of the restoration and management plan will include a description of current conditions, with a focus on soil type and quality (no native vegetation currently exists on the site); description of the target restoration community, an upland savanna system; a timeline for restoration; and guidance for ongoing management of the restored areas. The restoration plan will be included in the creation of construction plans for the project and will guide both construction and ongoing management. This plan will be kept both in MPRB staff project files and in the MPRB archive, as well as posted publicly on the MPRB website.

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.

MPRB and its partners will fully utilize BWSR’s guidance document. Because this project occurs in an urban site but envisions a savanna plant community, we expect that the recommended number of plant species will be on high end of the "Disturbed Sites" row according to the “Minimum Recommended Number of Species” matrix (p.8). The project will utilize and source seed as recommended for the project location (Ecological Section 8, Big Woods Subsection). Primary project type guidance will come from the section on remnant prairie and savanna restoration.

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.

Long term maintenance and management will be performed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as part of its overall natural resources maintenance programs. Such activities do include paid staff work, volunteers, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations. Maintenance and management activities are funded by the MPRB tax levy and are supported by the state and Metropolitan Council through regional parks operations and maintenance (O&M) funding.

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

Prior to the commencement of construction activities, the project manager will contact the Conservation Corps of Minnesota to determine desire and availability to perform applicable work.

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.

As described in Activity 3, evaluations of plant germination and ongoing health will be performed after the first germination after construction, and then annually for three years. Though this timeline extends beyond the allowable grant window, this work will be accomplished by MPRB natural resources staff. Analyses will focus on the long term viability of the restoration and will recommend corrections if problems arise. The three-year summary report will be made public on the MPRB website.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [8976cb19-3e0.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

A graphic showing the adopted Park Plan for the South Plateau, and a second graphic showing the potential restoration area within the South Plateau. The yellow dashed line encompasses approximately 2 acres, which is what can be accomplished with only MPRB funds. An ENRTF appropriation would allow a 150% increase....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
MPRB Financial Report	1789b15b-6b7.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution 2024-48: Passed 3/20/2024, final executed version forthcoming	716ab8fe-1b7.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:

James Shaffer, MPRB; Carol HejlStone, MPRB