



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-319

Proposal Title: Chaska Big Woods Property Acquisition

Project Manager Information

Name: Ashley Cauley

Organization: City of Chaska

Office Telephone: (952) 227-7526

Email: acauley@chaskamn.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The City of Chaska wishes to acquire property that contains remnant Big Woods for the preservation of its natural resources, including mature stands of trees and wetlands, in perpetuity.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$557,000

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?

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 and In the Future

Narrative

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

There is an existing mature oak savanna landscape commonly referred to as 'the Big Woods', currently under private ownership, within the city of Chaska. It is adjacent to existing city property intended to be developed into a park accessible to kids with disabilities through the installation of a Miracle League Field and inclusive playground. Both the Big Woods properties and the city-owned land for a future park abut the site of a future District 112 elementary school. The City of Chaska wishes to acquire 13.36 acres of the Big Woods property to preserve a majority of the area's mature tree stands and protect existing wetlands in perpetuity. Given the site's proximity to a future city park and school, the proposed acquisition is a prime opportunity to preserve a natural and scenic resource with social, recreational, educational, and ecological benefits.

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 City wishes to acquire the area shown as Outlot G (7.64 acres) and Outlot J (5.72 acrea) in the current land use proposal to preserve natural, open space as a public amenity in perpetuity. These 13.36 acres include mature stands of trees, remnant bluffs, and wetlands. The preservation of wooden open space, with the eventual addition of low-impact improvements (ex: trails, seating, and educational signage), aligns with the city's goals and desires of area residents. The preservation and amenities would also provide unique educational opportunities and support for the future school and future park.

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?

First and foremost, the project preserves and protects wetlands and mature trees in perpetuity. This will make it possible for Chaska residents and visitors to experience a unique ecosystem close to home, rather than needing to travel to a state park to do so. Preservation of existing woods in this area of Chaska is especially important because much of the surrounding area is being developed with single-family homes. The proposed acquisition will protect the wetlands and trees from being destroyed in favor of development and instead provide a natural resource and recreation amenity to Chaska's residents in perpetuity.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Pre-Acquisition Activities

Activity Budget: \$5,000

Activity Description:

Several tasks must be completed before this portion of the Big Woods property is acquired, as required by the LCCMR, the DNR, and the City's own processes.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Finalize purchase price and terms with landowner	January 31, 2025
Contract with city attorney to handle legal aspects of the acquisition	March 31, 2025
Pre-closing documentation to the DNR Grants Unit	August 31, 2025
Written approval from the commissioner of NR 10 days prior to acquisition.	August 31, 2025
Documentation to LCCMR staff	August 31, 2025

Activity 2: Acquisition of Big Woods Property by the City of Chaska

Activity Budget: \$546,000

Activity Description:

The City of Chaska will work to acquire the land from the developer who has a purchase agreement with the property owner contingent on city approvals. If the purchase agreement expires, the city will work with the property owner directly to acquire Outlots G and J. The city is eager to acquire the unique oak savanna landscape to preserve the scenic, natural resources for passive outdoor public recreation ahead of development. Required LCCMR and DNR administrative and reporting processes will be completed to document the preservation of this land in perpetuity.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete land purchase through closing, title transfer and recording	September 30, 2025
Post closing items and payment confirmation to DNR within 10 days of closing	October 31, 2025
Post closing items, recorded documents, and title to DNR within 60 days of closing	November 30, 2025
NR specialist completes Restoration and Management Plan for Big Woods property	December 31, 2025

Activity 3: Post-Acquisition Activities

Activity Budget: \$6,000

Activity Description:

Post-acquisition administration and reporting activities will be completed as required by the LCCMR and DNR. Signage will be posted recognizing the preservation of the woods, wetlands, and unique landscape features was made possible through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop park signage recognizing LCCMR/ ENTRF funding source	December 31, 2025
Complete reporting and accounting for LCCMR/ ENRTF, including ongoing annual and final reporting	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Katherine Gould	Bolton & Menk, Inc.	Katherine Gould is a professional landscape architect at Bolton & Menk, a design/engineering consulting firm hired to assist with the Chaska Big Woods Property Acquisition proposal.	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?

After the acquisition of this wooded part of the Big Woods property, the City of Chaska may install trails, benches, educational signage, or other low-impact improvements to enhance the recreation value of the site. Ongoing maintenance needs will be addressed using existing city resources allocated for park upkeep. The city may seek to acquire additional, adjacent forested land for preservation and public recreation, but the land acquired in this proposal will provide the link from the future school and city park to the unprogrammed, open-ended recreation and enjoyment of nature provided by the woods.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Ashley Cauley

Job Title: City Planner

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

Ashley Cauley joined the City of Chaska in 2023 as City Planner to assist with long-range, park, trail, and planning projects and efforts. Before joining the city, she worked as a planner working on development projects and project management for 10 years. Recent projects completed through grant funds include the Downtown 41 project, which included Regional Solicitation, TED and Highway Freight grants, and MN River Bluff Regional Trail (Circle the Brick Trail), which included active transportation grants, and Safe Routes to School projects at CSAH 10/ TH 41 and Clover Ridge Elementary schools.

Organization: City of Chaska

Organization Description:

Chaska is a city and the county seat of Carver County, Minnesota. The population was 27,810 at the 2020 census. Chaska is an outer ring suburb of the Twin Cities.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Bolton & Menk or other natural resources consultant	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A natural resources consultant will be hired to complete a Restoration and Management Plan to guide the City of Chaska in taking care of the acquisition area and best protecting its beauty and natural resources.				1		\$50,000
Bolton & Menk or other funding consultant	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A funding consultant will be hired to assist the City in administering the grant, documenting progress, and completing LCCMR grant reporting requirements.				0.4		\$21,000
MHS Attorneys at Law	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contract with attorney for assistance with legal requirements of the grant process				0.1		\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$81,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Fee Title Acquisition	5.72 Parcels: 1						\$475,000
							Sub Total	\$475,000

Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Three posts and signs acknowledging ENRTF funding source	These three posts and signs will explain that the preservation acquisition was made possible via funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
							Grand Total	\$557,000

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				
In-Kind	Park dedication fees from developer of outlots adjacent to the outlots identified for acquisition and preservation	The City of Chaska will utilize park dedication fees from the developer of outlots adjacent to the outlots identified for acquisition and preservation to purchase Outlot G without ENRTF funds. Outlot G is 7.64 acres and much of it is buildable, but the City is dedicated to preserving these woodlands for present and future generations.	Pending	\$634,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$634,000
			Funds Total	\$634,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,191,000

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
Frez-Worm Property: Outlot G, Highpoint Vistas	Carver	Remanent Big Woods property immediately south of existing parcel already owned by the city and planned for a park. Outlot G will be obtained through parkland dedication.	Fee Title	7.64	-	-	Private	City of Chaska	Negotiations In Progress
Frez-Worm Property: Outlot J Highpoint Vistas	Carver	Remanent Big Woods property, an oak savanna landscape with several large stands of mature trees, remnant bluffs, and wetlands. The City of Chaska is seeking funds to acquire the additional 5.72 acres of the Big Woods for public passive recreation, wildlife value, scenic value, and educational opportunities. Preservation of natural resources was the top parks and trails-related priority when Chaska residents were surveyed in 2018 for their input on the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan.	Fee Title	5.72	-	\$475,000	Private	City of Chaska	Negotiations In Progress
Totals				13.36	0	\$475,000			

Fee Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

Very little of what was the Big Woods remains in Minnesota, however, roughly 42-acres of Big Woods exist on the Frenz-Worm properties. Roughly half of the 42-acres of Big Woods on the Frenz-Worm properties will be preserved through city ordinances and an additional 7.64 acres will be acquired by the city through parkland dedication and the development process. The city is pursuing funds for acquisition of the 5.72 acres that make up Outlot J as it contains buildable areas that the developer has explored for future development. Acquisition of the property would prevent future privatized development and increase the amount of scenic and publicly accessible property to the surrounding neighborhoods and the community.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

While not specifically identified for city acquisition, the acquisition site is guided as “parks and open space in the 'Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Plan' chapter of the City of Chaska's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The plan identifies public trail connections to the Future Community Park immediately to the north. Community input, collected for this comprehensive plan update, also supports the acquisition of natural and scenic properties for public use. "Protection of natural resources" was identified as the highest priority among a list of 19 choices for future initiatives, with 44% of respondents agreeing strongly agreeing this should be a priority and 34% agreeing it should be a priority.

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

The city has not yet developed the restoration and management plan but will hire natural resources specialists to complete one should the Big Woods Acquisition project be selected. A quote for the plan development was provided by Bolton & Menk's Natural Resources team. This item is included in the project Budget and will include an inventory of the site, citing existing plant communities and species; guidance to meet LCCMR restoration and management goals and a summary of expected restoration outcomes; a summary of overall strategies for long-term plan implementation; and assistance estimating long-term maintenance and management needs and cost.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

Not applicable

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

This is noted in pre-acquisition activities as a milestone and will be obtained as required.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [a124f28c-40c.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Map showing 5.72 acre acquisition from the larger Frenz Property and adjacent 7.64 acres the city will purchase with parkland dedication fees. These areas abut existing city land slated for future park development. A future elementary school site is adjacent to the acquisition area and future park space....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Signed Chaska Fiscal Agent Letter	9d13b73e-2d0.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution 2024-24, adopted 3-18-2024, Acquisition, Habitat, & Recreation Big Woods at 4250 and 4130 Chaska Blvd	719b0687-a94.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Acquisition Area Photos	c2f3ded1-594.pdf
Figures from Chaska 2040 Comprehensive Plan: Parks, Trails, Recreation and Open Space chapter, supporting acquisition	c85da5e8-dbf.pdf
Developer's proposal: Highpoint Vistas (Outlots G & J)	63c129ae-3c7.pdf
Developer's proposal: Highpoint Vistas (Outlots G & J)	dcd7fb95-b41.pdf
Developer's proposal: Highpoint Vistas (Outlots G & J)	e7afb7e2-8c3.pdf
Full parcel appraisal from July 2023	9c4bda4f-55d.pdf
Chaska Park Board: Concept Plan for Southwest Community Park	8577a62b-d05.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee Acquisition,

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?

Yes, City of Chaska

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

Is the purpose of the acquisition for construction of a building(s), trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration, either now or in the future?

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:

Katherine Gould, Bolton and Menk

