

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

The impact of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) has been far-reaching in its 35-year history. While the fund and the critical work of the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) have advanced outdoor recreation in the state, there are projects and constituencies which could advance projects but aren't able to access resources through the current process. The chance to renew and continue the dedication of funds to the ENRTF also provides an opportunity to create a process that does serve those projects. Increased public investment in environment and natural resources work carried out by organizations across the state is facilitative of increasing philanthropic and private sector investment and increasing community engagement in environmental quality and stewardship.

CURRENT BARRIERS

The existing LCCMR process operates on a reimbursement basis, which prevents smaller or younger organizations and entities which are unable to front project expenses from being reimbursed by the state. The complexity and length of the application process are often beyond what many important contributors to environmental and natural resources work can reasonably do. Therefore, investments in LCCMR, when complemented by this community grants strategy, allow us to significantly increase the diversity, range, connection and impacts of environment and natural resources protection, conservation, regeneration, and engagement work across the state.



POTENTIAL COMMUNITY GRANTS USES

- Local energy conservation projects, such as weatherization assistance or education.
 - *Example: Smaller organizations that participate in Re-AMP and the Midwest Building Decarbonization Coalition could receive grants to achieve energy conservation goals.*
- Local emission reduction and air quality improvement projects, such as air quality monitoring or air exchangers.
 - *Example: Minneapolis' Green Zones could expand projects to implement environmental justice work plans.*
- Environmental education, such as traditional Indigenous natural resource knowledge initiatives.
 - *Example: Organizations like the Niibi Center on the White Earth Nation could extend education program capacity.*
- Carbon sequestration projects, via forest easements, marginal croplands, etc.
 - *Example: Smaller, community-based organizations could access funds to carry out local conservation projects.*

HOW IT'S FUNDED

- No change to existing LCCMR process or funding allocation
- An additional 1.5% of the market value of the ENRTF will be directed to this program each year
- The total annual appropriation availability will be 7% of the ENRTF market value, up from 5.5%. 5.5% will continue to fund the existing LCCMR process. 1.5% will fund the new Community Grants Program.

HOW IT WORKS

1.5% of the ENRTF value is transferred to the DNR



Advisory council advises DNR on funding process and potential projects



DNR makes grants to local organizations to implement projects



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ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

- The program works through established grant-making staff at DNR to ensure there is direct support and technical assistance to realize projects in local communities.
- Grant recipients will be required to report to DNR about funded projects, and DNR will be required to provide an annual report to the Legislature.
- The Advisory Council will also annually review projects administered to ensure adherence to program goals.

COMMUNITY VOICES

"The community grants program provides a way for the ENTRF to significantly extend its reach and impact by engaging the leadership of people who are doing important environment and natural resources work in Minnesota. We need a complement to LCCMR funding to engage more of Minnesota's great leaders and organizations doing important work in the field. This offers an excellent way to make that happen."

Dr. Sam Grant

Executive Director at Rainbow Research

"This program provides the ENTRF the opportunity to support smaller organizations, communities and individuals in their important environmental work that impacts those in their communities most affected by the environmental issues we all face today."

Joe Morales/Nape' Wast'e (Good Hands)

Indigenous Action Research Director at Rainbow Research; Anishnaabe Agricultural Institute Board; Traditional Knowledge Keeper

"Those most impacted by environmental injustice can benefit greatly from the ENTRF community grants program. Organizations and leaders in these communities will be able to more effectively address the environmental issues that impact them with this funding support."

James Trice

CEO Public Policy Project; Environmental Justice Coordinating Council

"The ENTRF community grants program is long overdue. Establishing a community advisory council with representation from not only Tribal communities but from other underserved communities we can be assured that the monies from the lottery trust will benefit all walks of life in MN. This has not been the case in the past but we have that chance to make a change for the future. Speaking as a member of the Red Lake Nation I am looking forward to our voice being heard in a cultural and ecological way by the passing of this bill."

Sharon Nordrum

Red Lake Nation, Anishinaabe artist

