

# Outdoor Recreation Grant Program

## FY2017 Program Manual



MN Department of Natural Resources

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## **I. Program Information**

The Outdoor Recreation Grant Program assists local governments in acquiring parkland and developing or redeveloping outdoor recreation facilities. Applications must be submitted by **March 31, 2016** to be eligible for funding assistance for the current year. Applicants are eligible to receive more than one grant.

### ***FUNDING***

The program finances projects using federal funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON). Historically, some state dollars authorized by the Minnesota State Legislature have been available. Federal funding available for 2016 is \$374,142. State funding varies.

### ***GRANT AWARDS AND MATCH REQUIREMENTS***

Grants are reimbursed up to 50 percent of the total eligible costs. The remaining 50 percent "local share" can consist of cash or the value of materials, labor and equipment usage provided by the local sponsor or by local donations or any combination thereof. Volunteer unskilled labor is valued, for this grant program, at \$9.00 per hour. The minimum grant award is \$5,000 and the maximum grant award is \$100,000.

Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement can be made. Grant agreements generally expire within 24 months and projects must be completed by then.

***ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:*** Cities, counties, townships and recognized tribal governments.

Note: The applicant must be the current or intended owner and manager of the property to be acquired or developed. Multi-organization collaboration is not required for this program.

### ***ELIGIBLE PROJECTS:***

- \* Acquisition of land for future development of outdoor recreation facilities. Recreation facilities must be developed within three years from the date of acquisition.
- \* Development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of outdoor recreation facilities on land owned by the applicant.
- \* A combination of land acquisition and development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of outdoor recreation facilities.

***ELIGIBLE RECREATION FACILITIES:*** One or more of the following facilities must be included in a proposed project.

- Boat/Canoe Access Sites
- Campgrounds
- Fishing Piers/Shore Fishing Areas
- Skating Rinks/Parks
- Nature Study/Observation Areas
- Picnic Shelters
- Playgrounds
- Sports Fields and Courts
- Swimming Beaches and Outdoor Pools
- Splash Parks
- Trails (non-motorized internal park trails)

***ELIGIBLE RECREATION SUPPORT FACILITIES:*** The following facilities are also eligible for funding as part of a grant application that contains at least one facility from the eligible recreation facilities list above.

- Change Houses, Restrooms, Shower Buildings and Warming Houses
- Fencing, Lighting and Signs
- Landscaping and Natural Area Restoration
- Park Roads and Parking Areas (**may not** exceed 40% of the total project cost)
- Fixed park furnishings such as Seats, Drinking Fountains, Grills, Picnic Tables, Trash Receptacles and Fire Pits
- Walkways

***INELIGIBLE FACILITIES AND COSTS:*** Ineligible facilities or costs are those items that cannot be funded with an Outdoor Recreation Grant or included as part of the local match requirement. The following list includes common types of ineligible facilities. A determination of eligibility will be made by the Department of Natural Resources with final approval by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.

- Administrative Expenses/Contingency Allowance
- Design and Engineering in excess of 10% of the Total Project Cost.
- Concession-only Buildings
- Decorative Fountains, Statues and Plaques
- Dredging, Water Impoundments and Dams
- Facilities not available for general public use
- Golf Courses
- Indoor Recreational Facilities (ie: ice arenas, enclosed swimming pools, etc.)
- Acquisition of land already in public ownership
- Legal Fees
- Motorized Trails
- Non Permanent Skate Park Ramps and Equipment
- Press Boxes
- Sewer to Campsites
- Shooting Ranges

## **II. The Application Process**

The application is available to download from the [Outdoor Recreation Grant Program](#) web page. We urge applicants to begin the application process early in order to allow time to complete application requirements such as obtaining community involvement and completion of appraisals.

Completed applications are to be submitted electronically in a “.pdf” format by March 31, 2016 using the instructions in the application form. This program is very competitive. Staff members are available to discuss your project or review application materials. You are encouraged to submit any draft application or materials by March 3rd if you would like staff to provide comments.

### ***APPRAISAL REQUIREMENTS***

Appraisals must be performed by a qualified licensed appraiser and meet the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition (UASFLA) and the [DNR Supplemental Appraisal and Appraisal Review Guidelines](#). The application must include an appraisal report and a completed [DNR Appraisal Certification Form](#). The appraisal must include the DNR and the National Park Service as intended users and the landowner or designated representative must be given an opportunity to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of the property. Appraisals must have an effective date within 13 months of the application deadline.

To ensure the appraiser understands the appraisal requirements, we suggest using the sample engagement letter provided in Attachment A.

If your application is selected for funding, you may be required to submit a technical review of the appraisal report conducted by an appraiser who is not associated with the original appraiser and who is qualified to perform technical reviews under the UASFLA and 49 CFR Part 24.104. See UASFLA Section C-1 for further guidance on technical reviews.

### ***COMPETITIVE REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS***

The program is competitive and requires a review and selection process to make funding determinations and awards. The review and selection process will take place after March 31, and funding announcements will be made in summer. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be eligible for funding consideration. Program staff will review applications and, if necessary, a site visit will be conducted.

### **Minnesota’s 2014-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan**

The [2014-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (SCORP) is Minnesota’s outdoor recreation policy plan. This plan was developed with the input of Minnesota outdoor and natural resource leaders. It establishes outdoor recreation priorities for Minnesota to assist outdoor recreation and natural resource managers, the state legislature, and the executive branch in decision-making about the state’s outdoor recreation system and sets out criteria for awarding grants consistent with these identified priorities. Applications are assessed to ensure that the proposed project is consistent with priorities established in the SCORP document.

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**Selection Priorities:**

SCORP Plan (60%) - Selection criteria are based on strategic directions identified under the following three focus areas in the SCORP Plan.

- **Connect People and the Outdoors:** Better develop Minnesota's stewards of tomorrow through efforts to increase life-long participation in parks and trails. Provide a welcoming environment, create or improve access and provide a quality experience.
- **Acquire Land, Create Opportunities:** Create new and expanded park opportunities to satisfy current customers as well as to reach out to new ones. Focus on Strategic acquisition, development to meet the needs of people of all abilities and provides an environment that is open and flexible to accommodate new and emerging trends and group based recreational opportunities and establishing a sustainable and resilient infrastructure.
- **Take Care of What We Have:** Provide safe, high-quality park experiences by regular re-investment in park infrastructure, and natural resource management. Protect the public's investment in the built infrastructure and natural resources and maintain the quality of natural resources.

Additional non SCORP review components (40%):

- **Project Specific Criteria** including: Cost vs. benefit, application and project quality and local match.
- **Park and Facility Design:** Use & design are compatible with site; makes good use of available space; avoids conflicts among facilities; avoids conflicts with adjacent uses;
- **Health and Safety:** Consider health and safety risks;
- **Appropriate Design Standards:** All facilities must be accessible and designed consistent with standards;
- **Environmental Intrusions:** All non-recreational intrusions are documented and the impact has been considered in the park design. All power lines serving the park facilities must be placed underground.

***AWARD OF FUNDS***

All applicants will receive official written notification regarding their request for funding. If your proposed project has received preliminary approval for funding, you will be contacted regarding additional information requirements needed before an agreement can be processed. These requirements may include Minnesota Historical Society review, permits and other details.

Projects cannot begin until all final documentation has been submitted and a grant agreement has been completed. This process can take three months to complete. Any project costs incurred prior to the start date of the grant agreement will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Payment of grant funds to the local sponsor is on a reimbursement basis. The grant recipient must initially expend monies that are then reimbursed under the terms of the grant agreement. A portion of the grant funds will be retained until a final inspection has been completed.

***GRANTS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION***

Under [MN Statute 13.599](#), responses to a request for proposal are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the grantee, and the amount requested becomes public.

After the application evaluation process is completed, data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed.

[MN Statute 13.44](#) categorizes estimated or appraised value of real property prior to purchase and sale as confidential data on individuals or protected nonpublic data. See also Minnesota Government Data Privacy Act for more information. This information, along with corresponding budget information, will be redacted from the applications before making them public.

**III. Program Requirements****LAND RETENTION REQUIREMENTS**

- 1) **CONVERSION OF USE:** All land improved or acquired with assistance from this grant program must be retained and operated solely for outdoor recreation. The Grantee shall not at any time convert this property to other uses without the prior written approval of the State. The State will consider a conversion request only after the following pre-requisites have been met:
  1. All practical alternatives to the conversion have been evaluated and rejected on a sound basis.
  2. The Grantee has agreed to replace the converted lands with other lands of at least equal fair market value and reasonably equivalent recreational usefulness as determined by the State.

The State shall have the authority to approve or disapprove conversion requests.

- 2) **DEED RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT:** The Grantee will be required to record a condition with the deed of the real property funded by the grant agreement that notifies the public of the grant and the grant program requirements.

The Site Boundary Map submitted with your application will delineate and establish the property boundaries subject to the grant agreement. Therefore, it is very important that any existing public facilities and any known future public facilities (e.g., wells, lift stations, roadway improvements, etc.) are clearly identified and excluded from the boundaries of the project. The site boundaries should include only the property that the project sponsor plans on managing for outdoor recreation uses in perpetuity.



## ***REVIEW FOR POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HISTORICAL/ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

The Minnesota Historical Society will be contacted to review your project to determine if the site is a potential location for historical or archeological findings. If the Historical Society determines that a survey is required, the survey would need to be completed prior to any site disturbance for development projects and prior to the final reimbursement of the grant funds for acquisition projects.

## ***WATER PERMITS***

Development or alteration of shoreline adjacent to rivers, streams, lakes, and other public water bodies may require a written permit issued by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In addition, projects involving work within waters and wetlands may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Grantees will be required to determine whether a waters permit is required by contacting both the DNR and the COE directly. Contact Information:

[U.S Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Functions](#)  
[Department of Natural Resources: Public Waters Work Permits](#)

## ***RECREATIONAL CAMPING AREAS***

Campgrounds must comply with state laws and rules set by the Minnesota Department of Health. A summary of these requirements is available at Summary of [General Requirements for Recreational Camping Areas](#). You must submit plans and receive approval for the development of a recreational camping area to the MN Department of Health or your local health authority before construction begins. Upon completion of the campground, a license application, license fee and inspection by the area health inspector is required. A copy of the license must be submitted with your final payment request.

## ***REPORTING REQUIREMENTS***

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all of the terms in the grant agreement have been met. A progress report form will be provided by program staff. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless program staff have given the grantee a written extension.

## ***MONITORING REQUIREMENTS***

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to conduct at least one monitoring visit per grant period on all state grants of over \$50,000 and to conduct at least annual monitoring visits on grants of over \$250,000.

## ***CLOSEOUT PROCEDURES***

Upon completion of your project, a final billing must be submitted to our office no later than 30 days after the expiration date on your agreement. Program staff will complete a final inspection of the project. The inspection will focus on ensuring that the project was completed in accordance with the grant agreement, that facilities developed are accessible and a funding acknowledgment sign is installed. If any problems are revealed during the inspection, they will need to be corrected before you receive final reimbursement for your grant and the official closeout notification for your project.

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All expenditures are subject to verification by an independent state audit and, therefore, you must retain all project records for a period of at least six years after you receive the official closeout notification letter.

Periodic post-completion inspections will be conducted to ensure that the site is being properly operated and maintained and that no conversion of use has occurred.

***ACKNOWLEDGMENT SIGN***

All projects acquired or developed with assistance from this program must display a state approved funding acknowledgment sign at the main entrance to the park. The grant program staff will provide the specific sign information.

***AVAILABILITY TO USERS***

Public property, facilities & programs that receive state assistance and future development of a site that has received state assistance shall be open to entry by all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion or sex. No person shall, on the basis of disability shall be excluded from participation in any program or activity receiving state assistance. Finally, discrimination on the basis of residence, including preferential reservation, membership or annual permit systems is prohibited except to the extent that reasonable differences in admission and other fees may be maintained on the basis of residence. Fees charged to non-residents cannot exceed twice that charged to residents and must be comparable to fees charged at other state or local facilities.

**IV. Contact Information**

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