



Council Agenda Item 25-0723R

MEETING DATE: 09/22/2025

SUBJECT/TITLE: RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$155,000 FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND FOR ENHANCING PRESERVATION AND ACCESSIBILITY AT HAWK RIDGE NATURE RESERVE.

SUBMITTED BY: Tim Byrns, Project Technician

RECOMMENDATION: Approve.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:

22-0527R – Approved the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan to identify phased improvements at Hawk Ridge to enhance educational program offerings to and improve safety and accessibility

24-0226R – Authorized application to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF), for up to \$155,000 to support accessibility improvements at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve.

BACKGROUND:

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) is a nonprofit charitable organization incorporated in 2004 as a successor to a committee of Duluth Audubon Society. HRBO manages the 365-acre Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (HRNR) under a trust agreement with the City of Duluth.

For over 50 years, Hawk Ridge has contributed to monitoring bird population health through migration counts and banding research, while also educating tens of thousands of people annually from around the world about the ecological importance of birds and the ongoing conservation efforts at Hawk Ridge.

The Hawk Ridge Mini-Master Plan received unanimous approval from the Parks and Recreation Commission on June 8, 2022. Developed in close collaboration with the City, the five-year, three-phase conceptual plan outlines the construction of new or enhanced accessible trails, educational facilities, visitor amenities, and pedestrian and vehicle safety improvements. Under the agreement between HRBO and the City, HRBO will take primary responsibility for implementing the plan, while the City will support the effort through additional project planning, construction management, and/or assistance with securing state and federal grants.

This resolution authorizes the acceptance of funding referenced in Resolution 24-0226R, approved on March 3, 2025, which supported an application to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) through the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) for up to \$155,000. The awarded funds will support the implementation of Phase I of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan. Phase I addresses two primary issues:

1. the lack of equitable access to high-quality outdoor recreation and conservation-based education for individuals of all abilities, and
2. the degradation of native plant communities due to terrestrial invasive species within the reserve.

Specifically, the funding will support the construction of approximately 1,300 linear feet of universally

accessible trail, including the development of an accessible loop and improved access to an existing viewing platform. In addition, the project will include the removal of approximately 1.25 acres of invasive plant species to restore native habitat and enhance ecological integrity. Phase I of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan represents a critical first step, serving as a strategic foundation for future improvements proposed in the Plan.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The City shall contribute to this Project through its grant and construction management services.

OPTIONS:

Authorize acceptance of the \$155,000 ENRTF grant to support Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan, Phase I activities, or decline the grant funding, which would halt project implementation and significantly limit future recreation and programming opportunities for the community.

NECESSARY ACTION:

Authorize acceptance of the \$155,000 grant.

ATTACHMENTS:

Exhibit A – Funding Agreement.