



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 17-0781R, **Version:** 1

---

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF A \$220,000 GRANT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FOR THE ST. LOUIS RIVER NATURAL AREA PLANNING PROCESS.

### CITY PROPOSAL:

RESOLVED, that the proper city officials are hereby authorized to accept a \$220,000 grant award from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to support an 18-month St. Louis River Natural Area study and planning process, said funds to be deposited into 205-130-1220-CM205-SLRNA-Phase I (Parks Fund, Community Resources, Parks Capital, Capital Maintenance Fund 205, St. Louis River Natural Area, Lake Superior Action and Management Plan).

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the proper city officials are hereby authorized to execute a grant agreement, attached here to as exhibit A, with the EPA, complying with all applicable laws, environmental requirements and regulations as stated in the grant agreement.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This resolution authorizes proper city officials to execute a grant agreement and accept a \$220,000 grant award from the Environmental Protection Agency to support an 18-month St. Louis River Natural Area study and planning process. The city of Duluth council passed resolution 17-0037R on January 9, 2017 in support of the application for funding.

The Duluth Natural Areas Program was established to give city council a locally controlled mechanism to protect properties of special environmental significance. The properties to be studied for potential inclusion in a St. Louis River Natural Area include an Audubon Important Bird Area, extensive wild rice habitat, and most of the remaining coastal wetlands on the Minnesota side of the St. Louis River Estuary. The vast majority of the candidate properties are wetlands and bluffs with limited or no development value.

The study and planning process will proceed in two phases. Phase one will focus on development of a nomination that will identify specific properties and describe how those properties meet the Duluth Natural Area Program criteria. The nomination will be submitted to the planning commission and the city council for provisional approval by the end of March 2018. The twelve-month phase two will focus on development of a management plan for the nominated properties.

In support of this process, the EPA grant will fund public engagement and technical analysis. Under city direction, the nonprofit Minnesota Land Trust will manage technical analysis of the candidate properties that will include natural resource inventories and assessments, development suitability analysis, title review, restoration plan development, and review of relevant local, state, and federal plans, reports, and regulations. Minnesota Land Trust was named by the EPA in the grant application, and by the EPA in the grant award, as a sub-recipient of the grant.

A map showing the areas to be assessed is attached hereto as Exhibit A. The study and planning process is likely to result in exclusion of portions of the study area from the St. Louis River Natural Area nomination. Most of the property to be assessed is owned by the city of Duluth or St. Louis County. Some privately owned properties have been included in the assessment area with the consent of the owners.

With few exceptions, the outcome of the process will be a plan that:

Maximizes the conservation and recreation value of riverfront properties that have little or no development value; and  
Increases the development value of adjacent private property.

If approved, the St. Louis River Natural Area would not:

Restrict the freedom of boaters and sportsmen to travel and fish where they wish;  
Place new limits on the improvement and use of private property; or  
Require any private property owner to sell.