



General

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Park/Trail ID # 15-063D	Funding Application 17-0095-F	Park/Trail Name Woodland Trails Regional Park
Last Update July 25, 2017		
District 4	Project Name Woodland Trails Regional Park Phase I Development	

Project Description

Woodland Trails Regional Park is a natural resource-based regional park located within the City of Elk River. The park consists of 427 acres dominated by oak woodland, wetlands and restored native prairie habitats. Development within the park consists of a large parking lot which acts as the trailhead to the park, nearly eight miles of bituminous trails, over seven miles of natural surface mowed trails, a biathlon range and a small maintenance support facility. Summer recreation activities within the park consist largely of hiking, biking, running and nature viewing; winter recreation consists largely of cross country skiing on the 11 miles of groomed trails, walking and snowshoeing. Phase I development of Woodland Trails Regional Park would consist of constructing recreational facilities located in the vicinity of the existing parking lot facility. Based on public input received during the development of the Woodland Trails Regional Park Master Plan, completed in July 2016, there is a strong demand for new facilities within the park to add to the already dynamic trail system. Facilities to be constructed during the first phase of development of this park include a large children's nature play area; trailhead improvements and wayfinding signage; a picnic shelter; upgrades to the existing biathlon range to include modifications to existing facilities to allow for the addition to archery; and removal of invasive species. Projects selected for inclusion in the Phase I development were identified as high and medium priority projects during the master planning process and largely consisted of short-term and mid-term duration projects. These projects were selected to provide a more diverse offering of recreational facilities to the public and to complement the existing trail system as well as enhancing the natural woodland areas. The addition of the picnic shelter and nature based playground will enhance the overall use of the park by providing for family orientated activities drawing a larger demographic of users from the region. Additionally, converting the existing biathlon range into a multi-purpose archery and biathlon range will serve a growing population of archery enthusiasts. In 2016 ISD 728, Elk River School District, began offering the National Archery in the Schools Program which had 60 youth participants in it's inaugural year. This new facility would support the growth of this program by offering a facility for year round use.

Project Area Maps

<http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/>

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Park Concept Map_26f8c0.pdf

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Woodlands Trails_Regional Map_9a78c6.pdf

<http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/>

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Funding

Legacy Pillars:

- Connect People and the Outdoors
- Acquire Land and Create Opportunities
- Take Care of What We Have
- Coordinate Among Providers

Project Outcomes

Connection to Pillars

The Woodland Trails Regional Park Phase I Development project is intended to diversify recreational features within the park to draw a larger demographic of park users. Currently the park consists of eight miles of bituminous trails and over seven miles of natural surface trails which are utilized throughout the year for walking, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and nature viewing. The Phase I Development would add several facilities currently not available in the park to offer an alternate to trail related recreational activities.

In contrast to the largely individual activities conducted via trails, the addition of a picnic shelter and nature based playground would provide for family orientated recreational activities helping to connect people to the outdoors. Current use of Woodland Trails Regional Park consists largely of young adult and senior populations utilizing the trails for fitness type activities; but does not adequately service young families and youth who often seek out picnicking and playground facilities. Elk River and the surrounding communities of Big Lake, Zimmerman, Otsego, Princeton and Nowthen are currently seeing vast growth of residential properties with the largest demographic being young families who commute to the Twin Cities for work but find affordable housing in these outer ring suburbs. A nature based playground and picnic shelter would provide a connection for these young families to the park providing for recreation in a more natural setting than the typical neighborhood parks and could serve as a way to introduce these age demographics to the

already superb trail infrastructure within the park. Additionally the picnic shelter would provide a gathering place for larger family events often utilized by ethnically diverse population groups.

The existing biathlon facility is utilized infrequently throughout the year but does serve as a unique facility within Minnesota to train individuals in biathlon. Minnesota Biathlon is a partner with the City of Elk River and supports periodic events throughout the year as well as supporting individuals in training in which the Woodland Trails Regional Park biathlon range is a primary training facility. With the periodic use however, there is the opportunity for modification of this facility to incorporate archery as an alternate use. Minor modifications to the existing facility would be required to incorporate archery targets and support equipment which could easily be installed and removed to transform the facility from biathlon to archery use. The addition of archery to the existing facility would increase the use of the facility and provide the growing sport of archery with a quality facility for recreational and competitive archers. ISD 728, the Elk River School District, began offering the Archery in the Schools program in 2016 and had over 100 people attend the orientation meeting with 60 students ultimately participating; this was the maximum based on facility availability within the schools for the program. This range would provide an opportunity youth in ISD 728 (Rogers, Otsego, Elk River and Zimmerman) to practice their skills year round and would ultimately support an activity which can be conducted throughout ones lifetime.

Habitat restoration and management were seen as one of the most critical needs of Woodland Trails Regional Park in the master planning process. The 427 acre regional park consists largely of oak woodland, wetlands and restored prairie/oak savanna. As with many of our natural habitats, the park has seen an increasing number of invasive species over the past several decades which threaten the balance of the native ecosystem. One of the most severe invasive species infestations within the park consists of European buckthorn and honeysuckle which has invaded much of the woodlands throughout the park. The City of Elk River along with a large base of volunteers has worked to remove buckthorn over the past several years and has cleared over 100 acres of mature buckthorn from the park. Additional resources are required to continue to treat areas to prevent seedlings from reestablishing in the areas which have already been cleared and to continue to remove mature seed producing plants. The beauty of this park is the native oak woodlands in which the trails weave through ultimately giving the park its name of Woodland Trails. Management of invasive species in our forested areas is vital to ensure the long term viability of the forest and to preserve its diversity for future generations.

As the largest park within Elk River and one of the most highly used parks, the city works closely with a number of groups to maintain the existing infrastructure for the enjoyment of the residents as well as the use by these organizations. Elk River works closely with Minnesota Biathlon to support regional biathlon events throughout the year as well as to maintain the facility utilized by countless individuals within the sport. The city also partners heavily with ISD 728 to provide quality trails in support of the school districts athletic teams which includes the Rogers and Elk River High School cross country teams and the consolidated Elk River, Rogers and Zimmerman High School Nordic Ski Team. The park is also host to several state high school league events in these sports throughout the year to include the Northwest Suburban Conference's championship cross country meet each fall. Implementation of trailhead improvements, wayfinding signage throughout the park to include a new entrance sign and kiosk, and the picnic shelter will support the athletes and spectators for the various events conducted by these groups as well as to help guide other park users within the park. The park kiosk would also serve as a message board to inform the public of recreational programs within the park and throughout the city. The wayfinding signage would provide the public with information about trail connections from the park to the schools and downtown Elk River as part of a larger citywide wayfinding program.

Connection to Regional Values

Woodland Trails Regional Park is the lone regional park within Sherburne County and is located in the largest population center within the county, Elk River, with a population of over 24,000. While this park largely supports the population of Elk River, it is also a destination to the broader landscape of surrounding cities to include Otsego, Rogers, Zimmerman, Big Lake, Nowthen, Princeton and Becker. This area has a rapidly expanding population of young families who live in these outer ring communities and commute to the Twin

Cities for work. Woodland Trails Regional Park is a vital link to provide these families with limited time throughout their busy days to recreate in the expansive 427 acre regional park.

The park currently boasts nearly 8 miles of bituminous walking and biking trails as well as over seven miles of natural surface trails to provide opportunities for families to enjoy nature and participate in active recreational activities. The park is the southern trailhead of the Great Northern Trail, an old railroad bed, that serves as the main artery for bikers and walkers. The City of Elk River is working with Sherburne County, the City of Princeton and Mille Lacs county to seek funding to continue paving this railroad bed to Princeton and eventually to Milaca. Sherburne County is actively seeking funding opportunities to continue this trail north of Woodland Trails Regional Park and hopes to receive funding soon for the segment to Zimmerman. This trail, once constructed will be the primary link to future trails connecting the cities of Becker and Big Lake and include access to the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge and Sand Dunes State Forest. The southern end of the Great Northern Trail connects to existing trails within Elk River providing access to several schools including the Elk River High School, middle school and an elementary school. Future trail expansion within the city will connect the park to downtown Elk River as well as Lake Orono along the U.S. Highway 10 Corridor and to the Elk River Northstar Light Rail Station along the U.S. Highway 169 Corridor and ultimately connecting to the Mississippi River Trail in Ramsey.

Phase I development of this park would provide for a nature based playground, picnic shelter, and wayfinding signage. Current use of the park consists largely of trail users and does not provide an adequate space for families with young children to recreate. The nature based playground would afford families with the opportunity to enjoy child friendly activities while creating a greater connection to the land and providing an opportunity to attract these families to the trail network. Ultimately, this playground is seen as a key to the introduction of children to the outdoors and the gateway for these youth to experience the outdoors by transitioning to the trails as they grow older. The nature based playground would be constructed of modern playground equipment and meet all national safety requirements, but would be designed with a nature theme and afford children the opportunity to experience play in a natural setting surrounded by restored prairie and oak woodlands. The existing trail loop near the parking lot and playground facilities would provide youth with an opportunity to bike and walk through the prairie unit and along the woodland areas introducing them to the native plants and animals including song birds, turkeys, deer, rabbits and other wildlife.

The picnic shelter would also be located along this trail segment and provide an opportunity for family gatherings as well as events for local businesses and future programming. The shelter would be designed to fit with the natural elements of the park to include the incorporation of natural wood materials and stone which is native to this glacier formed landscape. The shelter would be designed to accommodate groups of approximately 50 people and would serve as the main gathering place for park sponsored programs as well as cross country and Nordic skiing events in addition to general recreational opportunities.

The wayfinding signage and trailhead improvements would be part of a broader citywide initiative to form uniform signage throughout Elk River to help guide park users to other attractions throughout the city to include public schools, residential neighborhoods, downtown Elk River and businesses along highways 10 and 169. As part of the wayfinding signage, a new kiosk would be installed at the parking lot trailhead to provide users with information about the park as well as other programs and events within the community.

While this phase of development does not include protections of new land through acquisition, it does aim to preserve and restore the vast acreage of existing park land through the continued efforts of invasive species removal. Managing invasive species in the oak woodlands is vital to ensuring the long term viability of the forest ecosystem and preserving the oak forests and scattered wetlands. Removal of invasive buckthorn, honeysuckle and other non-native trees and shrubs will provide for an opportunity for the next generation of native trees and shrubs to thrive, ultimately restoring and preserving habitat for native wildlife species. The trails winding through the woodlands offer users the opportunities to view deer, turkeys, song birds, raptors, and several species of reptiles. Continued degradation of these woodland areas and their associated wetlands will decrease native cover and food sources for wildlife resulting in fewer opportunities for wildlife viewing by the public.

Project Readiness

Project Lead

The City of Elk River currently maintains 40 parks and nearly 1400 acres within the city to include 32 miles of bituminous trails and 17 playgrounds. The parks department consists of 21 full time staff and includes a Parks and Recreation Director, Program Manager, and Park Superintendent as well as recreation and maintenance staff. Additional city staff support for this project would include the city planning, engineering and building departments as well as assistance from playground design and manufacturers. The Parks and Recreation Director, lead applicant, has been the director for over 5 years within the city as well as director positions in other cities prior to employment with Elk River. The Park Superintendent, project manager, has two years' experience in his current position as well as 11 years' experience with Anoka County Parks as the Natural Resource Manager prior to working for Elk River.

Previous grant funded projects include the acquisition, development and restoration of the William H. Houlton Conservation Area (LSOHC Grant), purchase and development of Bailey Point Nature Preserve, and various Conservation Partners Legacy Grants.

Elk River annually conducts invasive species removal projects throughout the park system as well as habitat management, forestry and other restoration work. Recent park projects overseen by the Parks and Recreation Director and Park Superintendent include installation of a destination playground at Orono Park and a new neighborhood park playground, construction of Rivers Edge Commons Park in downtown Elk River which hosts the summer concert series, construction of 4 miles of new mountain bike trails, athletic field improvements to include ball field lighting and scoreboards, and several bituminous trail construction and reconstruction projects. In addition, park maintenance staff conducts various facility improvements as well as daily maintenance to existing facilities.

Implementation Timeline

If grant funding were to be obtained, the City of Elk River would initiate design for the nature based playground and picnic shelter in July 2018 with final design completed around December 2018. Formal bid documents would be generated in early 2019 with bid awards anticipated by March 2019. Construction of the nature based playground and picnic shelter would be anticipated for June-October of 2019 with final completion no later than November 1, 2019. The city has already conducted final design for the wayfinding signage to include the entrance sign and kiosk for the park, construction and installation of these features would be in the summer of 2019. Modifications to the biathlon range to facilitate archery will largely be conducted by city staff during the summer of 2019 and funding would consist of purchasing the necessary materials for targets and stands, the archery range would be completed in the summer of 2019. Invasive species removal would be conducted throughout the summer and fall of 2019 with follow-up treatments in summer and fall of 2020. Total project completion is anticipated to be December of 2020.

Design Standards

The nature based playground will be designed and constructed in such a way as to meet ADA requirements and include play features which are ADA compliant. The Project Manager will work with the landscape design firm to determine the type and quantity of ADA accessible features within the playground; however not all features will be ADA accessible. The entire play structure will consist of ADA accessible surfacing in accordance with ASTM F2223-10 and walkways to the play structure will be designed and constructed in accordance with ADAAG Section 4.3 requirements. The physical play components will be designed and constructed to meet ASTM F1487-11 standards for consumer safety performance for playground equipment for public use. An audit of the playground structure and related surfacing and accessible routes will be conducted by the Project Manager who is a certified playground safety inspector (CPSI) prior to accepting the finished product.

The picnic shelter will be designed by a certified architectural firm with construction documents developed and provided for prospective bidders. The architect for the project will oversee construction of the picnic

shelter and ensure compliance with State of Minnesota building codes as well as local requirements from the City of Elk River. Final inspection of the shelter will be conducted by the City of Elk River Code Enforcement staff to ensure compliance with structural supports, load rating for the roof, and other applicable building codes. Electrical work for the shelter will be inspected by the State of Minnesota Electrical Inspector.

Modifications of the biathlon range to incorporate archery will not consist of any new construction requiring physical inspection. The existing biathlon range currently has a large berm as the backdrop to the range to prevent projectiles from traveling outside the range. Signs and fencing exist around the perimeter of the range complex to include the range fan for small caliber rifled bullets. This existing safety features of this range provide more than adequate safety requirements for archery.

Project Cost Breakdown

During the Woodland Trails Regional Park Phase I Development, no new land acquisitions will take place. Development within the park will consist of the installation of a children's nature play area, a picnic shelter capable of accommodating groups of approximately 50 people, trailhead improvements and wayfinding signage, upgrades to the biathlon range to incorporate archery, and invasive species removal.

Children's Nature Play Area - \$200,000

The children's nature play area will be constructed utilizing a nature base theme and incorporating modern playground elements. Design and materials will be chosen to fit in with the natural surrounds of the park to include elements which resemble trees, logs, rocks and other local vegetation. The design for this playground envisioned during the master planning process was to encourage climbing on, under and around features such as logs and boulders and to avoid creating a typical neighborhood type appearance. Additional features may include climbing structures made of natural materials and areas to build forts out of materials found on site. The project manager will work with the playground designer to ensure compliance with applicable ASTM standards and that the facility will meet ADA accessibility requirements, a playground audit will be conducted following installation to verify compliance. Typical playground structures within Elk River and surrounding communities consist largely of commercial style play equipment constructed of metal poles and platforms with plastic slides and climbing features. The uniqueness of this type of playground will draw from a greater audience throughout the region and become a destination play area where youth can connect with nature.

Medium Size Picnic Shelter - \$100,000 (\$25,000 cash match)

The addition of a picnic shelter is highly desired within the park and will allow for small group gatherings. Currently no picnic shelters exist within the park and existing picnic shelters within the city are located in highly developed parks and are less suitable for gatherings such as family reunions, small wedding receptions, or business and neighborhood gatherings. This shelter would accommodate groups of up to 50 people access to the existing trails within the park and complement the nature play area providing a family friendly environment. The physical design of the shelter will incorporate natural features such as field stone which is readily found throughout the park and be constructed of sustainable and low maintenance materials. In addition to the construction of the shelter, the city will furnish the shelter with amenities to include picnic tables, a serving table, and outdoor grills. Design of the shelter will be conducted by a licensed architect to ensure compliance with all applicable Minnesota and local building codes and to ensure ADA compliance.

Trailhead Improvements and Wayfinding Signage - \$25,000 (\$50,000 cash match)

The City of Elk River recently completed a wayfinding signage master plan which was adopted through the city council with the intent of implementing the plan over the course of several years. The over arching goal of the wayfinding program is to incorporate similar design aspects for informational and directional signage throughout the city to facilitate the linkage between school, residential and commercial districts as well as park properties. Through this program the city would install a new monument style entrance sign to the park as well as a kiosk in the parking lot and trailhead area utilizing a natural stone design theme which will be carried throughout the park. The four sided kiosk would provide summer and winter recreational trail maps of the park, interpretive signage and other park related information. Additional directional signage would be installed throughout the park to include updated winter and summer trail maps and directional signage to other destinations within Elk River.

Additional trailhead improvements would consist of new site amenities to include picnic tables, grills, trash cans, bike racks and benches which would be positioned throughout the park. These amenities would provide visitors with opportunities to rest along the trails or picnic as a small group away from the main picnic shelter. Interpretive signage would be added along the trails to discuss the natural habitats found within the park as well as the unique geological features found within the park.

Invasive Species Management - \$30,000 (\$50,000 cash match)

Woodland Trails Regional Park consists of 427 acres of primarily oak woodland and wetland complexes with small parcels of restored prairie. As with most woodland areas within southern and central Minnesota, the oak woodlands within the park have become inundated with non-native buckthorn and honeysuckle species. Managing invasive species in the oak woodlands is vital to ensuring the long term viability of the forest ecosystem and preserving the oak forests and scattered wetlands. Removal of invasive buckthorn, honeysuckle and other non-native trees and shrubs will provide for an opportunity for the next generation of native trees and shrubs to thrive, ultimately restoring and preserving habitat for native wildlife species. Additional funding for invasive species management would accelerate the removal of mature non-native trees and shrubs and allow for follow-up treatment to be conducted to prevent seedlings from maturing.

Multipurpose Archery and Biathlon Range - \$7,000

The current biathlon range with the park provides for a unique opportunity for biathletes from all over Minnesota to train; however this facility is currently underutilized and could be better utilized as a multi-purpose archery and biathlon range. Removable archery targets would be added to the existing biathlon range to allow for easy transition between shooting sports. The targets would be placed at varying distances from five to 50 meters with multiple targets positioned at 10 and 15 meters, the distances utilized for the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). Funding would be utilized to purchase targets and materials for the construction of portable target stands. Work on this project would be conducted by city staff and would include modifications to existing grades, construction and placement of target stands, and site amenities to include arrow and bow holders. Interior improvements to the existing range building would also be conducted to allow for the storage of targets as well as scoring for biathlon and archery events.

Funding Request Breakdown

Please use valid currency formats (e.g. \$100,000/100,000/100000)

Grant Funding Request

\$362,000

Local Match #1

\$125,000

Funder #1

0

Local Match #2

0

Funder #2

0

Local Match #3

0

Funder #3

0

Local Match #4

0

Funder #4

0

Local Match #4

0

Funder #5

0

Non-Eligible Local Match

0

Non-Eligible Item Description

NA

Total Funding

\$487,000

Percentage of local match

0.26

Completion Timeframe

December, 2020

Funder #1

City of Elk River

Funder #1 Resolutions

City Council Resolution

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/RES_17-37_498a24.jpg<http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/>**Funder #2**

NA

Funder #3

NA

Funder #4

NA

Funder #5

NA

Attachments

Doc Name	Description	Url
Project Area Map		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Project Area Map		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Park Concept Map_26f8c0.pdf
Project Area Map		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Woodlands Trails Regional Map_9a78c6.pdf
Project Area Map		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Funder Resolution One	City Council Resolution	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/RES_17-37_498a24.jpg

Funder Resolution One		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Archery Facility Concept	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Archery Facility Concept_304c30.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Approved Wayfinding Sign Designs	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Kiosk and In-Park Sign Designs_Wayfinding_90c3d7.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Master Plan Park Concept	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Park Concept Map_88a7f3.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Parking Lot and Trailhead Layout	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Park Concept Map_Main Campus_b6df7e.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Park Entrance Sign Approved Design	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Park Entrance Sign Designs_Wayfinding_2cbc68.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Existing Trails Map	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Trail Map_de10ac.pdf
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Picnic Shelter Concept	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Picnic Shelter Concept_8dbd62.jpg
Additional Attachment		http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/
Additional Attachment	Nature Based Playground Concepts	http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/Nature Based Playground Concepts_2bbed3.pdf

Additional Attachment

<http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/funding/17-0095-F/>