



## STAFF REPORT

DATE: 9/3/2019

**REGULAR**

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Marty Powers, Public Works Director  
**AGENDA ITEM:** Buck Thorn Removal Grant – Sunfish Lake Park  
**REVIEWED BY:** Ben Prchal, City Planner Director  
Kristina Handt, City Administrator

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### **BACKGROUND:**

At the August 2019 Parks Commission meeting, George Johnson submitted a proposal for the buckthorn removal grant application. The Park Commission recommends applying for the grant to remove buckthorn from Sunfish Lake Park.

### **ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNCIL:**

Should the city council recommend approval of the grant submittal?

### **PROPOSAL:**

As part of the plan to continue improving city properties, parks and the forests within, removing invasive species to improve the habitat for native animals, birds and insects that are dependent on these areas is of great benefit. Surveys of Sunfish Lake Park have shown that the invasive buck thorn is overtaking the native oaks, cherries, forbs, grasses and ferns at an alarming rate. The Grant would be utilized to remove the buckthorn and improve the 35 acres of oak forest, restoring it to its former state of a high quality habitat. The total project cost to remove the buckthorn is \$160,500. The Total grant amount requested is \$145,500 and the total match amount pledged is \$15,000. The project would be a joint effort between the City of Lake Elmo and The Friends of Lake Elmo's Sunfish Lake. Over the past year the Friends organization has already committed over 1000 hours of time to remove buckthorn from the park. The grant proposes that the city contribute \$10,000 and the remaining match be met with volunteer hours from the Friends. In addition, the grant program manager would be Becky Tempas, Executive Director of the Nature Center. In exchange the Sally Manzara Nature Center would receive the administration funds of approximately \$7,500.

The three year project would include the removal of the buckthorn through forestry mowing and by hand, using select methods to discourage re-emerging buckthorn, removing large deadfall trees and supplemental seeding of the areas with desirable plants that will be better able to compete.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

City funding for Sunfish Lake Park Buckthorn Removal match grant is \$10,000. The 2019 parks budget includes \$10,000 for Sunfish Lake Park Management efforts. It could be used for this grant or to continue efforts on the prairie work that started last year.

### **OPTIONS:**

- 1) Approval grant submittal.
- 2) Deny grant submittal
- 3) Table submitting grant application

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

***“Motion to submit the Grant Application for the Sunfish Lake Park Buckthorn Removal Project”***

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Draft Grant Submittal

Printed 2019-08-09

## Project Contact

**Project name**

Sunfish Lake Park Restoration

**Organization name**

City of Lake Elmo

**Organization type**

Government

**Mailing address 1**

3880 Laverne Ave., Suite 100, N.

**Mailing address 2****City**

Lake Elmo

**State**

MN

**Zip code**

55042

**Project manager**

Becky Tenpas

**Title**

Executive

**Phone**

651-408-2838

**Email**

becky.tenpas@sminc-lake-elmo.org

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## Project Overview

### Sites / Locations

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**County name:**

Washington

**Project site name:**

Sunfish Lake Park Restoration

**Total project sites:**

1

**Total project sites:**

1

**Total project acres:**

35

### Land Ownership

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**Primary land ownership:**

Local Government

**Additional land ownerships:**

### Habitat

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**Primary habitat type:**

Forest

**Additional habitat types:**

### Activities

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**Primary activity:**

Restoration

**Additional activities:**

**ECP activities:**

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## Project Finding Summary

Grant type	Metro
Grant request level	over \$25,000
Total grant amount requested	\$145,500
Total match amount pledged	\$15,000
Additional funding amount	
Total project cost	\$160,500

# Project Summary

**Have you ever received a CPL grant before?** No

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## Project Location Summary

### **Primary county**

Washington

### **Project site name**

Sunfish Lake Park Restoration

### **Primary land ownership**

Local Government

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## Habitat and Activity Summary

### **Primary habitat type**

Forest

### **Primary activity**

Restoration

### **Total project sites**

1

### **Total project acres**

35

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## **Summary**

Sunfish Lake Park is a highly visible and heavily used park that holds great diversity and is looked at as the “jewel”™ of the parks of Lake Elmo. This Park is home to three ecosystem, a large tract of Upland Oak Forest, a 17-acre restored prairie, and a portion of Sunfish Lake with associated wetlands. The forest is home to a diverse mix of plant species that live among the Oaks. Over time this land has become highly degraded by invasive species, providing less of a sanctuary for the native animals and birds that inhabit this area. Surveys of this area have shown that invasive species of flora are overtaking high quality native vegetation at an alarming rate and encroaching even further into the sensitive areas. This area also provides refuge to numerous types of wildlife, including migratory birds. This project will restore 35 acres of oak forest. Restoring it to the former functional state will

provide much-needed habitat to species dependent on mature oak forest. There was a Forestry Management Plan for Sunfish Lake Park that was completed in 2015. That plan is attached. This grant intends to begin following the recommendations of that plan. This project is a joint effort of the City of Lake Elmo and the Friends of Lake Elmo's Sunfish Lake, which is an organization supporting the Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center which opened in June 2018. Over the past year the Friends organization has already committed over 1000 hours of time to remove buckthorn from the park.

## **Problem statement**

The issue in this area is dense buckthorn growth that is competing with native oaks, cherries, forbs, grasses, and ferns. Currently, a community of desirable oaks does exist, however, the age structure shows that buckthorn is out competing regrowth. Without management, the area will be dominated by buckthorn in the future. Restoring this area to its native oak forest habitat will ensure continued pressure from new invasive species does not inhibit the function of this unique land of biodiversity.

## **Project objectives**

The result of this restoration will be increased diversity of understory plant types and a more desirable of age structure (wider range) of desirable trees. Buckthorn will be removed from the area, allowing increasing native plant regeneration. Supplemental seeding will take place to ensure a bank of desirable plants that will be better able to compete. The result of this project will be a restored ecosystem that supports native biodiversity. Buckthorn and other invasive plants will be reduced as a threat. Native bird populations will enjoy and thrive in the increased habitable area. Other oak wood dependent species will also benefit. Butterflies and other pollinators that currently see this area as uninhabitable will have food and shelter established through this restoration. 35 acres of oak woods will be maintained as a unique ecosystem for visitors to learn about. Finally, the risk of spreading the known invasive species of Sunfish Lake Park, such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, and Oriental bittersweet, into adjacent restored areas will be greatly reduced. The projected budget is similar to that of other projects that have been completed in surrounding Metro Counties, which are commonly based on state contract prices. This budget is the most reasonable price to meet the objectives of the restoration.

## **Methods**

The restoration will include removal of invasive species, primarily buckthorn, further removal of undesirable tree species, prescribed burning at select areas, and seeding of aggressive native herbaceous mix selected to out compete re-emerging buckthorn seedlings. The restoration of these areas will promote the growth of native herbaceous vegetation and oak woodland regeneration for the benefits of plant species diversity and improved habitat, while stabilizing erodible areas. Removal of woody invasive vegetation, including buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other trees impeding the oak woodlands will be done through forestry mowing where feasible or by hand. Large deadfall trees from a 2013 blowdown will be removed. The material will be stacked and burned on site, with the potential to have some removed from the site. A prescribed burn of select areas will be completed the spring

following all the woody invasive removal. Native seed will be cast in areas with limited native herbaceous cover and bare soil following the burn. Select areas of herbaceous invasive species, such as garlic mustard, will also be sprayed and cleared for planting of native seed. Work will be completed by a contractor as required, except for additional Buckthorn removal and other work feasible for volunteers, and prescribed burning will be conducted by a certified contractor following a DNR approved burn plan. Seeding with cover crop using a stabilizer, such as hydro mulch, to prevent erosion as seed takes will be used as feasible.

## **Experience / Abilities**

The City of Lake Elmo is a growing city with a strong commitment to building and managing parks and trails for its residents. They have completed many successful projects and worked cooperatively with county and state organizations. Becky Tenpas, the project manager, is an employee of the Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center (SMINC) and is an experienced administrator who has vast experience organizing local community volunteers and managing community projects. The SMINC has a growing list of over 800 volunteers and interested citizens to draw on for assistance.

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## **Project Timeline**

<b>Time Frame (month, season and/or year)</b>	<b>Goal</b>
Winter 2019/2020 & 20/21	Undesirable wood removal 30 acres
Winter 2019/2020 & 20/21	Burn piles
Winter 2019/2020 & 20/21	Large tree removal 10 acres
Spring 2020 & 2021	Prescribed burn
Fall 2020 & 2021	Foliar spray of vegetation
Fall 2020 & 2021	Casting native seed 35 acres
Fall 2020 & 2021	Oak planting 35 acres

## **Estimated project completion date**

2022-12-31

(must be complete by 2023-06-30)



# Budget Information

**Name**

Sue Iverson

**Title**

Director Of Finance

**Email**

Slverson@lakeelmo.org

**Phone**

651-747-3909

**Street address 1**

3880 Laverne Ave., Suite 100, N.

**Street address 2****City**

Lake Elmo

**State**

MN

**Zip Code**

55042

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## Budget Details

**Personnel**

Name	Title / work to be completed	Amount	Grant/Match	In-kind/Cash
Becky Tenpas	Administration	\$2,500	Grant	
Becky Tenpas	Coordination/volunteers	\$5,000	Grant	

**Contracts**

Contractor Name	Contracted Work	Amount	Grant/Match	In-kind/Cash
TBD	Herbicide spray 10 acres	\$5,000	Grant	
TBD	Prescribed burn 10 acres	\$4,000	Grant	
TBD	Seed and application 10 acres	\$15,000	Grant	
TBD	Oak Seedling/planting 10 acres	\$2,500	Grant	
TBD	Woody removal 25 acres	\$37,500	Grant	
TBD	Herbicide spray 25 acres	\$12,500	Grant	
TBD	Prescribed burn 25 acres	\$10,000	Grant	
TBD	Seed and application 25 acres	\$37,500	Grant	
TBD	Oak Seedling/planting 25 acres	\$5,000	Grant	
TBD	Burn Woody piles	\$4,000	Grant	
TBD	Large tree removal 10 acres	\$5,000	Grant	
TBD	Seed hand casting 5 acres	\$10,000	Match	Cash
TBD	Woody removal 5 acres	\$5,000	Match	In-kind

### Additional Funding

Additional Funds are dollars used towards the project that are not grant funds or counted as match.

### Additional funding amount

### Budget Overview

Item Type	Grant	Match	Total
Personnel	\$7,500		\$7,500
Contracts	\$138,000	\$15,000	\$153,000
Fee Acquisition with PILT			
Fee Acquisition without PILT			
Easement Acquisition			
Travel (in-state)			
Professional Services			
DNR Land Acquisition Cost			
Equipment/Tools/Supplies			
Additional Budget Items			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$145,500</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$160,500</b>

### Project Finding Summary

Grant type	Metro
Grant request level	over \$25,000
Total grant amount requested	\$145,500
Total match amount pledged	\$15,000
Additional funding amount	
Total project cost	\$160,500

# Project Information

Answer each of the following questions in 1000 characters or less.

**1. Describe the degree of collaboration and local support for this project.**

The City of Lake Elmo is partnering with the Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center (SMINC). Staff from SMINC will administer the grant and recruit volunteers. SMINC opened in Sunfish Lake Park in June, 2018. The volunteers of SMINC became the Adopt a Park sponsor for Sunfish Lake Park with the City of Lake Elmo. The SMINC now has a mailing list of 800 people. In July 2017 a committed group of citizens began removing Buckthorn from the park. Every second Saturday of the month the group cuts Buckthorn. In the past year they have volunteered over 1000 hours. The group, lead by local retiree George Johnson, knows that removing Buckthorn is a long term project. They have removed about 5 acres of Buckthorn creating a display area to bring awareness to the problem and gather local support, and they are committed to removing another 5 acres and dedicating 250 hours (minimum) to supporting this proposal. This group will continue to monitor the areas where work is completed

**2. Describe any urgency associated with this project.**

If this work is not completed in the next few years the environmental risks and cost of restoration will only increase. The oldest buckthorn removed thus far had been established about 35 years ago, providing a major supply of seed carried by birds to the rest of the City. A significant part of the Park's forest is dominated by buckthorn. The further encroachment of invasive species will continue to degrade the remaining woodlands. The existing work on the initial 5 acres will go for naught. The remaining understory of the woodland is at high risk given the established buckthorn seed bank and will only become more infested with an increasing seed bank and larger mat of buckthorn vegetation.

**3. Discuss if there is full funding secured for this project, the sources of that funding and if CPL Grant funds will supplement or supplant existing funding.**

There is full funding secured as a budgeted cash match of \$10,000 from the City of Lake Elmo and a committed volunteer match of 300 hours times \$20 per hour or \$6,000 from the SMINC. The CPL funds requested would not substitute traditional funding. Lake Elmo Sunfish Park has been identified by Lake Elmo Parks and Recreation Committee for quite some time as a prime location for restoration, however, ever-growing budget constraints have limited the funds for additional habitat quality enhancement projects that go beyond what is possible with traditional funding. If awarded, the funding for this project stands to implement the conservation ideals of all agencies and stakeholders involved.

**4. Describe public access at project site for hunting and fishing, identifying all open seasons.**

There is no public hunting allowed in the Park, fishing is available in Sunfish Lake adjacent to the Park but there is no public boat ramp. The site is open for recreational use.

**5. Discuss use of native vegetation (if applicable).**

The grasses and forbs seed being used for the prairie and understory propagation will be from local ecotypes from the St. Paul Baldwin Plains and Moraines or the Anoka Sandplain subsections, if possible. It is imperative that the species being used for the site are conducive to the natural ecosystems to meet the goal of native reestablishment.

**6. Discuss your budget and why it is cost effective.**

The cost per acre for this site was projected from the costs to complete the restoration work on other projects. This budget is similar to other projects that have been completed in surrounding Metro Counties which are commonly based on state contract prices. This budget provides the most economical way to meet the objectives of the restoration project.

**7. Provide information on how your organization encourages a local conservation culture. This includes your organization's history of promoting conservation in the local area, visibility of work to the public and any activities and outreach your organization has completed in the local area.**

The Sally Manzara Interpretive Nature Center provides educational programs to civic, conservation, and scout and other community groups. We provide extensive information on conservation and habitat restoration on our website, at the nature center and with handout materials. In 2018 we held a Buckthorn Festival to remove buckthorn from Sunfish Lake Park, educate the community on this invasive species and have some fun. Our staff works with multiple agencies and nongovernmental organizations to conduct habitat restoration activities and outreach programs associated with restoration work for wildlife habitat improvement. We have constructed a Rain Garden with technical assistance and a grant from the Valley Branch Watershed District to reduce run-off from our building site, and as a teaching tool. We have also implemented a Monarch Waystation through Monarch Watch to offset the Monarch habitat deterioration and to help educate our visitors on environmental and pollinator topics.

## Site Information

Land Manager

**Name**

Marty Powers

**Organization**

City of Lake Elmo

**Title**

Director of Public Services

**Review and approval form**

lm-approval.pdf

**Phone**

651-747-3941

**Email**

mpowers@lakeelmo.org

Site Information

**Site name**

Sunfish Lake Park Restoration

**Habitat**

Forest

**Activity**

Restoration

**Land ownership**

Local Government

**Pls section**

T: 29 R: 21 D: W S: 15

**Project acres**

35

**Open to public hunting?**

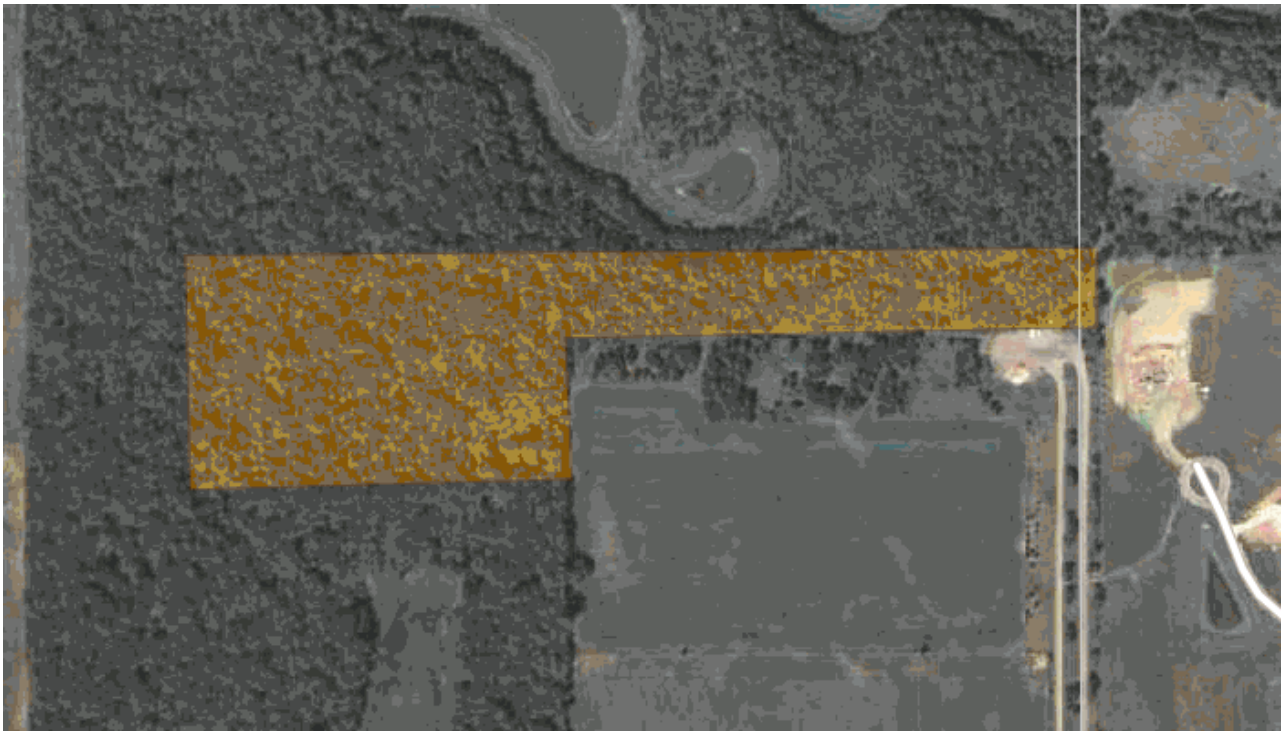
No

**Open to public fishing?**

Yes - some

**Will you receive any revenues during the grant period from activities on this land?**

No



# Natural Heritage Database Review

Answer the following questions

**Natural Heritage elements were found within one mile of my project site(s)**

Yes

**List all elements found within one mile of site(s) and discuss how you will mitigate or avoid impacts to these elements.**

NHIS Review for CPL Application "Sunfish Lake Park" 29 July 2019 Vertebrate Animal  
Scientific name Common Name State Status Federal Status # of features Notes Buteo  
lineatus red shouldered hawk SPC Haliaeetus leucocephalus bald eagle delisted  
Etheostoma microperca least darter SPC Notropis anogenus pugnose shiner THR  
Emydoidea blandingii Blanding's turtle THR Invertebrate Animal Bombus affinis rusty-  
patched bumblebee END Terrestrial Community Native plant community type - FDs37 Oak -  
(Red Maple) Woodland Type STATE STATUS - KEY END - endangered THR - threatened  
SPC - special concern We will be sure to work with our contractor and volunteers to make  
sure we are not interfering with any of these natural heritage elements.



# Attachments

## Additional Documentation

Attach additional documentation as applicable using the appropriate categories below. If you exceed the size limit while uploading, contact CPL staff to discuss your options.

## Letters of Support

### Partner Commitment Letters

File	Description
SMINC_letter_to_support_for_CPL_Grant.docx	Commitment Letter for nature center

## Photos

File	Description
Buckthorn_Removal_Fest.pdf	Poster from Buckthorn Festival
2014-Sunfish-Lake-park-map.pdf	Sunfish Lake Trail Map

## Restoration Plans

File	Description
Sunfish_Lake_Park_Forest_Management_Plan_Final.pdf	Forest Management Plan

## Engineering/Survey/Design Plans

### Supplemental Documents

# Final Application Submission

This completes your CPL Grant Application. Please take the time to revisit the previous sections and make sure you have entered everything completely and correctly. Once you hit the submit button below, you will not be able to return to this application to make changes.

I certify that I have read the Conservation Partners Legacy Grants Program Request for Proposal, Program Manual and other program documents, and have discussed this project with the appropriate public land manager, or private landowner and easement holder.

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I certify that I have read the Conservation Partners Legacy Grants Program Request for Proposal, Program Manual and other program documents, and have discussed this project with the appropriate public land manager, or private landowner and easement holder.

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I certify that all of the information contained in the application is correct as of the time of the submission. If anything should change, I will contact CPL Grant Staff immediately to make corrections.

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I certify that if funded I will give consideration to and make timely written contact to Minnesota Conservation Corps or its successor for consideration of possible use of their services to contract for restoration and enhancement services. I will provide CPL staff a copy of that written contact within 10 days after the execution of my grant, should I be awarded.

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I certify that I am aware at least one Land Manager Review and Approval form is required for every application and at least one Public Waters Contact form is required for all public waters work. I am aware I must submit all completed forms by uploading them into this application. I have attached the required type and number of forms as necessary for this project.

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I am aware that by typing my name in the box below, I am applying my signature to this online document.

**Signature**

**Title**

**Organization / Agency**

**Date**