

Natural Resources

Projects Summary

(\$ in thousands)

Project Title	Priority Ranking	Funding Source	Project Requests for State Funds		
			2026	2028	2030
Natural Resources Asset Preservation	1	GO	\$ 203,000	\$ 203,000	\$ 203,000
Natural Resources Betterment of Buildings	2	GO	\$ 43,000	\$ 43,000	\$ 43,000
Natural Resources Acquisition and Betterment of Public Lands	3	GO	\$ 29,000	\$ 29,000	\$ 29,000
Aviation Infrastructure	4	GO	\$ 16,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
Improving Accessibility of DNR-Managed Lands and Facilities	5	GO	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Dam Safety Repair, Reconstruction or Removal	6	GO	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance Program	7	GO	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000
Parks and Trails Local and Regional Grant Program	8	GO	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
Total Project Requests			\$ 359,000	\$ 343,000	\$ 343,000
General Obligation Bonds (GO) Total			\$ 359,000	\$ 343,000	\$ 343,000

(\$ in thousands)

Natural Resources Asset Preservation

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$203,000**Priority Ranking:** 1

Project Summary: \$203 million in GO bonds for repair or renovation of degraded or failing capital assets (including buildings, roads, trails, public water accesses, bridges, recreational facilities and more) to ensure they are safe and functional for the recreating public, support the conservation of Minnesota's natural resources, and preserve the state's investment in its capital assets.

Project Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$203 million for Natural Resources Asset Preservation (NRAP) under M.S. 84.946 to address the following high-priority needs:

- **Buildings:** \$70 million for repair and deferred maintenance of existing buildings, particularly to bring crisis or poor buildings and building components up to acceptable or better condition. Special focus will be paid to safety, accessibility, and operational efficiency.
- **Water and Wastewater Systems:** \$12 million to address aging, failing and substandard water and wastewater infrastructure statewide, including at our most heavily used state parks such as Itasca and Lake Bemidji state parks.
- **Roads, Trails, and Bridges:** \$42 million to provide critical repair and renewal of poor-condition and failing roads, trails, culverts, and bridges on state public lands. DNR-managed roads provide essential access to state forests, parks, recreation areas, wildlife management areas, and private lands—supporting outdoor recreation, economic activity, and emergency response. State trails, which see about 2 million visitors annually, offer affordable outdoor recreation.
- **Public Water Access Sites (PWAs) and Lake Superior Small Craft Harbors:** \$12 million to continue to rehabilitate Minnesota's public water accesses and harbors to make them accessible to all users, meet the needs of modern vessels (both motorized and paddle sports), improve protection of public waters from stormwater runoff and invasive species, and enhance resilience from more frequent storm events.
- **Water Control Structures:** \$10 million to repair or replace deteriorating water control structures that provide waterfowl habitat and support fisheries on key shallow lakes and wetlands across Minnesota.
- **Campsites, Group Camps, Shower Buildings, Day Use Areas, and Vault Toilets:** \$47 million to address deferred maintenance and meet the changing needs of the public by refurbishing campgrounds, group camps, shower buildings, day use areas, and vault toilets in state parks, recreation areas, and forest campgrounds.

- **Hatcheries:** \$10 million for critical repairs to fish hatchery facilities that support conservation, outdoor recreation, tourism, and rural economies.

Project Rationale

The DNR manages \$4.36 billion in built assets - facilities and infrastructure that span every Minnesota county. DNR-managed lands, buildings, facilities, and infrastructure are part of the fabric of communities. These assets help to connect Minnesotans with the outdoors, support local and statewide economies, conserve natural resources, and enhance quality of life. Stewardship of these assets requires ongoing repair, renovation, and replacement.

Two complementary components of DNR's overall bonding request support this stewardship: NRAP, which funds repair, renovation, and like-for-like replacement of existing capital assets; and "Betterment of Buildings," which funds major improvements, expansion, and new construction to address buildings that no longer meet current needs. Together, these programs target critical preservation, renewal, and modernization needs.

The growing list of deferred maintenance (currently estimated to total \$789 million) poses considerable risk to the safety and usability of DNR-managed assets, and the public benefits they provide. Significant NRAP investment is essential to address this risk. As DNR addresses asset preservation, the agency also upgrades to today's standards and best practices, whether that be accessibility, energy efficiency, or climate resiliency, thereby enabling the DNR to better serve all Minnesotans into the future.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

The DNR's asset preservation needs are further documented in the most recent DNR 10-Year Capital Asset Need report (mndnr.gov/reports).

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This request does not require additional operating funds. Addressing agency asset preservation needs in a timely manner prevents more costly repairs in the future. Operating funds may be needed for capital repairs if future bonding appropriations are insufficient.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2025, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 15 – Bond, Asset Preservation \$33,000,000

L2023, Ch. 72 - Bond, Asset Preservation \$36,000,000

L2020, 5th Spec. Sess. Ch. 3 - Bond, Asset Preservation \$20,000,000

L2019 Ch. 2 - Bond, Asset Preservation, \$3,419,000

L2018 Ch. 214 - Bond, Asset Preservation, \$26,581,000

L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, Asset Preservation, \$15,000,000

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Natural Resources Betterment of Buildings

AT A GLANCE

2026 Request Amount:	\$43,000
Priority Ranking:	2
Project Summary:	\$43 million in GO bonds to modernize or replace existing facilities and invest in new facilities to better serve all Minnesotans.

Project Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$43 million to acquire, construct, and improve buildings under M.S. 86A.12. The request will support significant modernization and enhancement efforts including:

- Replacing or significantly enhancing DNR offices and storage facilities to improve accessibility, staff safety, public service, and operational effectiveness;
- Designing a new St. Paul Fish Hatchery to replace the existing facility, which was last updated in the 1980's;
- Completing the construction of a new seed extractory, packing house and cooler, and office expansion and remodel at the State Forest Nursery facility at Badoura; and,
- Constructing new or significantly modernized/enhanced visitor centers, picnic shelters, trail center facilities, camper cabins, and campground shower buildings at state parks and recreation areas.

Project Rationale

The DNR manages built assets valued at \$4.36 billion for the benefit of all Minnesotans. This infrastructure, which spans every Minnesota county and reflects generations of investment, connects Minnesotans with the outdoors, supports community prosperity, conserves our natural heritage, and contributes to our quality of life.

Funding for Betterment of Buildings is a critical complement to funding for Natural Resources Asset Preservation (NRAP). NRAP funding addresses the backlog of deferred maintenance that affects the safety, usability, and effectiveness of DNR-managed facilities and infrastructure. "Betterment" funding allows for substantial improvements or additions to, or replacement of, buildings that fail to meet current needs or have reached the end of their useful life, and construction of new buildings essential to advancing the DNR's mission.

The growing list of renewal and replacement needs poses considerable risk to the public benefits provided by DNR-managed assets, including rearing fish for stocking Minnesota lakes and streams, growing trees for reforestation and forest/woodlot enhancements, serving the public at DNR offices, and providing high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities.

Renewal and replacement of DNR-managed buildings also reduces operating costs and enhances public value by replacing antiquated buildings with ones that require less energy and water to operate, have greater safety features, provide better access to all Minnesotans, and require significantly less maintenance now and into the future.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

When determining building needs, the DNR looks for opportunities to consolidate uses to promote efficient use of space and reduce long-term operating costs (example: co-located offices or storage).

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Betterment of Buildings activities have been funded through capital investments before and this proposal is not expected to result in new impacts on operating budgets. Addressing agency capital asset needs in a timely manner prevents more costly repairs in the future. Operating funds may be needed for capital repairs if future bonding appropriations are insufficient.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2023, Ch. 72 - Bond, Buildings, \$30,000,000

L2018, Ch. 214 - Bond, Buildings, \$6,000,000

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Natural Resources Acquisition and Betterment of Public Lands

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$29,000**Priority Ranking:** 3**Project Summary:** \$29 million in GO bonds to acquire and better public lands in order to conserve Minnesota's natural resources, enrich outdoor recreational opportunities, and provide for sustainable commercial uses of natural resources.**Project Description**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$29 million to acquire and improve DNR-managed public lands under M.S. 86A.12.

Acquisition: \$13 million is requested to acquire, either in fee or through easements:

- High-priority parcels for Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs).
- Strategic in-holdings for state parks and recreation areas, and high-priority parcels for state trails, and public water accesses.
- Forested parcels currently in private ownership that might otherwise be converted to non-forest uses.

Betterment of Public Lands: \$16 million is requested to improve public lands, including:

- Reforestation after timber harvests, forest pest outbreaks, and storms/wildfires.
- Forest stand improvement projects to enhance species diversity, resilience, wildlife habitat, water quality benefits, and economic value.
- Renewal and replacement of campgrounds and day-use areas and development of new campgrounds or campground loops to meet the needs of current and future users. This includes adding new tenting and group campsites, adding amenities such as larger campsites and increased capacity for RV camping at existing campgrounds, adding or enhancing campground electrical connections and dump stations for recreational vehicles (RVs), and building trailheads.

Project Rationale

Minnesota's public lands are vital to the health and wellbeing of the state. They provide opportunities for those of all incomes and abilities to connect with and enjoy the benefits of the outdoors, and they contribute to the health of local economies. Continued investment is needed both to maintain the rich outdoor resources Minnesotans currently enjoy and to ensure the state's public lands meet the

needs of a growing and changing population. Investment is also needed to help ensure Minnesota's natural systems are resilient to the effects of climate change and other large-scale landscape impacts.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

DNR evaluates acquisitions using department-wide Strategic Land Asset Management (SLAM) goals, as well as division- and program-specific goals for Forestry, Parks and Trails, Fish and Wildlife and Ecological and Water Resources. DNR's department-wide land acquisition goals are to:

- Increase close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities
- Protect significant and/or rare natural resources
- Restore and protect water resources
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Expand access to existing land holdings
- Consolidate land ownership, creating larger, contiguous blocks of DNR lands

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Land acquisitions can impact operating budgets. Acquiring in-holdings may increase operating efficiency by consolidating ownership and reducing boundary and trespass issues. Some acquisitions may result in development of new facilities in the future, which could increase operating costs. Campground expansions may increase operating costs but also expand revenue collected from camping fees.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2025, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 15 – Bond, Reforestation, \$1,000,000

L2023, Ch. 72 – General Fund, Acquisition and Betterment of Public Lands, \$2,500,000

L2023, Ch. 72 - Bond, Reforestation, \$6,000,000

L2020, 5th Spec. Sess. Ch. 3 - Bond, Forests for the Future (i.e., easement acquisitions), \$1,000,000

L2018, Ch. 214 - Bond, Reforestation, \$3,000,000

L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, Reforestation, \$1,000,000

L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, Parks and Trails, \$14,548,000

L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, St. Paul Invasive Tree Pests, \$1,500,000

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Aviation Infrastructure

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$16,000**Priority Ranking:** 4**Project Summary:** \$16 million in GO bonds to modernize aviation infrastructure in Brainerd that supports effective response to wildfires, law enforcement response and search and rescue operations, and other safety and natural resource management needs.**Project Description**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) proposes critical infrastructure upgrades to modernize its aviation facilities at the Brainerd Regional Airport. The project includes replacing outdated modular units and sheds with a new wildfire and emergency response operations center, rebuilding deteriorated aircraft parking and airtanker loading area pavement, and consolidating three leased hangars into a single, purpose-built facility that better meets the need for secure storage and work areas. These improvements will enhance efficiency, coordination, and effectiveness in emergency response and natural resource management.

Project Rationale

DNR aviation units, based in the divisions of Forestry and Enforcement, are vital to the state's wildfire and emergency response operations. The aviation unit in Brainerd is strategically located to support wildfire and emergency response needs in Central Minnesota and is the primary base for large airtanker operations in the region.

DNR aviation teams respond to wildfires, floods, windstorms, and winter storm damage on state-administered lands. They provide critical initial attack and surveillance for wildfire suppression, support law enforcement activities, conduct search and rescue, and transport medical and first responder personnel to remote areas inaccessible by road—often saving lives and bolstering public safety in critical moments. Beyond emergency response, DNR's aviation fleet supports a wide range of natural resource management tasks across Minnesota including wildlife surveys, forest health assessments, fish stocking, invasive species control, and supply transport.

Airtanker bases, hangars, and helibase facilities must be secure, safe, energy efficient, and provide the space needed for dispatch and operations personnel, aircraft, pilots, and crews to support effective response to wildfires and other emergency response and public safety needs on state lands. With a long track record of serving Minnesotans and protecting natural resources, the DNR's aviation program now faces constraints from aging and inefficient infrastructure. Investing in aviation facilities is essential to maintaining rapid response capabilities, safeguarding valuable equipment, and ensuring

long-term program sustainability. This project will continue the effort to modernize aviation infrastructure that began with the replacement of the airplane ramp in Hibbing, Minnesota.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

The DNR is working with the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission on this project and may grant the commission funds to execute construction.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

This request does not require additional operating funds. This project is expected to reduce operating expenses by reducing hangar rental fees and improving building weatherization.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2023, Ch. 72 - Bond, Wildfire Aviation Infrastructure, \$6,360,000

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Improving Accessibility of DNR-Managed Lands and Facilities**AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$10,000**Priority Ranking:** 5**Project Summary:** \$10 million in GO bonds to comprehensively improve the accessibility of DNR-managed lands and facilities to Minnesotans of all abilities.**Project Description**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$10 million to comprehensively improve the accessibility of state-managed lands and facilities to Minnesotans of all abilities. The funding will enable the DNR to complete accessibility improvements to high-use state parks and recreation areas, as well as high-visitation wildlife management areas (WMAs) and aquatic management areas (AMAs). Improving accessibility at DNR-managed facilities and public lands enhances the experience of all users and advances the DNR's strategic priorities of connecting people to the outdoors and expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Project Rationale

Many DNR buildings and facilities are more than 50 years old and were built before the advent of state and federal accessibility standards. While recent renovations and construction projects meet these standards, the project-by-project approach to addressing accessibility needs has resulted in a “patchwork quilt” of accessible and not-yet-accessible features across DNR-managed state parks, recreation areas, WMAs, and AMAs. As a result, visitors with disabilities can enjoy certain components of a site, but not an accessible experience.

The DNR has been partnering with the Minnesota Council on Disability and others to identify opportunities to more comprehensively enhance accessibility at public lands and facilities. This project will build on recent successes, such as the comprehensive accessibility improvements completed at William O’Brien State Park in 2025. It will provide for more accessible experiences across the state so that all Minnesotans can enjoy public lands and facilities in their entirety.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

Enhanced accessibility opens outdoor experiences to people with disabilities and improves access and experience for people of all abilities.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

Investments that increase accessibility have been funded through capital investments for many years

and this proposal is not expected to result in new impacts on operating budgets.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2025, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 15 – Bond, \$1,000,000

L2023, Ch. 72 – Bond, \$1,200,000

L2020, 5th Spec. Sess. Ch. 3 - Bond \$3,000,000

L2018, Ch. 214, Bond, \$500,000

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(\$ in thousands)

Dam Safety Repair, Reconstruction or Removal**AT A GLANCE****2026 Request Amount:** \$10,000**Priority Ranking:** 6

Project Summary: \$10 million in GO bonds for repair, modification, or removal of public dams to 1) prevent public safety hazards, 2) maintain structural integrity, 3) regulate water levels on recreational lakes, and 4) improve fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, water availability and recreational value.

Project Description

This request supports the DNR's Dam Safety Program, which was established under M.S. 103G.511 to manage Minnesota's public dam infrastructure. The program provides design, engineering, and construction assistance to repair, reconstruct, or remove dams, and to respond to dam safety emergencies. Minnesota's public dam infrastructure includes nearly 650 dams owned by the state, counties, cities, and watershed districts. The state owns more than 300 of these public dams.

This request will support the repair or removal of approximately the top five DNR-managed dams and top six locally owned dams identified on the Dam Safety Project Priority List*. About 10 percent of the request will be reserved for emergencies. Prior to the end of the funding window, unspent emergency funds will be used for the next highest priority projects identified on the Dam Safety Project Priority List.

* The DNR prepares the Dam Safety Project Priority List as directed by M.S. 103G.511, subd 12.

Project Rationale

Most public dams are over 50 years old. Capital investment funding is needed to repair, modify, reconstruct, or remove these aging dams to 1) prevent public safety hazards, 2) maintain structural integrity, 3) regulate water levels on recreational lakes, and 4) improve fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, water availability, and recreational value. Emergency repairs also must be made when extreme weather events or emerging structural challenges affect integrity or safety.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

As a part of the Dam Safety Program, every other year the DNR develops and submits to the legislature a Dam Safety Project Priority List. This list, along with the maintenance needs identified in the DNR's 10-Year Capital Asset Need Report, informs each capital request for dam safety repair,

reconstruction, and removal.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

The Dam Safety Program has been funded by capital investments for many years and is not expected to result in new impacts on operating budgets.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2023, Ch. 72 – Bond, \$4,000,000

L2020, 5th Spec. Sess. Ch. 3 - Bond, \$20,000,000

L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, \$9,400,000

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Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance Program

AT A GLANCE**2026 Request Amount:** \$45,000**Priority Ranking:** 7

Project Summary: \$45 million in GO bonds for cost-share grants to local governments, including cities, counties, and watershed districts, for projects that reduce flood risk. Projects range from purchasing and removing damaged and at-risk residential structures from the floodplain to constructing levees, pumping stations, and multi-purpose flood impoundments.

Project Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$45 million for Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance Program grants, established in M.S. 103F.161. These funds provide cost-share grants to local governments to support projects that reduce flood risk in communities across the state. Types of projects include the construction of levees, pumping stations, and multi-purpose flood impoundments, and the purchase and removal of flood-damaged and at-risk residential structures. The DNR has approximately \$125 million in project applications from cities, counties, watershed districts, and other public entities awaiting funding. This request will help support the highest priority projects, based on the nine funding considerations detailed in statute.

Project Rationale

Minnesota's investments in flood mitigation have resulted in a more flood-resilient state, and significantly decreased emergency flood response, economic impacts, and recovery costs. However, even with the significant progress that has been made, flood risks remain. Land use changes and increased intensity and frequency of storm events have only expanded the need for continued, robust program funding to enhance the resilience of Minnesota communities.

Flood mitigation is also cost effective. A 2017 study by the National Institute of Building Sciences shows it is estimated that every \$1 spent on flood mitigation avoids \$7 in future damages.

Project Timeline

The projects will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

Past appropriations for the Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance Program have leveraged significant federal and local dollars, considerably reducing Minnesota's vulnerability to both the safety and economic impacts of floods.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

The Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance Program has been funded by capital investment for many years and is not expected to result in new impacts on operating budgets.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2025, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 15 – Bond, \$9,000,000
L2023, Ch. 72 – Bond, \$34,300,000
L2023, Ch. 72 – General Fund, \$21,115,000
L2020, 5th Spec. Sess. Ch. 3 - Bond, \$17,000,000
L2018, Ch. 214 - Bond, \$20,000,000
L2017, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 8 - Bond, \$11,555,000
L2015, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 5 - Bond, \$23,549,000
L2015, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 5 - Bond, \$2,515,000 (Disaster)
L2015, 1st Spec. Sess. Ch. 5 - General Fund, \$500,000 (Disaster)

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Parks and Trails Local and Regional Grant Program**AT A GLANCE**

2026 Request Amount:	\$3,000
Priority Ranking:	8
Project Summary:	\$3 million in GO bonds to provide competitive grants to local governments for acquisition and development of local parks and trails across the state.

Project Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requests \$3 million to provide competitive grants to local governments for acquisition and development of regional or local parks, trails, and natural and scenic areas across the state. These funds will support existing park and trail grant programs established in M.S. 85.019:

- Outdoor Recreation Grant Program: \$1.5 million to help local governments acquire, develop and/or redevelop close-to-home outdoor recreation facilities.
- Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program: \$500,000 to help local governments and school districts acquire and protect natural and scenic areas statewide.
- Local Trail Connections Grant Program: \$500,000 to provide grants to local units of government to acquire and develop trail connections to residential areas, schools, workplaces, community centers, recreation areas, trails, and parks.
- Regional Trail Grant Program: \$500,000 to provide grants to local units of government for acquisition and development of regional trails outside of the metropolitan area.

Project Rationale

This project supports Minnesota's communities by helping to ensure public access to a high-quality system of local and regional parks, trails, and natural and scenic areas. Connecting people to the outdoors is a DNR strategic priority that is critical to enhancing community health and wellness. Pass-through funding for local and regional parks and trails projects further fosters connections of children and families to the outdoors.

Project Timeline

The project will be completed within the given time frame.

Other Considerations

While Lottery-in-Lieu, Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, and General Fund appropriations have provided pass-through resources for local and regional parks and trails grants in recent years, the demand for funding is significantly greater than the available funds.

Impact on Agency Operating Budgets

The Parks and Trails Local and Regional Grant Program is an existing, pass-through grant program and additional capital investment in the program will not result in new impacts on the DNR's operating budgets.

Description of Previous Appropriations

L2023, Ch. 72 – Bond, \$2,000,000

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