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**Sponsor:** Parks & Recreation

**Meeting Date:** 1/11/2022

**Title:** Grant Awards from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for State Fiscal Year 2022 Conservation Partners Legacy Program

**File Number:** 2021-771

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**Background and Rationale:**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers the Conservation Partners Legacy Grants program, funded by the Outdoor Heritage Fund, created by the Minnesota Legislature through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment. For State Fiscal Year 2022, \$9,975,000 was made available for metro grants, for projects located within the seven-county metro area or within city limits of cities with a population greater than 50,000.

The DNR manages the Conservation Partners Legacy Grants program to provide competitive matching grants from \$5,000 up to \$400,000 to local, regional, state, and national non-profit organizations and government entities. Grants must restore, protect or enhance prairies, wetlands, forests, or habitat for fish, game, or wildlife in Minnesota. A minimum of 10% match is required for all grants, which may be cash or in-kind resources and must be identified at the time of application.

Grant applications are scored based on six criteria:

- 1) Overall project value
- 2) Applicant performance
- 3) Project benefits
- 4) Public benefits
- 5) Financial assessment
- 6) Urgency

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation submitted two grant applications: The Pigs Eye Island Habitat Project and the West Battle Creek Prairie Expansion Project. The Pigs Eye Island Habitat project was awarded \$314,460 to establish wildlife habitat on islands constructed as part of the Pigs Eye Lake island building project with the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The objective of this project is to establish quality vegetation on these islands, which will create enhanced habitat for waterfowl, fish, reptiles, amphibians and provide much needed sanctuary for wildlife moving through this corridor within the heart of the Mississippi Flyway. Establishing habitat on these islands is critical for long-term island sustainability and habitat diversity in Pigs Eye Lake and surround upland areas.

The West Battle Creek Prairie Expansion Project was awarded \$132,750 to convert 22.9 acres of land to native prairie and to enhance 23.1 acres of abutting established prairie to establish wildlife habitat for birds and pollinator insects in Battle Creek Regional Park. This project will enhance these areas by eradicating invasive vegetation and incorporating forb seed to promote diversity and provide additional pollinator habitat. The work required to convert these areas to useful wildlife habitat will include removing invasive trees, prepping the sites, planting native seed and establishing native prairie over the grant term. This project site is surrounded by over 100 acres of oak woodlands that was recently restored through funding provided by Conservation Partners Legacy funding; this project would further complete the restoration for this area.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Ratify the submittal of grant applications to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for State Fiscal Year 2022 Conservation Partners Legacy program grant.
2. Accept and approve a grant award with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for State Fiscal Year 2022 Conservation Partners Legacy program grant for the Pigs Eye Island Habitat grant for the period of grant execution through June 30, 2025 in the amount of \$314,460.
3. Accept and approve the grant agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for State Fiscal Year 2022 Conservation Partners Legacy program grant for the West Battle Creek Prairie Expansion Project for the period of grant execution through June 30, 2025 in the amount of \$132,750.
4. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreements.
5. Authorize the County Manager to enter into agreements and contracts and execute amendments to agreements and contracts, in accordance with the county's procurement policies and procedures, provided the amounts are within the limits of the grant funding.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McGuire, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By:   
Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board