



FRIENDS GROUP PARTNER *GRANTS*

P&TC Volunteer Habitat Restoration Grants – 2024 Overview

A. Grant Program Overview

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is proud to offer a grant program for our Friends Group partners. We will award a number of small grants (\$500-\$2,500 each) to support habitat restoration projects.

Our public lands are enhanced when volunteers engage in hands-on habitat restoration projects that contribute to a collective land ethic. A major goal of this program is to boost Friends Group efforts to engage with their members and new volunteers on these types of projects. When Friends Groups, land management agencies, Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, and community organizations work together, we can accomplish much more than we would on our own.

B. Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must be a Friends Group partner of Parks & Trails Council. See the P&TC definition of Friends Groups and program details at <https://www.parksandtrails.org/friends-groups/>.

C. Timeline

October 5, 2023	Grant announcement
October 25, 2023	Habitat restoration webinar (12-1pm). You may attend this in person or watch the recording afterwards, but reviewing the information from this webinar is highly recommended.
November 3, 2023	Attend grant office hours to answer any questions you might have. <i>(Highly Recommended)</i>
November 2023 – January 2024	Engage in conversations with land management agency staff (for DNR: site manager and resource specialist) to determine possible projects. <i>(Required)</i>
November 2023 – January 2024	Arrange a phone call with P&TC’s Friends Group Program Manager, Phoebe Ward, to discuss application and project plans. <i>(Required)</i>
January 26, 2024	Submit draft application to P&TC for feedback. <i>(Recommended)</i>
February 9, 2024	Submit final application, agency letter, and budget to P&TC by 5pm.

February 23, 2024	P&TC issues award decisions and awardee agreements.
March 15, 2024	Submit signed awardee agreement to P&TC in order to release funds for the project.
March 15, 2024– November 29, 2024	Project implementation period
July 26, 2024	Interim report due
December 20, 2024	Final report and volunteer hours log due

D. Eligible Projects

This grant program will fund habitat restoration projects. See charts below for activity types and eligible expenses.

Activity	Eligible expenses
Tree protection (bud-capping, cages, tubes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools/equipment • Materials/supplies • Publications to get the word out • Event related food/beverages
Exclosures (fencing to prevent deer browse)	
Planting (restoration at scale; usually seedlings, shrubs, and/or herbaceous plants)	
Planting (enhancing a use area, replacing vulnerable ash trees; usually larger trees)	
Seed collection	
Invasive species management	
Other restoration activity (subject to approval by P&TC)	

Awarded funds must be used for project activities that are explicitly stated in the application. Land management agency or P&TC time is not eligible to be considered for expenses.

P&TC recognizes that Friends Groups accomplish a wide variety of activities. If your project falls outside the scope of what is listed, it is possible that the project may still be eligible for funding under this program. Reach out to P&TC's Friends Group Program Manager to discuss.

E. Partners

Land Management Agency: Collaboration is key to the success of projects. Throughout the application process (and implementation, if awarded), the Friends Group should work closely with their land management agency representative to identify and develop a project scope. This is to ensure the project complements existing initiatives and that any needed resource reviews can be conducted accordingly. After mutually agreeing upon a desired project, the land management agency representative must provide a letter (or email) supporting the Friends Group's project plan, to be submitted with the application.

Community Groups: Depending on the project, Friends Groups will need to cultivate relationships with community groups, businesses, schools, or youth-serving organizations.

P&TC: P&TC will remain available and engaged as needed through the grant planning, implementation, and reporting process.

F. Budget and Financial Accounting Procedures

Friends Groups can apply for \$500-\$2,500 to complete their specified project. The supporting budget will include a line-item breakdown for the project. Applicants should work with staff at their land management agency to develop the budget.

Distribution

Our Friends Group Partners include a variety of organization types, and the method of funding distribution varies accordingly:

- For **fiscal clients** of P&TC, grant money will be distributed on a reimbursement basis. Funding will be issued as payments for invoices or receipts, so it is important for grantees to keep track of that documentation.
- For applicants with **501c3 status**, grant money will be issued in the form of a check.
- For **unincorporated associations** (i.e., groups that are neither fiscal clients nor registered 501c3 nonprofits), please contact P&TC's Friends Group Program Manager to discuss options.

G. Reporting

Grant recipients must submit an interim and final report to describe the process, challenges and successes, and impact of the project. A template—in a question-and-answer format—for each report will be issued to the selected grant recipients at the time of award notification.

Report content will include:

- *Measurable data:* number and types of trees planted, volunteer hours, etc.
- *Narrative:* descriptions of the activities, quotes from volunteers or speakers, lessons learned, etc.
- *Photo/video documentation:* candid pictures or video, pictures of the restoration accomplished, etc.
- *Financial information:* a financial comparison of the budget vs. actual expenses.

In addition, we will request monthly budget updates from recipients that are 501c3s, regardless of whether or not money has been spent that month. You should use the budget template provided with your award materials for these reports.

NOTE: If more than 10% of the grant funds are left unspent at the end of the project, we require an explanation in writing as to why. An insufficient or absent explanation will harm the group's standing in future grant evaluations.

H. Application Process

Application Documents

- *Discussion Guide*: This document is a tool to aid in project planning and site selection.
- *Application*: This Word document includes prompts for applicants to answer.
- *Agency Letter (or email)*: This letter draft is within the application. It should be edited by the land management agency representative and submitted with the application.
- *Budget*: This Excel document includes an example line-item budget and volunteer log. The volunteer log will be filled out as the project proceeds, but the projected budget should be submitted along with your application. Please direct any questions about this document to the Friends Group Program Manager.

Evaluation Criteria

Careful consideration will be given to projects that:

- Demonstrate a high level of volunteer engagement (in types of volunteer opportunities and number of hours).
- Engage with volunteers or youth from underrepresented backgrounds in regards to race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, or other areas of diversity.

In addition, projects will be evaluated on a number of criteria, including but not limited to how well the application documents the following:

- Project contributes value to habitat restoration goals of the park or trail.
- Project plan is thorough, clearly indicating scope, location, and materials needed.
- Budget includes items and costs that directly support the project described.
- Project timeline lays out clear and reasonable steps to carry out the project.
- Friends Group will be an integral partner in planning and carrying out the project.
- Project strengthens the partnership with the land management agency.

P&TC aims to partner with Friends Groups across Minnesota and will consider the geographic distribution of projects in its evaluation.

Submission

Friends Groups are strongly encouraged to connect with the Friends Group Program Manager to discuss their project idea, financial plan, and other questions.

Phoebe Ward, Friends Group Program Manager
oward@parksandtrails.org, 651-370-7907

Please submit the Application, Budget, and Agency Letter to Parks & Trails Council by 5pm on **February 9, 2024**. These documents can be submitted via email to friends@parksandtrails.org. Accommodations can be made for different methods of submission, if needed. Please reach out if your group is experiencing any difficulties with the file formats or with submitting the documents.