



**The Loppet Foundation
Request for Proposals for Contractor Services**

Trailhead Oak Savanna, Prairie, and Woodland Restoration



The Loppet Foundation is seeking a contracted partner to restore habitat, including removing invasive species, managing regrowth of non-native vegetation, and reestablishing native species, throughout a 49-ac. area of North Theodore Wirth Park that is heavily used by the public for outdoor recreation and nature connection. This landscape is currently comprised of oak overstory with savanna structure, open areas of turf grass and old field, and mixed woodlands. The budget for this project is \$448,875. The restoration is funded by a three-year Minnesota DNR-CPL grant that begins in summer of 2025 and runs through spring of 2028.

Release Date: Wednesday, 2 April 2025

Proposal Deadline: Wednesday, 30 April 2025

Please submit questions and final proposals via email to:
Andrea Bidelman, Strategic Initiatives Director; bidelman@loppet.org

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND, OVERVIEW, & GOALS

The Loppet Foundation (Loppet) is requesting proposals (RFP) for a contractor to partner with us in restoring roughly 49 acres of oak savanna, prairie, and woodland in north Theodore Wirth Park (Wirth Park). In partnership with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), Loppet operates The Trailhead, a 14,000sf hub for outdoor activity, and manages a portion of the surrounding park for hiking, running, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, frisbee golf, a par-3 golf course, and nature connection. Loppet and MPRB recently designed and approved a Trailhead Natural Area Restoration Plan ([TH Restoration Plan](#)) and donation agreement to restore natural habitat surrounding The Trailhead with the following goals:

- Restore high-quality habitat for wildlife, birds (including grassland and migratory birds), and pollinators (including the federally endangered Rusty Patch Bumblebee) while increasing erosion control, water quality, carbon storage, and climate resilience. Quality habitat restoration includes diversity of native plants and heterogeneous habitat structure – vegetation at various densities and heights.
- Provide educational opportunities in a highly visited part of north Wirth Park that raise community awareness of and foster a conservation ethic for the natural and cultural history of savanna, prairie, and woodland ecotypes.
- Create areas of aesthetic beauty that cultivate nature experience and connectedness among park users, while improving sight lines and safety.

The restoration area currently consists of oak overstory with savanna-like structure, open areas of turf grass and old fields, and mesic oak-dominated woodlands. Much of the canopy understorey is dominated by a dense growth of buckthorn, and open areas are heavily impacted by herbaceous invasive species such as burdock, Canada thistle, garlic mustard, ragweed, and other agricultural invasives. Recreational trails wind throughout the area. Over the last three years, Loppet staff and volunteers began habitat restoration on 6.1 acres of savanna within this area.

Loppet has been awarded a DNR Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) grant to support this work through a partnership of several different entities, including a contracted partner, community volunteers, Loppet program participants, and Loppet/MPRB staff – each contributing to project effectiveness, efficiency, oversight, and long-term stewardship commitment in different ways.

This RFP seeks a contracted partner to restore habitat. Total available budget for the contracted portion of this project through the DNR CPL grant is \$448,875, with a three-year grant period from summer of 2025 through spring of 2028. The contracted partner will be responsible for most restoration activities, including initial removal of major invasive species, turf grass conversion, non-native vegetation management to address resprouts and new seedlings, and revegetation with native species. If restoration of all areas listed in this RFP cannot be completed with this budget, priority will be given to full completion of a smaller amount of total area instead of partial completion of the entire area.

The contractor is responsible for coordinating with Loppet to complete initial restoration and re-establishment of native species on all parcels by the end of the grant period within the 49-acre restoration area where contractor-led activities are implemented. Loppet staff and volunteers will partner on certain defined dimensions of the work, including: initial removal of buckthorn and invasive species in some savanna plots, conservation mowing twice annually where feasible, any other restoration activities not covered under the DNR CPL budget allotted for the contractor. Loppet staff and volunteers will also assume long-term maintenance of restoration areas after the three-year grant period. The MPRB Natural Resources Supervisor and advisory council will oversee Loppet's management of this work, including approval of annual work plans and progress reports.

2. ABOUT THE LOPPET FOUNDATION

The Loppet Foundation began initially in 2002 as a Nordic (aka cross-country) ski race. In 2003, we partnered with MPRB, began operating in Theodore Wirth Park and launched our North Minneapolis youth programs. Loppet now engages 30,000 people annually through opportunities that align with our mission: *connecting people to the outdoors through experiences that grow community.*

Loppet can best be understood in the context of Wirth Park. Envisioned as a cornerstone of a city united by green space, Theodore Wirth Park rivals New York City's Central Park in size, and features remnant oak savanna, woodland, prairie, wetland, peat bog, and Hǎhǎ Wakpádaŋ (the Dakota name for Bassett Creek).

In 2018, Loppet opened "The Trailhead", a 14,000 sq ft facility surrounded by these natural features. The Trailhead is a unique public-private partnership that provides a hub to expand and diversify Wirth Park's user base and promote community and environmental health. The Trailhead hosts multiple types of events including community events, weddings, proms, field trips and running/ski races, as well as offering an indoor/outdoor cafe and meeting space that is open to the public seven days a week. Community members come to socialize, work, enjoy a meal, workout, rent skis or bikes, play golf or frisbee golf, and hang out before or after outdoor explorations.

Loppet recognizes that access to urban nature has been easier for some Minneapolis residents than others. Wirth Park bridges one of the most pronounced racial dividing lines in the US, spanning highly diverse North Minneapolis and more white affluent neighborhoods. Because there is less green space per capita on the city's Northside, Wirth Park is an especially important resource for this community. However, Northside residents and communities of color are underrepresented in park usership, in part due to a history of racist civic policies that discouraged low-income populations and people of color access to green space in neighborhoods bordering Wirth Park.

In the last three years, Loppet revisited strategic priorities to include anti-racism and renewed efforts to partner with underrepresented communities and organizations to increase access to the outdoors. Based on input from partners on how to best leverage our place-based capacity,

Loppet has further expanded our scope of programming to prioritize nature connection, land stewardship, and environmental justice.

3. PROJECT AREA & OBJECTIVES

Maps of the project area can be found in Appendix A. We encourage contractors to view the site prior to developing their proposal. Access to the area for purposes of developing the proposal must be done by walking into the site. The closest public access to the site is from The Trailhead and the Theodore Wirth Chalet parking lots. Contractors can make appointments to walk the site with the Loppet team by emailing: bidelman@loppet.org.

3.1. Savanna Areas (15.1 ac. total)

The landscape immediately surrounding The Trailhead is dominated by mature 150-200+ year old bur and white oak trees and has maintained open savanna-like structure due to mowing and maintenance of the understory for golf, trails, lawns, and other park uses. In their Natural Areas Plan, MPRB ([2021](#)) summarizes savanna as a “relatively open plant community where oaks, other trees, and shrubs cover less than half the ground, which is blanketed by sun-requiring and shade-tolerant plants.” MPRB advises that MN DNR classifications UPs14, UPs24 guide savanna restoration within city parks. The TH Restoration Plan calls for restoring savannas using these classifications, climate adaptable species, and species valuable for rusty patch bumblebee ([Appendix C of TH Restoration Plan](#)).

The overstory and midstory of these areas are currently dominated by mature oak trees. As such, these areas can be restored to more closely approximate natural savanna communities without removing mature native trees. Because most savanna areas exist in highly visible and well used public spaces surrounding The Trailhead, tree planting should prioritize some larger B&B savanna trees (such as bur, white, and climate adapted oak species). The size of these young transplants should balance near term aesthetic beauty and long-term health and growth rate. Following initial restoration, these sites are rich with oak seedlings. Proposals should also allow for regeneration of at least a small portion of oak trees resprouting from the existing seedbank.

For contractor activities, savanna plots have been divided into three treatment types based on status of initial restoration activities (see map in Appendix A). In addition to activities described below, Loppet staff will coordinate with the contractor and perform conservation mowing of savanna and prairie areas two times annually where topography allows.

Savanna Area A. Buckthorn previously removed (6.1 ac.)

Loppet volunteers and staff have removed buckthorn in this area over the last three years. A limited number of understory shrubs were planted in spring of 2024. In fall 2024, available seed was planted on three acres, including one acre of a savanna understory mix and two acres of a buckthorn replacement mix. In these areas, the contractor is responsible for additional vegetation management to address resprouting

and regrowth, as well as establishing native understory vegetation and overstory recruitment.

Savanna Area B. Buckthorn removed by volunteers, summer/fall 2025 (2.1 ac.)

Loppet Volunteers will perform initial removal of buckthorn on these areas in summer and early fall of 2025. The contractor will assume subsequent vegetation management and reestablishment of native understory vegetation and overstory recruitment.

Savanna Area C. All Other Savanna Areas (6.3 ac)

Contractor will be responsible for initial buckthorn removal, vegetation management, and reestablishment of native understory and overstory species.

3.2. Prairie Areas (16 ac. total)

Most plots where prairie will be restored currently exist as turfgrass or largely non-native herbaceous fields and edge areas. Some of these areas are golf course edges and rough. Others are playing field edges, seasonally mowed ski trails, or edges of savanna and woodland areas. Many exist in between and around savanna and woodland areas and will form a continuous oak savanna, prairie, oak woodland matrix with edges transitioning from shade to sun tolerant species.

In their Natural Areas Plan, MPRB summarizes prairie as a “plant community of native grasses with a large variety of sunlight-dependent wildflowers that grow in different combinations based on soil moisture” (2021). They suggest that grasslands targeted for restoration to prairie should follow species listed in MNDNR classifications UPs 13, UPs23, and WPs54. The TH Restoration Plan calls for restoring these areas using species guided by these classifications, climate adaptable species, and species valuable for rusty patch bumblebee (Appendix C of [TH Restoration Plan](#)).

Prairie seed mixes should bias forbs in early stages of planting, as grasses often spread more quickly and dominate ground cover and forbs can be difficult to incorporate once grasses are established. This is particularly true of tall prairie grasses. For this reason, the seed mixes in Appendix C contain only short grasses. Tall grasses can be selectively incorporated through plugs or targeted seeding once prairie has been established.

Prairie Area A. Turf grass to prairie conversions (12.2 ac.)

Contractor will be responsible for turfgrass conversion, vegetation management, and reestablishment of native species.

Prairie Area B. Restoration following erosion control earthmoving work (2.7 ac.)

This area also involves turfgrass to prairie conversion, with an additional consideration. In Fall 2025, Loppet plans to complete erosion control and water retention work in a

significant portion of this area. This work will disturb much of the soil in these areas and dovetail with prairie restoration of these plots.

The contractor will coordinate with Loppet to eliminate non-native vegetation in these areas before and after earthmoving work associated with this project, replant these areas, and cover the areas in a combination of straw mulching (assume 1.7 ac) and biodegradable landscape quilt (assume 1 ac). Both straw and quilt should be composed of native species.

Prairie Area C. Trailhead parking lot plots previously planted to prairie (1.1 ac.)

These plots were planted to prairie in 2018 following construction of The Trailhead. In addition to being small patches of habitat, they also have value in welcoming visitors and passersby to The Trailhead. The contractor will provide additional vegetation management and enhance the assemblage of native species.

3.3. Woodland Areas (17.8 ac.)

Woodland areas lie farther afield from The Trailhead around much of the perimeter of the area managed under the TH Restoration Plan. Most fit MPRB's definition of dry-Mesic Forest/Woodland as a "well-drained, forested plant community of oaks and other tree species on higher ground and slopes" ([2021](#)) and should be restored primarily using species in plant communities FDs37 and MHs37 of the MN DNR's classification system. The TH Restoration Plan calls for restoring these areas using species guided by these classifications and climate adaptable species ([Appendix C of TH Restoration Plan](#)). Because woodland areas exist on the periphery of the restoration area, tree replanting should prioritize cost effectiveness and chances of long-term survival over short term aesthetic beauty.

All restoration activities in woodland areas, including removal of buckthorn and invasive species, vegetation management, and revegetation of native species, will be the responsibility of the contractor.

4. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS & CONSTRAINTS

Contractor proposals should consider the following project requirements and constraints and include a statement agreeing to abide by them through the course of the work.

4.1. Existing Native Vegetation, Sensitive Species, and Mature Tree Roots

Restoration should be careful to preserve any patches of native grasses and forbs that might be present. This is primarily the case in savanna areas where restoration has already occurred in and around The Trailhead. Roots of mature trees throughout the restoration area must also be protected from impacts of any heavy equipment during restoration activities.

4.2. Native Vegetation Establishment

Proposals must provide rationale for how the contractor will implement revegetation to achieve the goals of the TH Restoration Plan. Considerations should be made for the promotion of canopy, mid-story, and understory vegetation establishment to promote diversity of native wildlife, bird, and pollinator species. Forb rich diverse habitat is also a high priority to meet goals related to nature connection, environmental education, and aesthetic beauty.

4.3. Herbicide Use

If herbicide is proposed as part of the area treatment methods, treatment should follow MPRB's decision making guidance related to natural areas as outlined in the [MPRB's IPM Policy](#). Methods that minimize herbicide use as much as possible while accomplishing project goals effectively should be prioritized. In 2018 MPRB passed Resolution 2018-303, establishing a moratorium on the use of glyphosate in all MPRB land and water resource management activities. Therefore, any herbicide treatment proposed should also be non-glyphosate based.

4.4. Fire

Prescribed burns must be conducted in consultation with Loppet/MPRB and overseen by contractors with Minnesota DNR burn certification. Permits must be obtained through the Golden Valley Fire Department and the Minnesota DNR.

4.5. Brush Disposal

Proposals must explain how to deal with woody biomass removed through the restoration process. Possible options include but are not limited to hauling material off site, pile burning, or chipping/shredding on site. The contractor will explain how they will minimize any possible impacts of their proposed method. If the contractor proposes pile burning as a method for brush disposal, they will be responsible for obtaining all necessary permits including a State of Minnesota DNR Burn Variance Permit and a City of Golden Valley Fire Special Events Permit.

4.6. Invasive Species Prevention Plan

Proposals must provide a plan outlining how inadvertent spread of invasive species will be prevented, both into and out of the work site, through the course of their contracted work on MPRB lands.

4.7. Collaboration and Communication with Loppet Project Team

Regular communication with the Loppet Team is a critical dimension of this project. Communications with the designated Loppet contact or their designee will be required at least 48 hours before accessing the site. Upon completion of tasks, the contractor will update their Loppet contact on completed progress. The restoration area is also heavily used by park visitors and for Loppet events. The contractor will need to work with Loppet to

schedule, announce, sign, and/or close areas for restoration based on the multiple uses of the park for recreation and enjoyment. The contractor will also provide recommendations to Loppet for future management activities and any unanticipated work changes which differ from the work plan.

A collaborative adaptive management approach is also essential, as different entities are responsible for different aspects of the restoration work. The contractor and Loppet must schedule their respective restoration responsibilities in reference to the timing of one another. This includes working with Loppet to coordinate timing of Loppet-led activities, including initial volunteer buckthorn removal in some savanna sites, conservation mowing of some savanna and prairie sites, and any other staff or volunteer appropriate activities agreed upon by the contractor and Loppet. The contractor is responsible for working with Loppet to hold the vision and schedule for timing of the whole project during the three-year grant period.

4.8. Prevailing wage.

The Minnesota DNR-CPL funding for this project requires that the contractor must follow Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry prevailing wage policies.

4.9. Public safety, communication, and closures

Restoration activities will involve conflicts with public trail usage that require public notice and area closures. The contractor will work with Loppet to identify these conflict areas, plan appropriate trail closures and reroutes, and schedule work activities to minimize their impacts. The contractor should also foresee the likelihood members of the public will attempt to access the sites despite these closures. Standard safety precautions should be highly visible.

4.10. Park Access with Contractor Vehicles

Once the contractor begins restoration activities, access to the area with pick-up trucks and other light equipment is possible. Paved and gravel paths located throughout the park may be used with caution for access recognizing that they are used frequently by pedestrians. Care should be prioritized when soil is wet to prevent damage to turf and prairie areas. Access to the site with heavier equipment must use routes approved by Loppet and MPRB. The contractor will need to have their vehicles and equipment marked clearly with a company logo and place signs at park entrance points indicating that restoration work is in progress.

4.11. Changes

Loppet may request changes in the scope of services to be performed by the contractor. The contractor may also propose changes in the scope of services to Loppet. Such changes, including any increase or decrease in the amount of contractor's compensation, which are mutually agreed upon, must be incorporated in written amendments to the contract.

Mutually agreed upon changes in timeline due to weather and other factors do not necessitate amendments to this contract as long as all tasks are rescheduled to be completed during the grant period. These changes should still be documented in written email correspondence between the contractor and Loppet. If circumstances arise that prevent Loppet from completing the project, Loppet also reserves the right to cancel the contract without penalty,

4.12. Damages and Incidents Notification

The contractor will notify Loppet immediately of any safety incidents or damage to structures (paths, park benches, light poles, etc.). If urgent unforeseen situations arise during the working day, the designated Loppet contact must be apprised of the situation as soon as possible. Emergency situations occurring outside of the workday should be addressed by calling 911, and the Loppet contact should be informed of the situation as soon as possible. In the case of any damage, the Loppet team, MPRB, or their designee will document any damage and determine needed repairs and costs.

4.13. Insurance Requirements

Contractors are required to carry insurance in keeping with MPRB's standard contractor agreement. This includes a) workers compensation insurance, \$100k per accident, \$500k disease policy limit, \$100k disease per employee; b) commercial general liability insurance, \$2m per claim, \$2m aggregate; c) commercial auto liability insurance, \$1m per claim, \$2m aggregate from same occurrence; d) professional liability insurance for two years after after completion of work, \$1m per claim, \$2m aggregate per coverage period.

5. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals are required to include the following elements:

- Cover letter
- Overview of proposed approach, including how proposal will advance:
 - The overarching goals of the TH Restoration Plan listed in Section 1 above.
 - The restoration objectives for savanna, prairie, and woodland areas described Section 3 above.
- Proposed work plan, timeline, and budget for each of the project areas listed in Section 3 above (Savannas A, B, C; Prairies A, B, C; and Woodlands).
- Company overview and qualifications
 - Experience, capability, and capacity to implement project activities and deliverables described in RFP.
 - Overview of team members and equipment to be dedicated to this project.
 - Any subcontracted services that would be involved in the project.
 - Description of three similar projects in the last 5 years.
 - At least three company references for similar projects in the last five years.
 - Company lawsuit disclosure

- A description, including the status and outcome, of any lawsuits brought against the contractor related to the delivery of consulting services in the past five years, including status and outcome, OR a statement that there have been no such lawsuits brought against the contractor.
- Statement of acceptance of project requirements & constraints listed in Section 4 of this RFP.

6. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, AND SELECTION

6.1. Submission

The deadline for proposal submission is **Wednesday, 30 April 2025 at 3pm CT**. Please submit questions and final proposals via email to: bidelman@loppet.org

6.2. Communication During RFP Process

Contractors may submit questions regarding the project or schedule a time to tour the site with Loppet representatives by email to: bidelman@loppet.org. Phone consultations may also be scheduled by email.

6.3. Proposal Evaluation & Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated by a team of Loppet and MPRB representatives based on:

- a) robustness of approach and work plan to maximize long-term suppression of non-native species, maximize long-term stability of restored native habitat, and achieve project goals
- b) alignment with all elements outlined in this RFP
- c) the contractor's qualifications and experience
- d) thoroughness and clarity
- e) project cost

6.4. Additional Notes

- Loppet reserves the right not to consider any proposal that it determines to be unresponsive and deficient in any of the information requested for evaluation.
- A proposal with all requested information does not guarantee the contractor will be selected.
- Loppet may contact references to verify material submitted by contractors.
- The final scope of the project to be negotiated between Loppet and the contractor may be entirely as described in this RFP, a portion of the scope, or a revised scope.
- Loppet is not bound to accept the lowest cost proposal.
- Upon submission, all proposals become the property of Loppet, which retains the right to use any concept or idea presented in any proposal submitted, whether or not that proposal is accepted.

- The Loppet expressly reserves the right to amend or withdraw this RFP at any time and to reject any or all proposals.
- Contractors are held legally responsible for their proposals and proposal budgets. Contractors are not to collude with other contractors and competitors or take any other action that will restrict competition. Evidence of such activity will result in rejection of the proposal.
- Loppet reserves the right to negotiate contract terms contemporaneously and/or subsequently with any number of contractors as Loppet deems to be in its best interests.
- The contents of the proposal and any clarifications to the contents submitted by the contractor shall become part of the contractual obligation and be incorporated by reference into the ensuing contract.

APPENDIX A: MAP OF RESTORATION AREAS (acreage of individual parcels available upon request)

