

Parks Land Stewardship

5 year Business Plan

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Executive Summary

The land stewardship unit maintains 15.6% of natural lands within the Washington County Park System. The goal of this plan is to increase stewardship levels to 30% by 2022, by implementing additional land stewardship practices such as grazing and haying; increasing full-time staff dedicated to stewardship activities; and acquiring grant funding. Two new positions are requested through 2022: a Land Management Technician and Laborer, with funding for contracted professional services. The 30% goal was developed using the Dakota County Natural Resource Management Plan Benchmarking, which compared management across agencies.

2017 Land Stewardship Overview

Department: Public Works **Division:** Parks **Unit:** Land Stewardship **Locations:** Parks System
Services: The land stewardship unit manages 15.6%, or 556 acres, of the 3,576 acres of natural areas that Washington County owns. Stewardship practices are implemented throughout the year to promote healthy plant communities for wildlife and pollinators.

2017 Overall Budget: \$182,000. *Equipment and Maintenance assistance not included

2017 Staffing: 1 Natural Resource Coordinator, 3 summer Seasonals, 2 fall/winter Seasonals.

2017 Operations Budget: \$47,000

2017 Active Grants: Outdoor Heritage Fund (\$430,000 2014 – 2019). Clean Water Fund (6K)

The Market

Target market: Washington County Residents, Regional Park Users, 58% passive recreation

Market position: Washington County land stewardship is lower than similar metro counties.

The Future

Vision statement: To enhance visitor experience through implementing land stewardship practices which are ecologically beneficial, sustainable and economically viable, yet beneficial for plant communities, wildlife and people.

Goals: 1. Increase the number of managed lands throughout the park system through public/private partnerships. 2. Sustain existing DNR identified native plant communities and Species of Greatest Conservation Need. 3. Create large contiguous corridors of sustainably-managed habitat.

Finances

Financial overview:

Over the next five years, this plan seeks to have the budget for the land stewardship unit increase to \$135,000 for 2 FTE staff; \$35,000 for professional contracted services (\$25,000 increase); \$183,000 of equipment (Spread out over five years);, a \$32,000 increase in operating supplies; and \$20,000 in

holding to leverage as match from for grants. This will maintain stewardship efforts completed to date, and increase stewarded natural areas from 15% to 30%.

2017 Land Stewardship Overview

Stewardship Services

A list of the stewardship services completed throughout the year, and by season is in Table 1.

Table 1: Land Stewardship Tasks

Stewardship Task	Season(s)
Grant administration (planning, proposals, coordination)	Year round
STS coordination (project planning, coordination for all parks staff)	Year round
Controlled burn planning, burn break preparation and burning	Year round
Forest Management - Invasive shrub removal, diseased tree control	Year round
Volunteer coordination (Eagle scouts, school groups)	Year round
Planning assistance (development, construction plans, master plans, restoration)	Year round
Farmland coordination (soil samples, liming, contract development)	Year round
Wildlife management (deer harvest, wildlife control, turtle tunnel)	Year round
Prairie and oak savanna (installation and maintenance)	Spring, Summer, Fall
Rain garden and formal garden maintenance (mulching and weeding)	Spring, Summer, Fall
Contractor coordination	Fall, Winter
Snowmobile & ski trail	Fall, Winter
Herbaceous noxious weed control (thistle, knapweed)	Summer, Fall
Tree, shrub and prairie plug plantings & maintenance	Spring, Fall
Seed collection (native tree & shrubs, prairie seed)	Fall
Turf (soil samples for fertilizer)	Fall
Herbicide coordination (review, purchase, train)	Summer
DNR Aquatic Permits coordination	Spring, Summer

Stewardship Areas by Park

As of January 4th 2017, 556 of 3,576 acres of undeveloped land is actively managed (15.6%). Table 2 provides an overview of the unmanaged, managed and crop land per park. Developed areas, water are excluded.

Table 2: Managed v Unmanaged Areas

Park	Unmanaged Acres	% Unmanaged	Managed Acres	% Managed	Crop land	Total Acres
Big Marine Park Reserve	489	93%	36	7%	0	525
Cottage Grove Ravine RP	303	67%	148	32%	0	515
Grey Cloud Island RP	100	100%	0	0	0	100
Lake Elmo Park Reserve	1216	66%	438	23%	185	1,618

Pine Point RP	233	84%	40	16%	0	276
Square Lake	8	60%	5	40%	0	13
St. Croix Bluffs RP	272	55%	119	23%	110	529

Management Plan Status by Park

Land Stewardship within a park is typically detailed in a chapter its master plan. However, many state and federal grants an existing management plan for the restoration site as a prerequisite for application. Not only are management plans required for grant funds, but they are essential to implementing stewardship activities. Management plans define management units, assist to prioritize efforts, outline goals and objectives, and specify the appropriate stewardship activities. Table 3 provides the land management plan status for each park.

Table 3: Land Management Plan Status

Park	Status	Desired Plan
Big Marine Park Reserve	Master plan chapter	Management Plan
Cottage Grove Ravine RP	Master plan chapter Friends of Mississippi River (South half)	Management Plan
Lake Elmo Park Reserve	Master plan chapter Emmons & Oliver Wetland Report	Management Plan
Pine Point RP	No Master Plan	Management Plan
St. Croix Bluffs RP	Master plan chapter	Management Plan
Square Lake	No Master Plan	Management Plan

2017 Budget Overview

Table 4 (below) provides the budget overview for the parks land stewardship. Not included in this calculation are vehicles and equipment, grant-funding, and FT maintenance staff time for assistance with burns, prairie mowing, and invasive shrub removal, and diseased tree removal.

Table 4: 2017 Land Stewardship Budget Overview

Staffing	\$132,525
Operations	\$47,000
Vehicles & Equipment	Varies
Grants	Varies
Total	\$182,000+vehicles/equipment, part time maintenance assistance

2017 Staffing

The parks land stewardship team consists of 1.2 FTE which includes a 1.0 FTE Natural Resource Coordinator and Parks Manager Oversight (0.2 FTE). Table 5 below shows the staffing costs which include seasonal assistance provided year round. STS crew leader and Maintenance staff costs are unknown at this time, but will be calculated in the future with a land stewardship work order.

Table 5: 2017 Staffing

Position	Employees	Cost
Parks Manager Oversight	.2	\$ 20,000
Natural Resource Coordinator	1.0	\$ 74,000
Summer - Seasonal Natural Resource Maintenance Assistants	3	\$ 23,115
Fall/Winter - Natural Resource Maintenance Assistants	2	\$ 15,410
Sentence to Serve Crews, 1 crew 3 days a week (1/2 the time)	Unknown	Unknown
Maintenance Staff assistance (Unknown, RX burns, some forestry)	Unknown	Unknown
Total		\$132,525

2017 Stewardship Operations, Supplies Budget Detail

The operations budget in Table 6 below shows the 2017 allocations made to restoration projects, plant material supplies for trees and seeds, Washington Conservation District and herbicide.

Table 6: 2017 Land Stewardship Operations Budget

Detail	Coding	Cost
WCD, Restoration projects	322700, 626200	\$10,500
Deer surveys	322700, 632100	\$1,500
Restoration projects, steward	322650, 626200	\$10,000
Program supplies, steward – S&T	322650, 641100	\$25,000
Total		\$47,000
Crop revenue not included		\$44,250 after PILT (\$63,817)

2017 Vehicles & Equipment

The existing vehicles & equipment dedicated to the land stewardship unit is listed in Table 7. Yearly maintenance costs are not included, along with other vehicles used by seasonal staff and FT maintenance staff when assisting with projects.

Table 7: 2017 Existing Vehicle & Equipment

Equipment ID	Cost	Equipment ID	Cost
Truck	\$26,000	Truax	\$20,000
Forestry Mower	\$100,000	Controlled burn equipment	\$3,000
Batwing mower	\$30,000	Tank Sprayers (500, 400, 100)	\$13,000
Log skidder	Unknown	Disc (Damaged)	\$0
Roto-tiller	Unknown	Tree spade	Unknown
Tractor pulled sprayer	Unknown	Cultipacker	Unknown

2017 Active Grants

1. A \$430,000 Outdoor Heritage Fund grant is being implemented to restore 250 acres of habitat at Lake Elmo Park Reserve, Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park and St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park.
2. A Clean Water Fund Grant that provides assistance from the Minnesota Conservation Corp is applied through the Washington Conservation District each year. Past work has been funded within Lake Elmo Park Reserve wetland enhancement, Big Marine Park Reserve rain gardens and Square Lake rain gardens.

Table 8 below shows the active list of plant community restoration grants the county is implementing within the park system.

Table 8: 2017 Active Grants

Grant Id	Name	Location	Year(s)	Amount
1	Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant	LEPR, CGRP, SCB	2014-2019	\$430,000 one time
2	Clean Water Fund Grant	LEPR	2016	\$6,000 a year

Land Stewardship Cost Analysis

A cost analysis was completed to compare land stewardship activity costs for contractors versus Washington County. Table 9 shows the cost per acre for each habitat. Contractor costs vary based on site condition and access. Shaded boxes are the most cost effective.

Table 9: Contractor v Staff Cost Analysis

	Description	Stewardship Task(s)	Cost per acre	
			Contractor	Washington County (staff)
Prairie & Oak Savanna & Wetland	Prairie planting	Site preparation, plant, mow	Planting \$280 per acre or \$7,000 for 25 acres	Planting \$77 per acre, 4 days at 25 acres
	Controlled burns	Controlled burns, coordinate, mow, install burn breaks, burn in fall and spring	1-20 ac: \$220 a, min \$1,500; 21-40 ac: \$200 a, min \$4,200; 41-100 ac: \$175 a, min \$7,175	Burn cost per day with 10 FTE staff/8 hours = \$4,800-\$6,000 Crew size varies
	Noxious weed control	Control in summer, fall.	\$1,260 an acre	\$160 an acre based on 1 FTE, 3 acres a day
	Prairie enhancement	Seed fields after burn/disc'd. Mow growing season	\$280	\$77 per acre
	Seed collection	Purchase or collect seed	\$650 per acre, \$511 for 1 acre Mesic prairie	Unknown
	Tree & shrub planting	Purchase trees, plant, protect, maintain	\$35 per unit or \$800 per 100	\$4 per unit for small \$35 trees
	Grazing & haying	Fencing, setting up contracts	Mobilization of \$2,500 +8% above cost plus labor	Unknown
	Planning	Write grants & GIS	\$65 an hour, varies	\$65 an hour
	Forest	Inventory	Timber cruises	Unknown
Tree harvests		Set-up contracts	Unknown	Unknown
Invasive shrub initial removal		Removal via forestry mower or hand cutting with follow-up	\$700-\$4,000 per acre	\$1,050 - \$4,000 per acre
Invasive shrub follow-up		Follow-up via grazing or foliar applications.	\$180 - \$800	\$300 per acre
Controlled burns		Controlled burns, coordinate, install burn breaks, burn	1-20 ac: \$220 min \$1,500; 21-40 ac: \$200 min \$4,200; 41-100 ac: \$175 min \$7,175	Unknown
Tree & shrub planting		Purchase or collect seed, plant, protect, maintain	\$35 per unit or \$800 per 100	\$4 per unit for small \$35 trees

The Market

Market research

Market research was completed in February 2017 by the Natural Resource Coordinator. Information was obtained from the Dakota County Natural Resource Strategic Planning process which included other counties in the region.

Market position

Below are comparison charts of how the land stewardship unit compares to adjacent counties within the region.

- Anoka County has a 275k budget and 2.5 FTE's. Of their undeveloped acres 67 % are managed (1640 of 2240 acres). Their total undeveloped land consists of 9,000 acres, however 78% is water.
- Dakota County has a \$832k base budget and 4 FTE's, in 2017 four additional staff are being added to help maintain the 4,700 acres of natural/open space. They manage 27 percent of the land, in a few years this will increase to 2,200 acres or 47 percent with 8 employees.
- Washington County has a \$182,000 base budget without vehicles/equipment, and 1.2 FTE. The county manages 15.6% of 3,576 natural/open space.
- Ramsey County was not included in the figures below. But they have one Natural Resources Manager who oversees crews in the park (Contractors, MCC). In 2015 and 2016 they received \$661,000 in grants.

Figure 1: Land Stewardship Budget Comparison

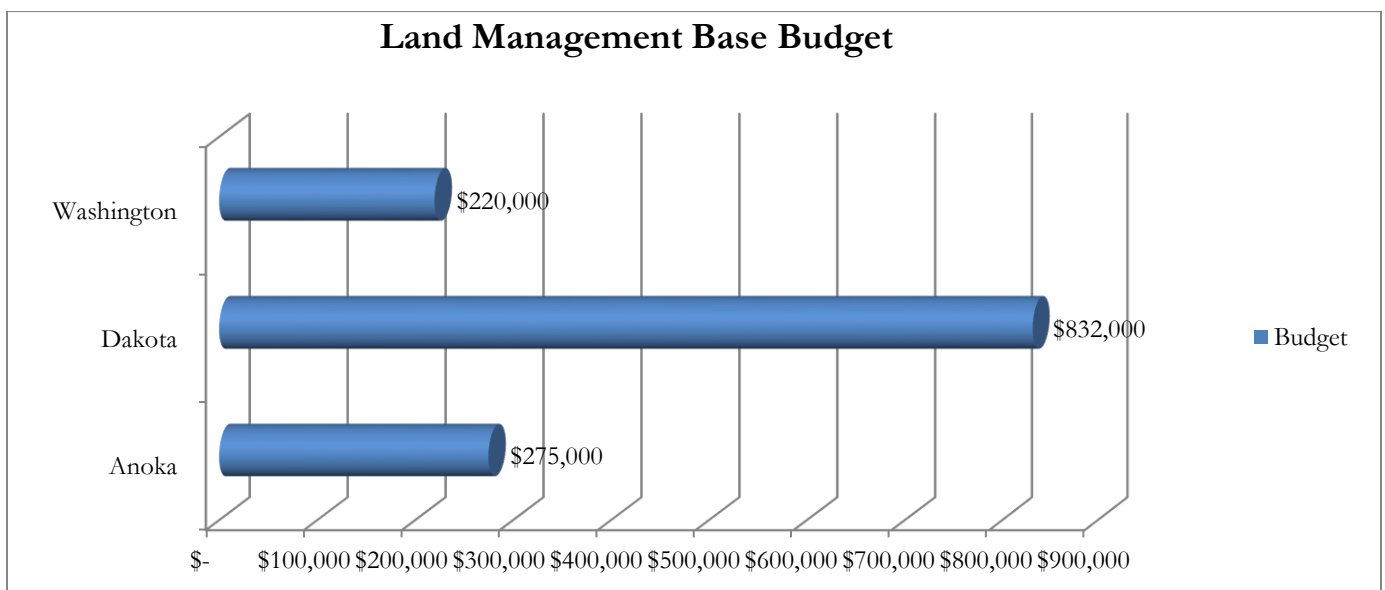


Figure 2: County Full time Land Stewardship Staff Comparison

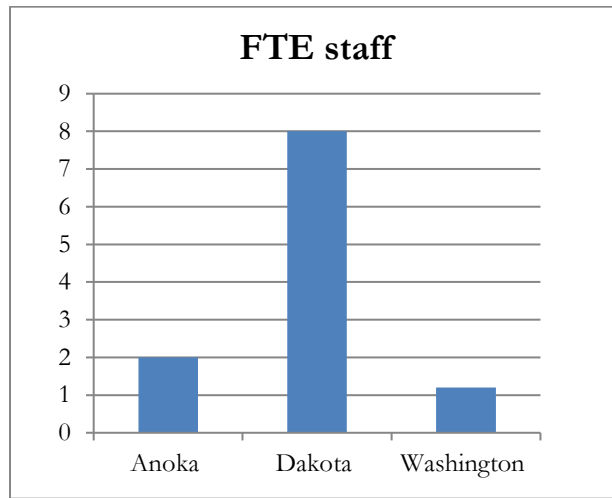
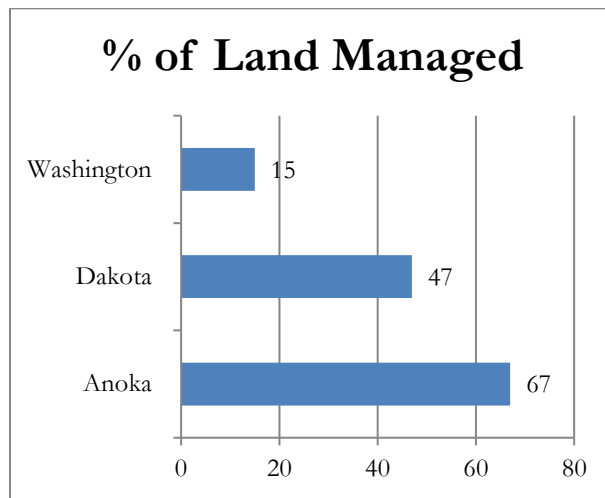


Figure 3: Percent of Land Managed



Areas were calculated using ArcGIS, taking into account areas that have had a stewardship practice take place in the last five years. All three calculations exclude water.

S.W.O.T Analysis

In order to understand the internal and external factors affecting land stewardship within the parks a SWOT analysis was completed by the Natural Resource Coordinator in 2017, and listed in Table 10.

Table 10: S.W.O.T Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Management (Outdoor Heritage Fund Grant) -Reporting capabilities (CPU/Word/Excel use) -Positive park user, commissioner and media -Volunteer interaction -Implementing new initiatives (goats) -Land stewardship issue awareness -Seasonal staff -invasive shrub removal -Commitment to reducing land impacts/fragmentation in park planning/design -Staff led controlled burns Public support for natural resource management, highest rated service of importance in county residential survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of field staff support for land management. Requires coordinator to be in field instead of seeking grants and planning projects. -Lack of forest stewardship i.e. diseased tree spread, woods fire suppression -Lack of land management plans -Project requests for staff not always completed by maintenance staff -Seasonal staff unable to use chainsaws (Can now use brushsaws if 2 present). -Lack of plant and tree identification knowledge
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grants (Conservation Partners Legacy, Outdoor Heritage fund LSOHC, LCCMR) -Grazing and Haying (Bison, Goats) -Forest stewardship -Management plans -Community gardens -Scenic overlooks and vistas on trails -Seed collection and consignment -Technology Greater community engagement through volunteerism, stewardship activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of land stewardship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continued loss of biodiversity due to: -invasive species, noxious weed spread -woodland fire suppression -oak wilt spread -pine plantation self-thinning, bark beetle spread -Lack of FTE field and forest support, burnout -Emerald Ash borer at Lake Elmo Park Reserve Viewsheds lost to woody species encroachment

Environmental/Industry Analysis

To increase stewardship levels in the parks. Staff wants to increase grant applications for stewardship activities, add two staff members dedicated to land stewardship, and seek alternative private/public based stewardship activities, and working with non-profit conservation organizations.

Future

Vision statement

To increase land stewardship throughout the natural areas of the parks system, by implementing sustainable land practices which increase plant diversity and are economically viable yet beneficial for plant communities, wildlife, pollinators and people.

Goals

Long-term goals:

1. Increase the number of managed lands throughout the park system through public/private partnerships.
2. Sustain existing DNR identified native plant communities and Species of Greatest Conservation Need.
3. Create large contiguous corridors of sustainably managed habitat.

Short-term goals:

1. Obtain one grant per year (LSOHC/OHF, Conservation Partners).
2. Develop management plans for each park, one per year.
3. Maintain and expand the stewarded lands.
4. Develop and implement working lands program.
5. Connect land management activities with the user experience.

5 year Stewardship Strategy

To increase land stewardship activities, a variety of approaches should be implemented varying from staff and equipment needs, private/public partnerships and targeting grants for habitat management. The next two pages describe each of the needs above, and set goals for obtaining them.

5 year Staffing and Professional Service Plan

In order to increase land stewardship throughout the park system, staff assistance is needed in the field to implement project and provide more time for the natural resource coordinator to apply for grants and plan for future projects. Table 11 (below) shows a Land Stewardship Technician and Laborer position which would increase field implementation activities within the park.

Table 11: 2017-2022 Staffing Needs

Position	Job Description	Cost	Target Year
Land Stewardship Technician	75% field, 25% office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists the NR Coordinator with leading field work, including but not limited to: invasive shrub removal, diseased tree removal, controlled burns, noxious weed control, leading volunteers, mowing prairies, meeting with STS crews, providing daily seasonal direction, meeting with contractors on-site, helping with staff id/knowledge). Office work would include burn plan development, implementation, communication, equipment purchase. STS project coordination and crew oversight. 	\$70,000	2017-2018
Land Stewardship Laborer	100% field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists the Land Stewardship Technician with field work and activities listed in description above. Entry level position to develop seasonals. 	\$60,000	2019
Total		\$130,000	

Table 12 below shows the contracted service needs to assist the stewardship unit increase land management activities throughout the park system.

Table 12: Professional Service Needs

Position	Job	Cost
Forester	Develop Forest Management Plans timber surveys, develop bids for forestry contracts.	\$20,000 per year
Range Mgmt Specialist	Develop and review grazing management plans	\$5,000 per year
Washington Conservation District	Work with county to develop site specific management plans, conduct vegetation surveys, and assist with wetland delineation.	\$10,000 per year (Existing)
Total		\$35,000

5 year Equipment Plan

In order to increase the acres of land being managed, equipment is required to complete the work. This includes staff transportation, prairie restoration, invasive shrub removal, diseased tree management, and controlled burn spraying equipment. A table of equipment is listed in Table 13 with the estimated cost and target purchasing year.

Table 13: 2017-2022 Equipment Needs

Equipment ID	Equipment Description	Cost	Target Year
UTV	A gator that can be used in all seasons for site access.	\$30,000	2018
UTV Rx burn unit	A water tank for controlled burns.	\$5,000	2018
Truck	Truck for FT staff addition.	\$26,000	2018
Chainsaws & Brushsaws	For additional FTE	\$4,000	2018
Moldboard plow	Moldboard plow for converting old fields to prairie.	\$5,000	2019
Disc for Tractor	Disc used for converting old fields to prairie, used after the Moldboard plow to smooth out the soil and prep for planting.	\$10,000	2019
Pull type seed harvester	Used by FTE to harvest prairie seed to reduce costs.	\$18,000	2019
Vibrating plow for oak wilt	Used to sever the roots of oak trees to prevent further spread of the fungus through the roots.	Unknown	2020
Truck	Truck for Seasonal work crew.	\$26,000	2020
Dump trailer	Field trailer for equipment, hauling out wood	\$20,000	2021
DR walk behind Mower	Used for installing burn breaks on steep slopes, wet areas.	\$5,000	2021
Chainsaws & Brushsaws	For additional FTE	\$4,000	2022
Replacement forestry mulcher head	Used with invasive shrub removal efforts and fuel load reductions in burn units.	\$30,000	2022
Total		\$183,000	

5 year Private/Public Stewardship Practices

To help increase the amount of land under stewardship, Table 14 lists potential private/public partnerships which could be adopted. These practices would help reduce staff costs by providing activities that increase plant, pollinator and wildlife diversity, while providing revenue.

Table 14: Private/Public Stewardship Practices to Adopt by 2022

Activity	Location(s)	Target Acres	Logistics
Conservation grazing	All	200	Apply for grants for fence install and grazing management plan development
Conservation haying	LE, SCB,CGR	100	Create bid, reach out to local farmers
Stewardship Proposals	All	25	Review and accept proposals from park users to steward the land.

5 year Habitat Restoration Grant Opportunities

Table 15 below shows the types of stewardship activities that are funded by grants. Often these are used in prioritized locations such as the enhancement of habitat next to trails and the creation of scenic vistas to enhance view sheds.

Table 15: Example Grant Funded Stewardship Practices

Priority	Habitat Type	Example Stewardship Practices
1	Oak woodland enhancement	-Invasive shrub removal (buckthorn, honeysuckle) -Garlic mustard reduction via biocontrols -Controlled burns -Reversing woodland Mesification through thinning to promote oak regeneration
2	Prairie and oak savanna enhancement	-Burning and Interseeding prairie seed -Converting cool season sod stands to prairie -Burning remnants -Planting trees -Planting milkweed and other pollinator resources -Removal of red cedar on bluffs such as SCB
3	Prairie restoration	Seeding crop field to prairie.
4	Shoreline Restoration and other BMP installs	-Planting native species along shorelines such as pockets at square lake.
5	Forest Restoration	Plant forest in strategic places to replace ash, or buffer roads.
6	Wetland enhancement	-Reducing Reed Canary Grass in wetlands -Restoring hydrology
7	Pine plantation management	-Thinning pine plantations to increase resiliency to further pine bark beetle spread. Seeding prairie species in gaps

5 year Stewardship Operations and Supplies Budget

Below is a budget detail sheet for stewardship supplies and operations. The budget below would be an increase of \$52,000, or 110% increase from 2017 levels, which are described in Table 6.

Table 16: Proposed 2022 Stewardship, Operations and Supplies Budget

Detail	2017 Cost
Funding set aside to help leverage grant funding	\$20,000
Professional services as described in Table 12	\$35,000
Deer surveys	\$2,000
Prairie Seed	\$20,000
Tree seedlings	\$2,000
Shrub seedlings	\$2,000
Tree and shrub seedling protection	\$4,000
Trees – container, bare root and large caliper trees	\$20,000
Container grown native plants for landscaping	\$4,000
Total	\$74,000

Finances

Key objective & financial analysis

This section requires the review of the current budget to determine what is currently being allocated as a percentage to land stewardship activities. This is important because according to Metropolitan Council survey, 58% of the people who use the park are using it passively enjoying our natural areas and the wildlife that use them. While they use infrastructure and trails that require upkeep, they are also there to experience the plants, water and wildlife.

Table 17: Land Stewardship 17' Allocation & Future Goals

2017			2020 – 2022 Goals		
Funding Source	% of Budget to Land Stewardship	2017 Allocation	Funding Source	% of Budget to Land Stewardship	Future Allocation
Park User Fee			Park User Fee		
County Funding			County Funding		
Metropolitan Council			Metropolitan Council		
Active Grants		\$430,000 OHF \$6,000 CWF	Active Grants		
Crop land		\$45,000 after PILT	Crop land		
Alternative Revenue Ideas					

Alternative Revenue ideas

A number of practices can be implemented to help decrease staff costs, monitor what types of plants/fungus are being taken out, increase pollinator resources, while raising revenue. Table 18 lists the alternative practice and the cost.

Table 18: Alternative Revenue/Practices

Permit or Practice	Cost
Firewood Harvest Permit	\$50 per permit
Community Garden	\$25 per permit
Grazing	\$5-\$40 per acre
Haying	\$10 per ton
Morel Mushroom Harvesting Permit	\$10 per year
Archery Hunting	\$100 to hunt
Edible Plant Foraging Permit	\$25 per permit
Timber contracts	Varies

Appendix

Connection to Washington County 2030 Comprehensive Plan

The Washington County 2030 Comprehensive plan sections of Natural Resources and Park and Open space support park efforts to address these challenges.

- a. Goal 6-1 – Utilize land in a manner that minimizes the impact on the county’s natural resources.
 - 6-1: Maintain corridors of connected open space, and promote protection and management of rare plant and animal communities to conserve biological diversity and avoid fragmentation of important natural areas.
 - 6-3: Consider natural resource conservation in all land planning decisions.
- b. Goal 6-2 – Protect groundwater and surface water resources through coordination and collaboration with state and local water resource organizations.
- c. Goal 6-3 – Preserve, manage, and utilize resources to promote a healthy environment for present and future generations.

Goals of the Park and Open Space section that refer to the maintenance of manicured and unmanaged lands are listed below, along with the corresponding strategy.

- a. Goal 5-1 — Showcase the county’s heritage through conservation, restoration, and interpretation of cultural and natural resources.
 - 5-1: Preserve, conserve, restore, and maintain a diverse mosaic of plant and animal communities that represents the widest range of biological diversity achievable.
 - i. Preserve native plant and animal communities within county parks. Identify needs, develop strategic plans, and prioritize projects that preserve and maintain natural areas. Prioritize preservation activities.
 - ii. Enhance and expand existing native habitat restorations within county parks.
 - iii. Identify needs and schedule parcels for restoration.
 - iv. Enhance biodiversity in existing restoration areas.
 - v. Complete one or two new restoration projects per year.
 - vi. Conserve and manage wildlife populations to maximize plant and animal biodiversity.
 - vii. Identify priorities to enhance wildlife habitat, such as fish habitat structures, nesting structures, and fish stocking.
 - viii. Implement management activities to maintain sustainable wildlife populations.
- b. 5-3: Incorporate principles of landscape sustainability, energy conservation, and “green” infrastructure into park planning, program implementation, and park operations and maintenance.
 - i. Develop a process to consider “green” landscape and building design alternatives.
- c. 5-4: Identify, evaluate, conserve, and interpret cultural landscapes within county parks and along trail corridors.