

APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Application Date: 08/31/12

Organization Name: City of Madison Parks Division/Conservation Parks

Federal Tax Identification Number: 39-6005507

Address: Madison Parks Division, 210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Madison,
WI 53703

Executive Director: Kevin Briski, Madison Parks Superintendent

Phone: 608-266-4711; Email: kbriski@cityofmadison.com

Grant Project Director: Russ Hefty, Conservation Resource Supervisor

Phone: 608-267-4918; Email: rhefty@cityofmadison.com

Project Name: Restoring Four Oak Savanna Gems

Project Duration: November 1, 2012 – December 31, 2013

Total Project Budget: \$ 93,000

Funds Raised to Date: \$30,000

Total Amount Requested from Madison Community Foundation: \$ 18,000

The date that your governing board approved a policy which states that the organization does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion, gender, sexual preference or national origin: Madison's Equal Opportunity (Sec. 39.03) and Affirmative Action (Sec. 39.02) ordinances were first adopted by the Madison City Council on 6/22/1973. They have since been amended many times and today include all the protected classes listed above.

1.) **Description of Applicant :** Madison Parks began in 1894 with the formation of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive. Madison citizens are fortunate to have inherited a park system built by the progressive vision and efforts of previous generations. Today, the Park Commission and staff continue a mission of enhancing Madison’s legacy of diverse parklands; providing green space, safe environments and recreational facilities; and meeting the changing needs of present and future generations.

In 2012, City of Madison Parks Division owns over 260 parks totaling over 5,500 acres of parkland and is responsible for maintenance of over 6,000 acres of public land. The Parks Division is also responsible for the operations and maintenance of special facilities such as Olbrich Gardens, public pool, four public golf courses, six off-leash dog parks, 18 shelters, two public cemeteries; maintenance of State Street and the Capitol Mall Concourse; pruning, plantings and removal of all trees in public right-of-ways; and it plays a vital role in the development, maintenance, and policies of the over 1,000 acres of public land administered by City of Madison Engineering for stormwater, bike paths and landfill purposes.

Madison Parks annually hosts over 320 special events each year in the Madison Parks, State Street/Mall Concourse and other city streets. Events range in size from several hundred thousand at Rhythm and Booms fireworks show to Madison Marathon to local charity 5K walk/runs. In addition to providing permits, guidance and staff assistance to events, Madison Park Community Services team organizes monthly events such as Ride the Drive, Kids to Kids Garage Sale, Madison Parks Hayrides, Daddy/Daughter Dance, Big Rig Gig and the “Learn to” series.

In addition to special events, Madison Parks annually plays host to 1400 shelter reservations and over 7,000 scheduled sporting events/games/practices.

The Madison Parks Conservation Section manages 14 unique conservation parks totaling over 1,600 acres. These public lands are managed to restore and preserve our natural heritage for the appreciation of current and future generations.

2.) **Summary Project Description :** Madison Conservation Parks is engaged in a multi-year project to restore outstanding oak savanna groves within Cherokee Marsh (north and south units), Turville Point, Edna Taylor, and Prairie Ridge. During 2012-13, we plan to complete 2 phases of restoration: restoring the “woody structure” of the savanna and establishing the native grassy understory. This work will be followed by years of management by Parks staff to stabilize the savanna ecology. This application to MCF seeks \$18,000 to hire Operation Fresh Start’s Conservation Crew (OFS) to assist with intensive work required to remove invasive and over-represented trees and haul away heavy wood debris which has accumulated for decades on the forest floor. Parks will also engage volunteer Friends groups to assist with less intensive tasks, such as preparation for prescribed burns, scattering native seeds, and planting native shrubs. The outcomes of the project will be: 1.) To complete the initial phases needed to restore 90 acres of oak savanna and recreate 250 acres of prairie/savanna complex in 4 Madison parks; 2.) To engage at least 9 youth from OFS in employability skills training and exposure to work in natural resource management; and, 3.) To involve 60 volunteers in 300 total hours of work assisting with restoration activities. The long-range goals of the

project are to diversify conservation habitat, beautify Madison's open spaces, and enhance the recreation and educational opportunities within our park system.

3.) **Project Purpose Statement** : Prior to settlement, oak savanna was the dominant ecosystem of Dane County. The impacts of European settlement, including grazing, fire suppression, and development, have caused the savanna to become a now rare plant community. However, within 4 of Madison's conservation parks – Cherokee, Edna Taylor, Turville Point, and Prairie Ridge - high quality standing oak groves still exist. They have become crowded with invasives and over-represented shrubs and trees. Over decades of neglect, the forest understory has become cluttered with large logs which inhibit the hot fires needed to establish a savanna. Restoration of these groves will address the following long-term goals:

a.) The total area of savanna to be treated and restored by this project will equal 90 acres. Invasive species will be removed or controlled; woody debris will be removed; controlled burns will be implemented; and, native grasses and forbs will be seeded/planted. The savanna restorations will re-establish the natural connection and transition between savanna and prairie, re-creating prairie/savanna complex areas totaling 250 acres. Within the 100-acre savanna/prairie tract at Cherokee Marsh, for example, copses of oak will transition to dry prairie, wet prairie, sedge meadow, and to ephemeral ponds. Species which depend upon diverse habitat will be supported by this restoration.

b.) The restoration projects will enhance recreation and educational/cultural opportunities within 4 parks located in the north, east, southwest, and central areas of Madison. These parks are served by a combined 9 miles of internal trails extensively used by area residents for year-round, low-impact recreation, including hiking, jogging, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing, nature study, bird-watching, and photography. Links to regional trails (Prairie Ridge is linked to the Ice Age Trail and Turville Point is adjacent to the Capital City Bike Path) enhance recreational opportunities in these two parks. In Cherokee, 10 acres of newly acquired land to be restored through this project are not accessible by trail in 2012, but in 2013-14, a trail will be established through the area and connected with the existing Cherokee trail system. Cherokee and Edna Taylor (adjacent to the Aldo Leopold Nature Center), are widely used by local schools for nature study. From a cultural and historical point of view, restoration will afford park visitors a glimpse of the oak groves European settlers found when they arrived in southern Wisconsin. In Edna Taylor, the OFS crew will carefully clear trees encroaching on linear burial mounds and use the cut logs to define and protect them. Restoration at Turville Point, an outstandingly beautiful site near Madison's downtown, will contribute to a comprehensive city strategy of reclaiming this natural area from inappropriate uses.

c.) Disadvantaged youth from the Operation Fresh Start Conservation Crew (OFS) will receive employability training and exposure to work in natural resource management. This crew will undertake the intensive work of using chain saws on steep slopes, hauling away heavy woody debris from the forest floor, and thinning over-represented trees to create the open canopy savanna structure. Exposure of young people to work in the outdoors and to the skills required in natural resource management is a goal that can be achieved within the timeframe of this

proposal. OFS itself has additional longer-range goals for its participants which include GED completion, avoidance of recidivism, and placement in unsubsidized jobs or post-secondary education. Parks considers the project to be a good platform to support these goals. However, they are outside the scope of this project.

d.) Area residents will be engaged as volunteers helping to complete certain project tasks. Three of the 4 parks have well-established and active “Friends” groups who have helped Parks staff to complete a wide range of stewardship projects. (Parks staff will work to involve neighborhood volunteers in the restoration at Prairie Ridge which does not currently benefit from an active group of volunteers.) Once the woody savanna structure is established and the woody debris removed, these Friends groups will help establish the native understory by preparing the ground for prescribed burns, scattering native seeds, and planting native shrubs and saplings. Parks staff will engage these groups in long-term follow-up maintenance of the savanna areas. (Please see attached letters of support from the 3 Friends groups.)

4.) Proposed Outcomes and Outcome Indicators: Madison Conservation Parks’ long-term goal for this project is to establish stable savanna and prairie/savanna plant communities for the enjoyment and education of Madison and Dane County residents and visitors and to diversify wildlife habitat. Achieving this goal will require years of careful follow-up and management by Parks staff and volunteers.

Short-range project goals, outcome indicators, and measurement methods, are as follows:

a.) Within 4 Madison Conservation Parks, the woody structure of 90 acres of oak savanna and the connection between savanna and prairie will be re-established within 250 acres of prairie/oak savanna complex. When complete, canopy cover within the woods will fall in the range of 50 – 70%. The forest floor will be sufficiently cleared of debris so that hot fire can be achieved. The Conservation Resource Supervisor will inspect the areas to be restored and document that these standards have been achieved for each area.

b.) 60 volunteers from Parks Friends groups will spend a total of 300 hours preparing for controlled burns, scattering native seeds, and planting native perennials. The Conservation Resource Supervisor will maintain a volunteer log to identify individuals and numbers of hours volunteers will be engaged in the project.

c.) At least 9 young people, ages 16-24, will each be engaged in at least 300 hours of project-based employability skills training and exposure to natural resource management. The OFS Conservation Crew Supervisor will maintain timesheets for each crew member. These will be reported to and verified by the Conservation Resource Supervisor.

5.) Activities/Strategies: Key Personnel/Partners: This project will be planned and supervised by the Conservation Resource Supervisor, Russ Hefty, who for 30 years has successfully engaged in the active restoration and long-term management of Madison’s 1,600 acres of conservation parks. Over the past decade, Russ and Madison Parks field staff, working with volunteer groups and the OFS youth crew, developed and implemented a large aquatic restoration within Cherokee Marsh. For this project, the City was the recipient of the Aldo

Leopold Foundation’s award for “Innovation in Ecological Restoration” and the Wisconsin Wetlands Association’s award for “Education and Outreach.” Russ has hired and supervised contractors, including the OFS youth crew, for 20 years. Russ has an excellent rapport and teaching relationship with the young people who benefit from his explanation of the science of landscape restoration and his ability to model skills needed in completing restoration tasks. Russ has extensive experience over a 30-year period recruiting, training, and managing volunteers who assist in park stewardship.

Operation Fresh Start has been a partner in conservation and stewardship projects in Dane County for over 25 years. During much of this period, youth crews worked at a wide variety of parks projects primarily during summer months. However, in the past 3 years, OFS has fielded 2 year-round conservation crews, each with 8–10 members, who are equipped with tools and safety gear, well-supervised, and capable of traveling to job sites around the region. Members have been trained in chain saw usage and safety and are certified herbicide applicators. They have completed projects for such conservation groups as The Nature Conservancy, Swamplovers, and the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, as well as for municipalities, such as the Village of McFarland and the City of Fitchburg. OFS youth will undertake the manual labor and work with chain saws needed to remove trees too large for forestry mowers, to remove trees and shrubs located in areas inaccessible to forestry mowers, and to cut up and haul away accumulations of large woody debris that inhibit fire. These are tasks which are too intensive for volunteers and too time consuming for Parks field staff to accomplish in addition to their routine assignments.

The 3 Friends groups include Friends of Cherokee Marsh, Friends of Turville Point, and Friends of Edna Taylor. These groups have volunteered on organized group workdays and as individuals. Projects have included: sowing native seeds, planting native trees and shrubs, transplanting wildflowers, hand pulling garlic mustard and dames rocket, and collecting native seeds. Letters of support from the 3 volunteer groups are attached.

Project Timeline:

Task	Partner	Timeline
Project planning	Parks Staff	11/01 – 11/15/2012
Remove excess woody debris	OFS	11/15/12 – 03/31/13
Remove and treat brush	OFS	11/15/12 – 03/31/13
Thin over-represented trees	OFS	11/15/12 – 03/31/13
Thin young trees	OFS	11/15/12 – 03/31/13
Forestry Mowing	Parks Staff	11/15/12 – 03/31/13
Scatter Native Seeds	Friends Groups	01/01/13 - 03/31/13
Herbicide Treatment of garlic mustard, etc.	Contractor	03/15/13 – 04/30/13
Preparation/implementation of controlled burns	Friends/Parks Staff	03/01/13 – 05/31/13
Interim Report to MCF	Parks Staff	05/31/2012
Scatter Native Seeds	Friends Groups	10/01/13 - 12/31/13
Final Report to MCF	Parks Staff	01/31/2014
Follow-up treatment, burns, seeding	Staff/Friends	01/14 – 12/16
Monitoring, adjustment, routine management	Staff/Friends	2017 and beyond.

Recognition of MCF: City of Madison will announce via a press release on the City homepage that the Madison Community Foundation is providing financial support to the Savanna Gems project. A similar announcement will appear on the home page of the Madison Parks website. Within each park, staff will place signs to educate visitors about the projects and their funding. At Cherokee, this sign will be placed in the kiosk adjacent to the parking lot. In Turville Point, Edna Taylor, and Prairie Ridge, these signs will be placed on the trail in a location relevant to the restoration.

6.) Funding Plan: The Madison Parks and Open Space Plans (current adopted plan and draft 2012 – 2017 plan) confirm Madison’s long-standing commitment to the preservation, restoration, and expansion of Madison’s conservation parks, currently totaling over 1,600 acres. Madison’s 2011 and 2012 Capital Budgets have each included \$120,000 to fund conservation park improvements. In preparation of the draft 2013 Capital Budget, the Parks Division has requested \$90,000 for Conservation Parks improvements, including \$45,000 specifically designated for oak savanna restoration. These requests are within the limits requested by the Mayor for the 2013 Capital Budget. In addition, \$30,000 will be carried over from the 2012 Capital Budget to complete savanna restoration tasks approved for, but not completed in 2012. The \$45,000 sum proposed for the 2013 Capital Budget is sufficient to cover the cost of herbicide application, forestry mower rental, and seed purchase, but not to hire the OFS Conservation Crew to undertake the labor of cutting trees and hauling logs and brush. Our request to MCF is for \$18,000 to cover the cost of hiring this crew at \$1,500/week for 12 weeks.

Project Period and Funding: We are proposing a project that lasting 14 months, the period we anticipate will be required to complete the canopy thinning, ground preparation, prescribed burns, and seeding. However, the MCF funds will be spent within a 12-month period. Thus, we are not requesting a multi-year grant.

Sustainability: We anticipate completing the structural restoration tasks in 2013. These are the tasks for which the Park Division is requesting funds. When this work is complete, on-going management of the savanna areas can be handled with Parks staff and volunteers within the Operating Budget.

(Please note: The \$10,000 US Fish & Wildlife Service grant identified in our Letter of Intent will be spent before MCF funds are released. Therefore, we have not included it here.)

7.) **Budget:**

Project Budget – Includes total funds raised, anticipated, and requested from MCF:

Project Costs	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Forestry Mowing (rental of mower per week)	4 weeks	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
Herbicide Treatment by Contractor per acre	47 acres	500.00	23,500.00
Native Seed Mix per acre	55 acres	754.54	41,500.00
OFS crew per week	12 weeks	1,500.00	18,000.00
Total Project Costs			\$93,000.00
Project Funding Source	Status	Amount	
City of Madison 2013 Capital Budget	Proposed (likely)	\$45,000.00	
City of Madison 2012 Capital	Approved (carry over)	30,000.00	
Madison Community Foundation	Requested	18,000.00	
Total Project Funding			\$93,000.00

Attachments:

1. Letters of support: Please see attached letters from 3 Friends groups
- 2a. Aerial photos showing some of the park areas to be restored.
- 2b. Photos showing examples of conditions to be addressed by the Operation Fresh Start Conservation Crew.