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# TREE SEEDLING DROUGHT RELIEF

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2023 Request for Applications

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## Grant Overview

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources welcomes applications from counties and tribal governments within Minnesota that manage forests and are in need of financial assistance to replant young forest stands damaged by the 2021 drought. The Minnesota legislature and governor have made \$1.25 million available to fund projects through June 30, 2027. No maximum dollar amount exists and match is not required. Funding can be used to replant bare root and containerized seedlings, prepare planting sites, protect seedlings from deer browse, and tend seedlings to restore forest sites to their condition prior to drought damage.

## Eligible expense for applicants in 2023:

On reforestation sites damaged by the 2021 drought, grantees can use grant funds to pay for services and materials to restore previously reforested sites. Damage defined by [MNDNR Regeneration Monitoring Procedures and Standards](#) as sites falling below the minimum standard for cover-type, floristic region, and age of planting. This is a 100% pass-through grant.

### Eligible Services:

- Reforestation site preparation
- Tree seedling planting
- Protection from deer browse
- Release of seedlings from competition

### Eligible Materials:

- Bareroot or containerized tree seedlings for reforestation planting

## Eligible Applicants

All counties and tribal governments within Minnesota who manage forest land and have regenerating stands with seedlings that were damaged by the 2021 drought may apply.

Priority will be given to:

- Counties or tribal governments who have trained forestry staff. Staff name and working title must be listed in application to be considered.
- Counties or tribal governments who manage forest lands, have a recent forest management plan, or have natural resource plans that include their forest lands.
- Projects that benefit underserved populations and areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher populations of low-income residents, or people of color, including tribal communities, or both). Please reference the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's interactive environmental justice [map](#) for more information.

## Amount of funding available:

The DNR has \$1.25 million available in general fund dollars to fund projects that replant bareroot or containerized tree seedlings on young reforestation sites damaged by the 2021 drought.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive grant process with review by a committee representing content specialists with regional knowledge. DNR expects to announce selected grantees by January 31, 2023.

### Match Requirements

No match is required.

### Minimum Requirements

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity. Minimum requirements are:

- Grant requests must be greater than or equal to \$5,000
- Proposed project activities must be within the boundaries of Minnesota.
- All proposals must include tree seedling planting, and any proposed site preparation and tending must be associated with sites where tree seedlings will be planted using these grant funds.
- Showing the ability to implement the project and submit final report by July 31, 2026.
- Demonstrating a need with recent data supporting claims of drought damage (e.g., forest regeneration surveys).
- Providing documentation of the project's progress at biennial reporting deadlines (July 31 and January 31), including photos, tables, figures, and maps.
- Complying with all federal and state laws and regulations related to the completion of projects as stated in the grant agreement.

### Additional criteria

- Tree seedling planting projects should follow standards set in MNDNR's State Tree Planting Contract Specification (see Appendix A) or equivalent contract specifications.
- All proposed reforestation sites must be submitted to MNDNR in a shapefile following MNDNR Forestry Shapefile Standards (see Appendix B).
- All species planted must be regionally native and of an appropriate seed source for the proposed sites.
- Planting stock must be bareroot or containerized tree seedlings.

### Priority projects

Ensuring fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards is a policy of the state of Minnesota. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant making. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities, disparities, or both.

Projects clearly benefiting underserved populations and areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher populations of low-income residents, or people of color, including tribal communities, or both) will be rated higher. Please reference the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's interactive environmental justice [map](#) for more information. Applicants should describe how the proposed project activities benefit and serve these communities.

### Required site conditions for funding

Sites must be less than 10-years-old where measurable tree seedling mortality occurred as a result of the drought of 2021. Use the threshold below to determine if a site is eligible for funding:

Age of project site	Eligibility based on tree density (trees/acre or TPA) and stocking (%)
< 5 year old	Eligible if below 600 TPA and 75% stocking
5-10 year old	Eligible if below 500 TPA and 75% stocking

### Maximum reimbursable cost rates for eligible activities

Proposed and funded activity costs will be reimbursed up to the maximum cost rates listed below. Should funding be limited, projects will be funded with preference given to priority 1 activities (site prep, purchase and planting of seedlings), then priority 2 activities (protection), and finally priority 3 activities (release).

Priority	Activity	Treatment Details	Maximum reimbursed cost-rate	Notes
1	Purchase and planting tree seedlings	Purchase of bareroot or container tree seedlings	Conifer: up to \$400 per thousand for seedling purchase and planting  Hardwood: up to \$700 per thousand for seedling purchase	
1	Site prep – mechanical/ chemical	Not limited to but including disc trenching, slash alignment, or raking mechanical treatments  Broadcast, strip, or spot pesticide treatments	Up to \$300 per acre	
2	Protection - budcapping	Budcapping up to 800 trees per acre	Up to \$75 per acre	Only eligible for trees planted under this grant, conditional on available funds
3	Release – mechanical/ chemical	Not limited to but including brushsaw removal of competition within at least a 4-foot radius of crop tree  Broadcast, strip, or spot pesticide treatments	Up to \$180 per acre	Only eligible for trees planted under this grant, conditional on available funds

### Ineligible expenses

- Costs incurred prior to the start date on the fully executed grant agreement
- Staff time for county or tribal government employees
- Purchase and planting of plant material that is something other than bareroot or containerized tree seedlings (sometimes referred to as conservation grade tree seedlings)
- Equipment purchases
- Easement or land purchases
- Experimental practices not approved by MNDNR
- Practices that will not lead to stocked stands as described in MNDNR Regeneration Monitoring Standards

Questions about additional eligible or ineligible expenses can be directed to:  
[reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us).

### Application Instructions

#### Completing Application

When filling out the application, ensure all sections are completed and the application is submitted by the deadline. Pay close attention to requested information and respond to all questions. If funded, answers will be incorporated into the grant work plan; therefore, make sure enough information is provided to serve as a complete work plan. Clearly demonstrate how the application connects to eligible activities.

A complete application will consist of the following documents:

1. Application form (PDF, do not change format)
2. Attachment A (Excel, do not change format):
  - a. Tab 1 - Project work plan,
  - b. Tab 2 - Budget request summary, and
  - c. Tab 3 - Key personnel
3. GIS shapefile of project stands polygons (follow format standards in Appendix B)

#### Submitting Application

After reading through the Request for Applications, complete all parts of the application found online. Grant applicants are required to submit applications to [reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us). Applications must be received electronically by midnight on December 12, 2022, to be considered eligible for funding. MNDNR is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems causing an application to be received late. The applicant is responsible for ensuring their submission is received by MNDNR by the deadline; applications received after the deadline will not be eligible for consideration in this round of funding. All applicants will be notified by January 31, 2023, whether or not their project is to be funded.

## Selection Process

A steering committee, made up of MNDNR Forestry staff and select stakeholders, will recommend projects and award amounts. The steering committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. MNDNR will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for final award decisions. The award decisions of MNDNR are final and not subject to appeal.

## Project Timeline

Grant Program Step	Date(s)
RFA posted on the MNDNR website	October 12, 2022
Application questions due	November 11, 2022
Applications due	December 12, 2022
Application grant review process	December 12, 2022 – January 13, 2023
Project selection; grant agreement negotiations begin	January 13 - 31, 2023
Work plans approved, contracts executed, grant work begins	April 1, 2023

## Reporting and Monitoring

### Reporting

Reporting on activities by project site will be required twice a year by July 31 (for activities completed between January 1 and June 30) and January 31 (for activities completed between July 1 and December 31). Payment will occur for activities successfully completed within each reporting period.

### Monitoring

The state shall be allowed at any time to conduct site visits and inspections to ensure work progress in accordance with this grant agreement, including a final inspection upon project completion for grants greater than \$50,000. At least one monitoring visit per grant period on all state grants of over \$50,000 will be conducted and at least annual monitoring visits on grants of over \$250,000. Monitoring sites will be chosen at random by the state.

Following closure of the grant, the state's authorized representatives shall be allowed to conduct post-completion inspections of the site to ensure the site is being properly operated and maintained and that no conversion of use has occurred.

The state reserves the right to inspect the site before and after payment and to decline reimbursement if project work is not completed to the state's standards.

## Project Completion

All project work must be completed by June 30, 2026, and the final request for reimbursement (along with final reports) must be submitted by July 31, 2026.

## Questions:

Submit questions to [reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:reforestation.dnr@state.mn.us). Questions must be submitted no later than November 11, 2022. Answers will be posted weekly online.

### Data Privacy and Trade Secret Notice

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applications are private or nonpublic until opened. Once the applications are opened, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until all agreements are fully executed. After DNR has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A statement by a grantee that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application (Minn. Stat. § 13.599, subd. 3).

### Other considerations

All proposals submitted in response to this RFA become the property of the MNDNR. MNDNR reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement.

### Liability and Project Implementation

MNDNR will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the execution of the contract. Project work and expenses that are eligible for reimbursement with grant funds CANNOT be started or incurred until the grant contract is fully executed. All grant agreements are expected to be finalized by April 1, 2023. Related grant project work can begin after all required signatures are obtained. Interim reports and final reports will be required for all grant-funded projects.

MNDNR also reserves the right to:

- Post funded proposals and reports, including images and maps, to the MNDNR website.
- Reject any or all proposals received.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and agreement of applicant.
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights.
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFA requirements and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the state of Minnesota.
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate notice to potential applicants.
- Require a good faith effort on the part of the grantee to work with MNDNR subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results.
- Re-evaluate applications for funding should additional funding becoming available up to and/or including an additional application period.
- Withhold any payments when contract conditions are not met.

## Exhibit A: Application evaluation score sheet

### Selection Criteria and Weight

The steering committee will be reviewing each eligible application on a 100-point scale. Scores will be used to develop final funding recommendations.

Selection Criteria	Weight
<b>1. Project Overview and Need</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Application is clear and complete</li> <li>b) Organization has demonstrated a readiness to take on a project of the proposed scope and size</li> <li>c) Organization describes project locations and has field survey data or observations of drought damage to support need for sites falling below MNDNR regeneration monitoring standards</li> <li>d) Application package includes properly formatted GIS shapefile that includes polygon features for all proposed project sites</li> </ul>	40
<b>2. Project Treatment Timeline and Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Timeline provides specific dates for all activities</li> <li>b) Timeline is easy to read and comprehend</li> <li>c) Budget request does not exceed maximum allowable cost rate for activities</li> <li>d) Timeline follows a silviculturally sound treatment plan based on regionally accepted practices</li> </ul>	30
<b>3. Project Impacts on Priority Populations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Planning and implementation serves and includes areas of concern for environmental justice (communities with higher populations of low-income residents, people of color, including tribal communities, or both)</li> <li>b) Describe actionable items for identified communities</li> </ul>	10
<b>4. Key Personnel and Forest or Natural Resource Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Key personnel are listed with corresponding project roles, including an identified "reforestation project coordinator"</li> <li>b) Appropriate certifications and education degrees are listed for staff carrying out work on project sites</li> <li>c) Staff have a degree in forestry or a related natural resources field with experience managing grants</li> <li>d) Describe personnel experience in planning, contracting, implementing, and monitoring reforestation projects</li> <li>e) Applicant follows a published or available plan that directs management of forest or natural resources</li> </ul>	20
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