



CITY OF LA CROSSE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Please note that previous funding amounts are not a guarantee for continued support and any funding amount may be based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, performance, available City funds, and collaborating efforts by your organization with similar organizations.

Contact Information

Organization

Friends of the Blufflands, Inc.

Address

2222 Hoeschler Dr. La Crosse, WI 54601

Phone

608-788-8831

E-mail

wilsonpat2222@gmail.com

Name of contact person

Patrick Wilson

Proposal Summary

Project Name

Mathy Bluff Prairie Restoration

Total amount of City funds your agency is requesting

Will any new jobs be created as a result of the project?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If so, how many?

What benefit has your organization provided to the La Crosse community, and specifically to the City, in 2024?

Friends of the Blufflands (FBL) is a nonprofit organization in existence since 2016. Our mission is to promote sound conservation practices in the Coulee Region blufflands and to be a voice for a wide variety of users who value the recreation and habitat value of the blufflands. It is becoming increasingly recognized that being active in a natural setting is a way that many cope with the stresses of modern day life. The trails in Hixon Forest and the surrounding bluffs offer such a setting and the prairies serve as an appealing destination. But, in 2016, these prairies were in a highly degraded state and needed attention. FBL stepped into this void and began their restoration by hiring and coordinating contractors while leading many volunteer work days. This continued into 2024 when \$33,250 in grant funds from the Paul E Stry Foundation, the Natural Resources Foundation, the La Crosse Area Community Foundation, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Services were used to hire contractors for continued work on Stry, Birch Point, Mathy Bluff, Zoerb, Juniper, and Vista prairies, as well as on Lookout Savanna. Also in 2024, the City of La Crosse provided \$8,194 for this work and FBL contributed \$14,163 from donors. Volunteer hours in 2024 totaled over 1000. These ancient prairies are not only enjoyed by trail users, but also provide vital habitat for as many as 100 unique plants and 2000 insects, including several listed as species of special concern by the state of Wisconsin. One insect, the rusty patched bumblebee found frequently on the restored prairies, is listed as federally endangered. Unfortunately these prairies are being overtaken by brush and trees. FBL seeks the continued support for the ongoing work of restoring and maintaining these prairies. FBL has had a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of La Crosse for many years to continue this work. We have collaborated with The Prairie Enthusiasts on work days and they have provided controlled burns of several of the prairies since 2022 at no charge.

FBL is an organization that has proven its ability to restore and maintain remnant prairies in the La Crosse area since 2016 as well as pursue other conservation work. We have a dedicated board, volunteer base, and many members who remain active with us. We have no paid staff or office rental expenses, so the vast majority of the funds we seek goes toward the hiring of contractors for the work we outline. We have forged relationships with many partners along the way who have contributed to our success. As we expand our work and become even more well known, we believe that our success will continue. This will require funding for the ongoing maintenance of restored prairies, as well as the possibility of beginning the restoration of new ones.

FBL involves many in the community in its work including students from UWL, especially those in the Environmental Sciences area, and Viterbo University especially during their Service Saturdays. We have had a WisCorp Service Member work with us from June through August the last few years as well as the WisCorp Crew for one week. Others have signed up as volunteers through events such as Earth Day. We have also led hikes for the City sponsored Bluff Bash and for the NRF and statewide residents

What does your organization have planned for the remainder of 2024 (that is of benefit to La Crosse, and specifically the City)?

NA

What does your organization plan to accomplish with the help of City funding in 2025?

FBL will continue to restore and maintain the eight prairies that have been worked on. Birch Point Prairie is the most recent prairie added to this list where we began restoration in late 2024. This has continued into 2025 with a new contract of \$4,000 awarded in February to continue the effort. Funds from La Crosse County of \$10,000, with supplemental funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well as FBL are earmarked for continued restoration of Juniper Tract Prairie in 2025. Stry Prairie was burned on 3/2/2025 by the Coulee Region Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts at no charge, and Lookout Savanna and Dobson Prairie are on the list to be burned this winter or early spring if the right conditions present themselves. A major focus will be the continued effort to fully restore Mathy Bluff Prairie. This has already had a significant amount of work devoted to it, but we seek the funds from the La Crosse Community Enhancement Grant for continued work on this site.

Organization Details

Legal status of organization Private, Non-Profit	Federal Tax Identification Number 81-3769215
--	--

What was your organization's total operating budget for the past year?

Has your organization received City funds in the past? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	If yes, how much has your organization received and how many years has your organization participated in the program? Since 2020 the Friends of the Blufflands (FBL) has received \$20,600 in City funds for matching contract funds for bluffland restoration with total contract payments from FBL and other donors to FBL for \$110,180.
--	---

Organization Structure

Attach the following documents (check off as you upload each file below)

☒ Concise organization chart showing your agency's major administrative structure

☒ Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws

☐ List of Board of Directors

☒ Current agency budget

☒ Current project activity budget if currently funded

☐ Other financial forms: Form 990, Income Statement, Balance Sheet, et al.

File Upload

FRIENDS OF THE BLUFFLANDS.docx	13.86KB
Bylaws of Friends of the Blufflands, 8-14-2018.pdf	255.87KB
FofB Articles of Incorporation - Nonstock Corporation - WI Appr.pdf	2.51MB
FBL BOD 2025.xlsx	12.56KB
Form308For2024Signed.pdf	3.77MB

What is your agency’s primary funding source(s)?

private donations, City of La Crosse Parks and Recreation Dept., Paul E Stry Foundation, Natural Resource Foundation of Wisconsin, La Crosse Area Community Foundation, US Fish & Wildlife Service

What percent of your anticipated total project budget does this City request represent?

30%

What other source(s) of funds could your organization pursue? Does your organization receive similar funding from other municipalities?

FBL has received funding from the Paul E Stry Foundation, Natural Resource Foundation of Wisconsin, La Crosse Area Community Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and La Crosse County.

Proposal Details

Provide an overview of the program (this pertains only to the activity for which you are seeking funds).

Of the eight remnant prairies in Hixon Forest and on the bluffs nearby, Mathy Bluff Prairie is one of the largest. It is in the process of being restored, but there is still much work to be done. This includes further tree and brush removal, control of the many anticipated resprouts on the central prairie and recently cleared areas into which the prairie can expand by a combination of cutting and treating stumps, basal bark treatment, burning brush piles, careful cutting and treating and careful foliar spraying. With these funds, FBL would hire a local contractor to supplement the work of its many volunteers.

Specifically state how the requested funds will be used.

To hire a contractor to remove trees and brush from the central and expanded prairie.

State the specific local needs and problems that your proposal intends to address.

The La Crosse Climate Action plan states that La Crosse is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change. Prairies are known to be an excellent way to sequester carbon in the soil for longer time periods than other natural systems such as forests. Restoring these prairies also increases the resilience of many insect and plant species to the impacts of climate change by providing more connected habitat. These prairies also enhance the natural beauty of our area.

Identify the project target population your proposed program or activity will serve. Include unique characteristics such as: ethnicity/race, age, disability, income level.

These prairies provide much needed habitat for many important pollinators that are important for many of the foods we consume. According to the US Department of Agriculture, 35% of the world's food rely on pollinators, including local crops such as apples and tomatoes. These prairies also enhance the beauty of our area for all citizens to enjoy.

Describe methods used to measure success in achieving objectives and specifically meeting needs of the target population.

Success will be measured by the degree of restoration that occurs with the funds provided as well as the ongoing maintenance of the restored prairie with continued surveillance for unwanted brush, trees and other nonnative plants, as well as prescribed burns.

If more than one agency within the La Crosse area deals with similar problems or clients that you have identified, describe how your agency coordinates tasks and responsibility with these other agencies and how duplication of services will be avoided.

The Mississippi Valley Conservancy works on other sites they own in the area, and their representative attends FBL Board meetings. As an example, MVC is currently actively restoring a site called the Kaplan Prairie just north of Mathy Bluff Prairie which will complement each other by providing further habitat and genetic exchange between the two sites. We also cooperate closely with The Prairie Enthusiasts that have been conducting prescribed burns on the prairies we have worked on. Fish and Wildlife Services also provide technical advice and funding.