



Draft Natural Systems Plan (NSP)

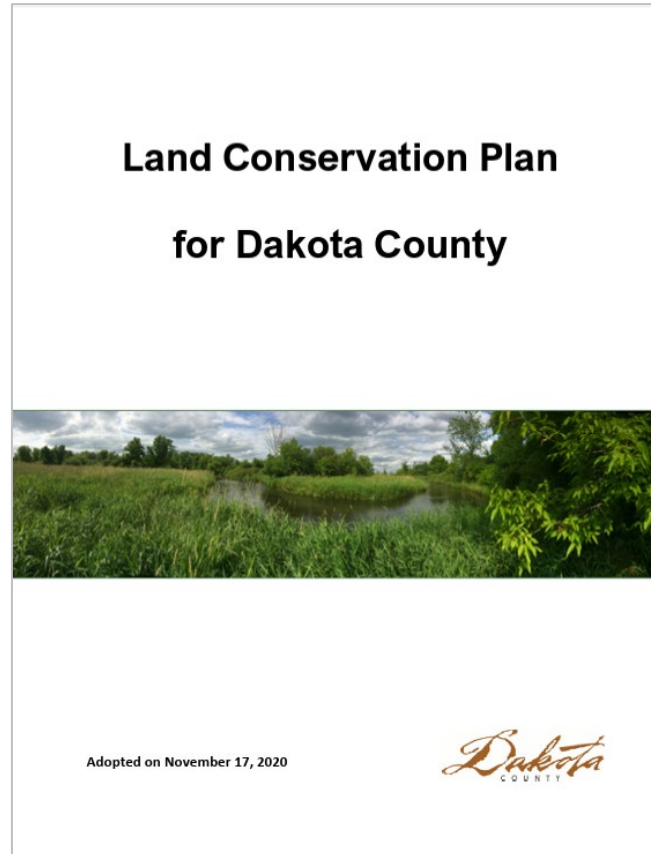
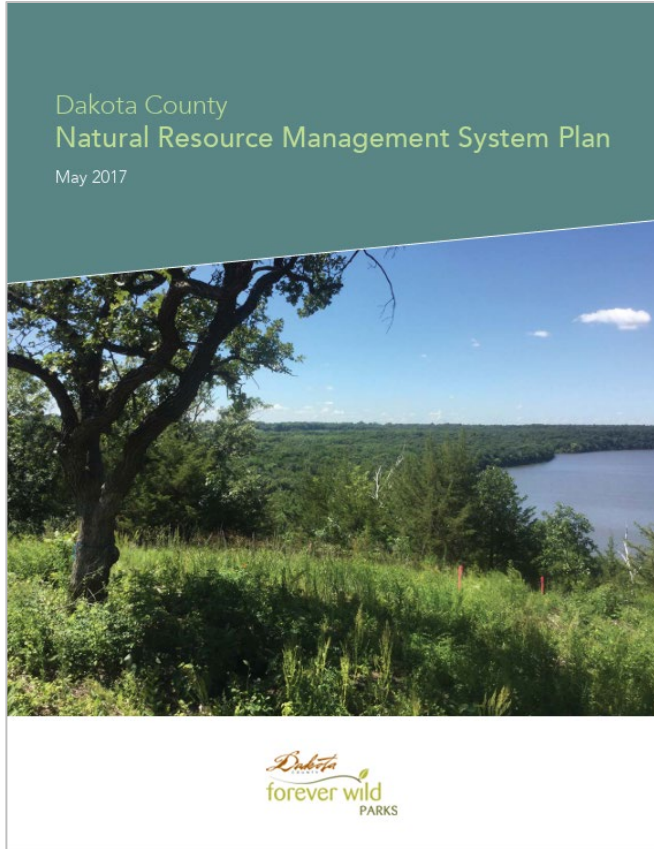
Dakota County Physical Development Committee
Request for Release for Public Review: August 18, 2026
Tom Lewanski, Parks Natural Resources Manager
Mary Jackson, Office of Planning

Overview



1. NSP Recap
2. Plan Context
3. Plan Highlights
4. Discussion and Questions
5. Recommendation on Public Review

NSP Recap



Goal

Combine and update

- 2020 Land Conservation Plan (LCP)
- 2017 Parks Natural Resources System Plan (NRMSP)

NSP Recap



Summer 2025	Project scoping
Fall 2025	Inventory and update two legacy plans
Winter 2025	New objectives and strategies
Spring 2026	Stakeholder engagement
Spring 2026	Implementation outcomes
Summer 2026	Draft Plan
Fall 2026	Proposed adoption

Plan Context

Context for natural systems management:

Complex,
interwoven,
interdependent,
living systems





Plan Purpose:

- Protect ecologically valuable lands amid development, growth, and habitat fragmentation
- Ensure consistent, science-based management for long-term ecological resilience
- Provide a framework for funding, restoration priorities, and partnerships

Plan Context



Plan Hierarchy:

- Vision Plan
- Operational Plans
- Unit Plans

Highlights for Land Conservation



Five-Year Focus:

- Continue prioritization and comprehensive communications
- Seek funding opportunities for long-term natural area easement management
- Work with willing landowners to secure up to 10 new natural area easements
- Restore up to 945 easement acres, up to 22 projects
- With SWCD, re-engage ag easement owners on BMP adoption

Highlights for Natural Systems Stewardship

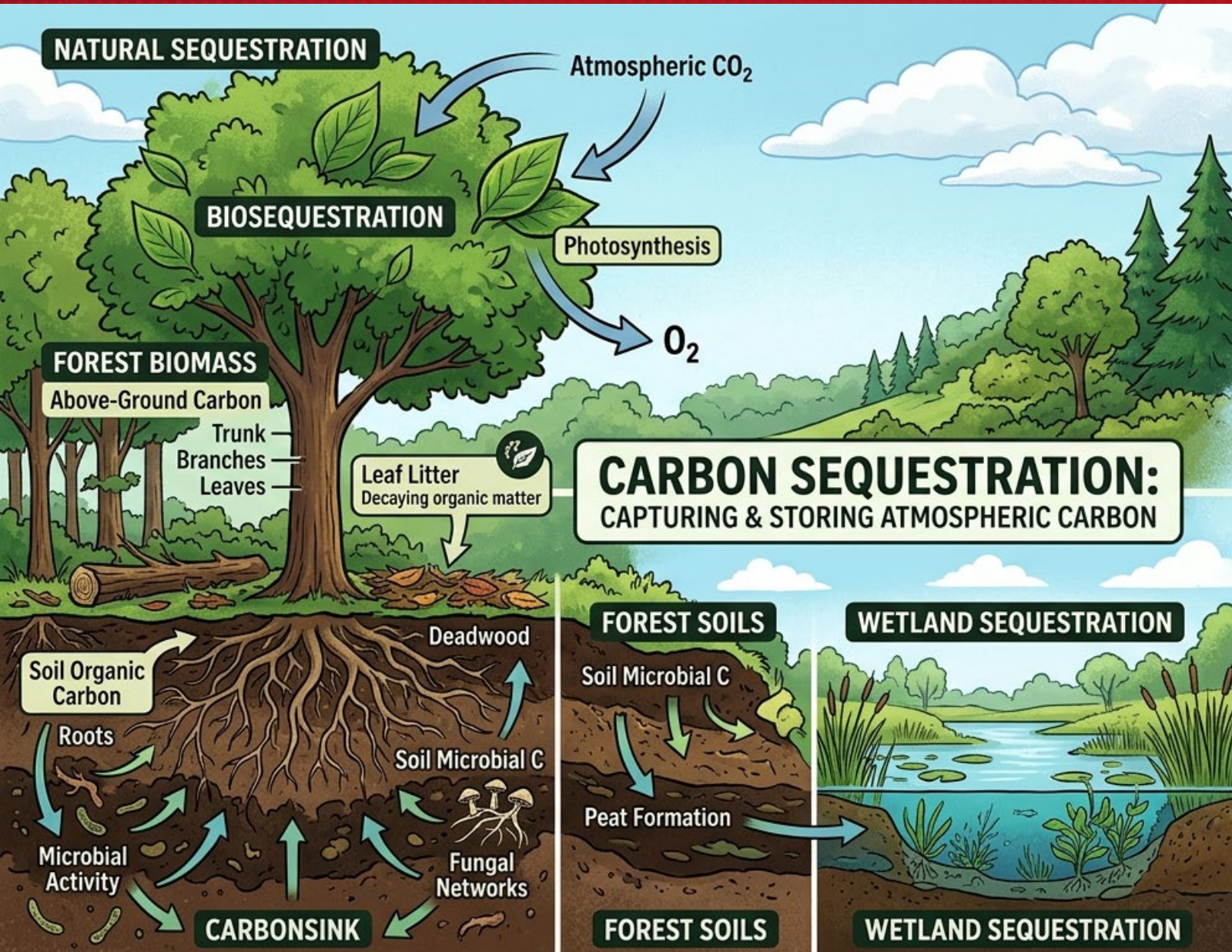


Five-Year Focus: Adaptive Cycle

- Seek increased funding as the system grows
- Secure stable funding for
 - long-term adaptive management of the system
 - private funding for restoration and maintenance of private protected lands
- Designate the most sensitive areas where the priority will be natural resource integrity.



Highlights for Natural Systems Stewardship



Five-Year Focus: Climate

- Strengthen diversity for resilience
- Use science-based approaches to adapt
- Increase sequestration
- Reduce carbon footprint

Highlights for Natural Systems Stewardship



Five-Year Focus: Wildlife

- Continue to monitor and manage
- Consider new reintroductions
- Evaluate new opportunities for wildlife movement corridors



Highlights for Operations



Five-Year Focus: System Growth

- Enhance partnerships
- Develop a comprehensive Communications Plan for natural resources
- Identify optimal staffing ratios
- Enhance data collection and analysis, land management database
- Address projected funding shortfalls

Desired Five-Year Outcomes:

- Restore an additional 1,500 acres of park land
- Restore 366 acres of Greenway corridor lands
- Restore 945 acres of natural area easements
- Acquire 175+ acres for conservation easements
- Manage previously restored lands, increasing from 2,400 acres in 2026 to 3,700 acres by 2031
- Water quality improvement projects
- Wildlife management, re-introduction of several native species

Highlights for Implementation



Cost Estimates, Natural Resources (NR) and Land Conservation (LC)

Acquisition and Restoration Grants	\$22.15 M
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County Share for Acquisition and Restoration	\$0.86 M
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<u>Long-Term Management of Restored Lands</u>	<u>\$9.79 M</u>
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Total	\$10.65 M
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Estimated Average Annual County Cost	\$2.13 M
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2022-2026: Average annual NR and LC CIP budgets = \$3.5M (\$1.3M ELF, \$2.4M external funds).

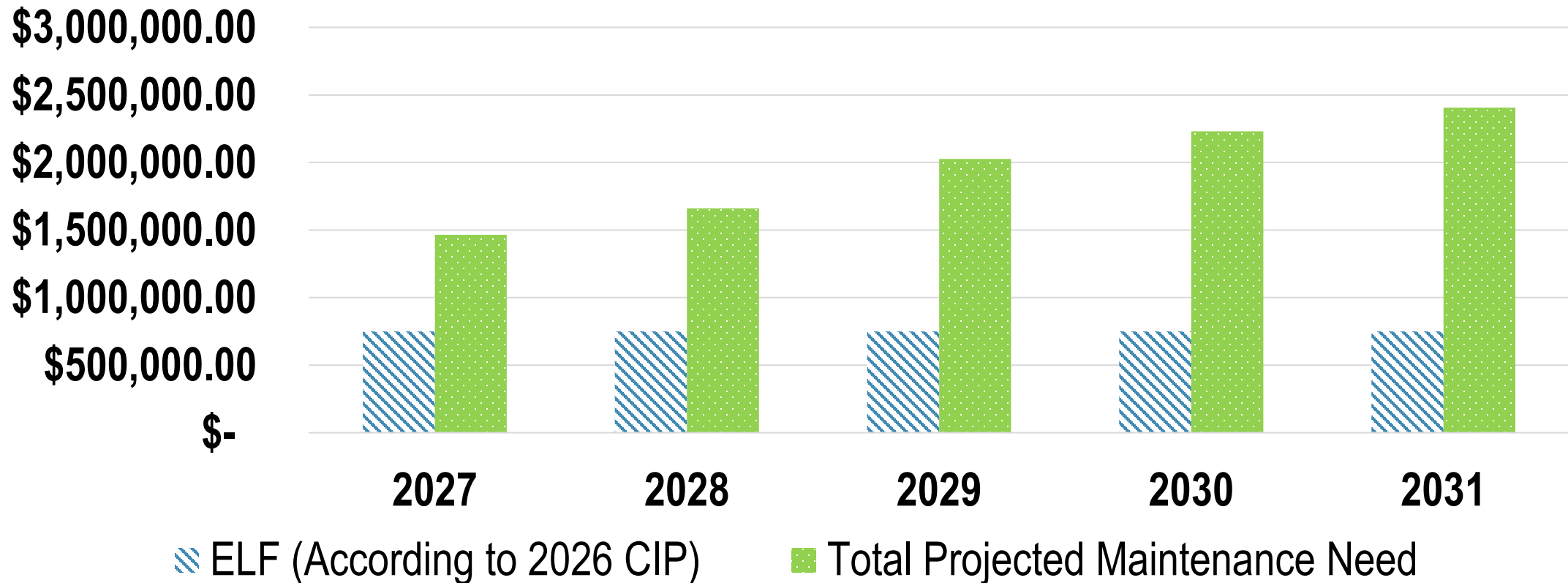
2027-2031: Projected average annual NR and LC CIP needs = \$6.56M (\$2.13M ELF, \$4.43M external funds).

Outside funds secured are typically twice the amount of ELF invested (100% ROI).

Highlights for Implementation



Projected Park and Greenway Maintenance Need



Opportunities to Address Funding Needs:

- Complete 2026 Parks funding study.
- Study sustainable funding and partnerships for managing private natural area easements.
- Re-prioritize and limit new restoration to the highest priorities.
- Adjust maintenance standards while minimizing ecological quality losses.
- Use flexibility in five-year plan under low, medium, and high funding scenarios.
- Seek external funding for long-term maintenance.
- Leverage partners in funding for restoration and maintenance.

Discussion And Questions



Does the Committee have comments and/or questions on the draft Natural Systems Plan?

Requested Action



That the draft Natural Systems Plan be released for a thirty-day public review and comment period.