

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grand Meadow Chert Quarry / Wanhi Yukan Archaeological & Cultural Preserve

Habitat Restoration, Phase 2 - Removal of Invasive Species

Mower County Historical Society - Austin, Minnesota



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2. OVERVIEW

The Mower County Historical Society (**MCHS**) and the Prairie Island Indian Community (**PIIC**) are seeking to contract with a firm (**Vendor**) for Phase 2 of a restoration project (**Project**) for the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry/Wanhi Yukon Archaeological and Cultural Preserve (**the Preserve**) in southeastern Minnesota. The goal is to continue to clear invasive plants from three Key Project Areas: one in a nearly 8-acre wooded parcel being restored to an oak savanna, and two in a 5-acre restored prairie. The project with the Vendor will take place over a 3-year period. The first season (Fall 2026) will involve cutting, removal and chemical treatment of invasives in both biomes. A controlled burn, separately contracted through another RFP, will follow in either this fall or spring of 2027. Following the work this fall, there will be 30 months of additional maintenance by the Vendor in this Project. After this Project an ongoing maintenance program for the site will be managed by MCHS volunteers, and based on recommendations made by the Vendor.

Special care will be required due to the sensitive nature of the site. Within the woods are nearly 100 open pits that were created by Indigenous people mining this landscape nearly 1000 years ago, to acquire a special stone called ‘chert’ used to make a wide variety of daily tools. No machinery will be allowed within the pits, and only a limited portion of the ground within the woods can be traveled by machinery. A large portion of the work will need to be accomplished manually.

This property is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is owned and preserved by The Archaeological Conservancy. It is managed and protected in by a partnership between the Mower County Historical Society and the Prairie Island Indian Community.

3. BACKGROUND

Site Location

The Project Area is north and west of the town of Grand Meadow in Mower County. On Highway 16 go west of town to the gravel road 730th Avenue, then 1 and 1/3 miles north, past 255th St and St. Finbarr’s Cemetery. See maps on page 9.

Project Leadership and Funding

The Mower County Historical Society is a non-profit organization located in Austin, Minnesota whose mission includes the preservation, protection and interpretation of historic and precontact sites on behalf of the people of Mower County. The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Archaeological Preserve is one of 17 such properties. The site was purchased in 1994 by The Archaeological Conservancy, for permanent protection and preservation. In an ongoing partnership since 2020, MCHS and the Prairie Island Indian Community developed the interpretive signage and Trail and now manage the site. The Project Director will be available

to answer questions, advise the Vendor, and to monitor all work being done on site to avoid putting the fragile archaeological, cultural, and natural resources at risk.

Site Background

The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry (21MW0008) is a 170-acre archaeological site on the National Register of Historic Places near the town of Grand Meadow in Mower County, Minnesota. Previously surrounded by prairie, most of the original site is now hidden below what is mostly cultivated farmland, but there is a notable exception: a small 15-acre parcel that includes 8 acres of woods that contain a completely pristine remnant of the original Native American open-pit quarry, dug between 600 and 1,000 years ago.

During the period that chert was being extracted by digging pits, this site is thought to have been the most visited place in the state, annually drawing many families from many different villages within 120 miles of the chert quarry. It is among the most important sites of southern Minnesota, along with the Pipestone Quarries, the Pederson Site on Lake Benton, and the Jeffers Petroglyph site, and the most recent to have been made available to the public.

The wooded parcel in Project Area #1 has been protected by one family since 1921, who then sold it to The Archaeological Conservancy in 1994, the same year it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2020 the joint MCHS/PIIC project to clear the woods and build a trail began, and in 2022 a DNR CPL Legacy grant supported Phase One of returning the overgrown woods to its original state as an oak savanna, and restoring 5 acres of fallow farm field to its original prairie condition. A few hundred woody buckthorn trees were removed and shredded or burned, and most small plants were sprayed repeatedly over a 3-year period. In 2025 a DNR Parks & Trails Grant made possible the completion of a 3,600ft public walking trail with interpretive signage, in Dakota and English.

The Preserve also includes a 5-acre open field that had once been plowed, but was allowed to become grassland for over 30 years. The effort to restore that land to its original prairie also began in 2022, and continues with this Project. There is a waterway through the center of the otherwise dry upland prairie, leaving strips on each side with enough moisture to create a distinctive set of ‘wet prairie’ plants, along with a few species of unwanted invasives. Each of those two separate circumstances will require a specific treatment plan. All seeds for the prairie areas are being sourced from native stands within 15 miles of the site, to recreate an authentic and hyperlocal prairie.

Note: An additional 2 acres of grassland lies on the eastern side of the woods, reached by a paved driveway from 730th Avenue. That area is available to the Vendor for parking, equipment storage, and if requested, overnight camping.

4. MAP OF KEY PROJECT AREAS

Key Areas of the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry Preserve
(Includes undeveloped Right of Way acreages)



5. SCOPE OF WORK

Prior to submitting a proposal, respondents will be asked to:

- A. Visit the site or schedule a Zoom meeting with the MCHS Project Director.

The successful Vendor will be expected to:

- B. Meet as requested with MCHS staff to schedule work, inspect work areas, provide treatment recommendations, acquire approval for proposed work, and provide updates on progress.
- C. Notify the Project Director of any and all changes to the work schedule.
- D. In Project Area #1, the 8-acres of woods:
 - a. Cut or spray annually, possibly multiple times, all invasive, non-native woody exotic species, including (but not limited to) common buckthorn, Tartarian honeysuckle, white mulberry, velvet leaf, and burdock, as well as any specific invasive pioneer trees as identified by MCHS. Foliar herbicide treatments should follow immediately after cutting large stems or stumps.
 - b. Follow-up management/treatment in woodland areas throughout the course of the contract period. Nonnative plant cover to be reduced to less than 5% by the end of the project period.
 - c. Employ manual methods for removal of invasive species in the archaeological pits or near other features as identified by the Project Director. Use of machinery will be highly limited.
 - d. Ensure the protection of oaks, cherry trees and other native hardwoods to be identified by MCHS.
 - e. Only cutting and spraying will be allowed; plants cannot be uprooted in the Project Area. A small skidsteer for mulching or shredding will be allowed in selected areas if deemed necessary.
 - f. Develop recommendations for control of aspen trees, and for continued treatments of invasives to be done by volunteers after the project period.
- E. In Project Area #2, the upland dry prairie:
 - a. Manual spraying or stem-cutting and removal of wild parsnip, Canada thistle, reed canary grass, and other non-natives, seasonally as needed.
 - b. Mowing at Vendor's recommendation.
 - c. A controlled burn is anticipated for Year 3, but is not within this contract.
- F. In Project Area #3, the wet prairie:
 - a. Mowing on both sides of the waterway up to 3 times, at Vendor's recommendation, out to the limit determined by Vendor, but at least 10 yards on each side.
 - b. Multiple sprayings of Glyphosate in year 1 and as needed.

Beyond This Scope of Work:

1) A separate vendor will be sought for two controlled burns during the project. Respondents to this proposal will be invited to be considered for a controlled burn in Area #1 in either Fall 2026 or Spring 2027, and for a burn in Areas #2 and #3 at a time to be determined. 2) Reseeding in all

3 areas will be accomplished by experienced volunteers, who will be using native prairie species collected from nearby stands of virgin prairie plants identified by former DNR staff.

6. SCHEDULE

It is the responsibility of proposing contractors to visit and become familiar with the site no later than EOD Monday, September 14, 2026. See p. 8, below, for scheduling a site visit. All work performed under the anticipated contract must be carried out in accordance with applicable procedures, requirements and regulations of the Clean Water Land & Legacy Fund; MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy Grant; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Mower County; and others as applicable.

MCHS anticipates the following schedule for the completion of this contract:

RFP Solicitation Release	August 25, 2026
Final Date for Site Visit or Zoom Session	September 14, 2026
Proposals Due by	Monday, Sept 28 at 11:59pm
Proposal Selection Announced	October 2, 2026
Contract with MCHS Completed by	October 9, 2026
Recommendations for Continued Treatment	June 1, 2029
Project Completion Date	June 31, 2029

Submit recommendations for ongoing restoration management beyond this Project by 30 days prior to the Project completion date.

7. PROPOSAL CONTENT

Proposal shall not exceed 8 pages (single-sided) plus two appendices. At a minimum, the proposal shall include:

1. Title Page/Cover Letter to introduce the contractor submitting the proposal, including the name, address, telephone number, fax number and email address of respondent.
2. A description of the responder's background and experience. This should include examples of similar work indicating the responder's level of involvement in specific similar projects.
3. A description of the responder's project approach proposed to be utilized for the project. Included should be a work plan and/or schedule identifying the major tasks to be accomplished; the responder's approach and methods; description of equipment; and quality control procedures. It should demonstrate the responder's understanding of the scope and unique circumstances of this project.
4. An appendix with a resume of the project manager with details of their experience, and any other information considered to be relevant.

5. An appendix with proof of liability insurance coverage.
6. An appendix with at least 3 references, and contact information.

8. CONTRACT

The selected responder will agree to perform the work for a contract sum that will include the total cost of work and travel expenses through June 2029. The funds that are available for this work will be discussed during the site visit or during an informational Zoom conversation. The payment schedule will be outlined in the contract, and payments will occur upon receipt of scheduled invoices.

9. SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

A review committee will evaluate all responses received by the deadline. The following specific factors will be considered in the evaluation of proposals:

1. The qualifications of the team and its previous experience with comparable projects at similar natural, historic or archaeological properties with sensitive resources;
2. The capacity to complete the project within the allowed time;
3. The ability to achieve goals while working in a cost-effective manner;
4. A demonstrated skill for working in a collaborative atmosphere;
5. Responses received from references;
6. Appropriateness of general approach as outlined;
7. Any other factors considered to be in the best interests of MCHS.

The evaluations will be weighed on the following basis:

Item	Weight
1. The responder's background and specialized expertise with ecological restoration services, including ability/experience working on similar projects.	45%
2. Responder's expressed project understanding, approach and methodology; project work plan.	45%
3. Responder's references and reviews.	10%

In evaluating the proposals received, MCHS will consider all of the above criteria, including overall value. This is a quality-based selection process. After selection, the successful responder will be expected to meet electronically with MCHS staff for an interview; submit a detailed scope of services, timeline and budget; and negotiate contract terms and conditions.

10. MCHS RIGHTS

MCHS reserves the right to:

1. Reject a submission due to defects, irregularities or provisions inconsistent with this RFP.
2. Alter the Project timeline.
3. Cancel the proposal request.
4. Issue a subsequent request for proposals.
5. Remedy technical errors in the proposal process.
6. Appoint an evaluation committee to review proposals.
7. Investigate the qualifications of any firm under consideration, and contact responder's references.
8. Request additional evidence of qualifications to perform the work described.
9. Interview responders or the successful vendor prior to contract negotiations
10. Negotiate with any, all, or none of the proposal request respondents.

This proposal request does not commit MCHS to enter into a contract, nor does it obligate MCHS to pay for any costs incurred in preparation and/or submission of proposals.

11. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION & SITE LOCATION

A PDF copy of the proposal shall be received via email no later than 11:59pm on **Monday, September 28, 2026**. Late proposals will not be considered.

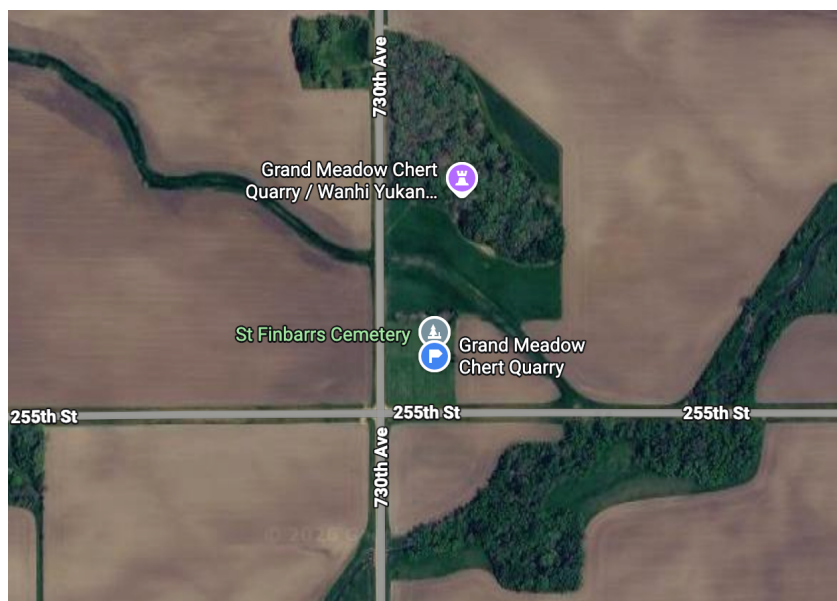
For any submissions, inquiries, or responses, and to arrange a mandatory site visit or Zoom discussion with the Project Director prior to submission, contact:

Randal J. Forster, Executive Director
Mower County Historical Society
director@mowercountyhistory.org

(507) 437-6082

SITE LOCATION:

The Grand Meadow Chert Quarry / Wanhi Yukan ([see: Google Maps](#)) is located c.24 miles south of Rochester, MN, and c.21 miles east of Austin, MN. The wooded and prairie Key Project Areas (shown on p.4) are located on the east side of 730th Avenue, indicated by the gold arrow in the Map below:



The mission of the Mower County Historical Society, founded in 1947, is to discover, collect, preserve, and share the history of Mower County and relate it to the history of Minnesota.