



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-298

Proposal Title: Priority Lakes: Meeting Protection Goals and Multiplying Benefits

Project Manager Information

Name: Crystal Mathisrud

Organization: Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Use existing tools and partnerships to meet protection goals and transition to long-term community driven, coordinated management for multiple benefits, including: habitat, water, forest health, local economy and climate resiliency.

Funds Requested: \$1,890,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): Central

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): Central

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

The State of Minnesota has prioritized the long-term protection and management of private lands to secure the future health and vitality of our natural resources for our state and people. Partners across the state have developed high quality tools to identify and protect according to vulnerability and impact. We have become exceptional at prioritizing and rapidly implementing protection.

Protecting water quality in the 26 best fishing lakes in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB) of Minnesota is within reach. People love these pine studded shores for the diverse forests, clean waters & world-class fisheries. It is no mistake that these high-quality resources exist together. Forests absorb rainfall, reduce runoff, improve infiltration and protect our great state's water quality and quantity. MN DNR Fisheries research of over 1,300 revealed that phosphorus concentrations in lakes are directly related to land disturbance and maintaining 75% forestland cover in a watershed is critical for water quality.

To maintain 75% forestland cover continuously, improve resource quality and multiply benefits over a long period of time, we need to be proactive and teach and support our partnering landowners to actively use their plans and promote adaptive management to secure long term ecosystem services benefits.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Well managed forests produce many benefits over long periods of time. Our northern forests—and the people who manage them—have the power to protect water permanently, improve soil, manage the conveyance of water in times of drought and intense rainfall, produce and nurture wildlife, grow record walleye and trout, enhance family life, sequester and store carbon, and grow products that sustain local economies over the long term.

These benefits increase as more people manage more forestland better over longer periods of time. For long term water quality and forest health success, we must engage more people in active management on small and large tracts. We must create a process to shift from the protection implementation mindset to a collaborative long-term forest and water management model state-wide.

The goal of this project is to focus on high priority lakes across the Upper Mississippi Basin, target and rapidly meet protection goals and then engage local groups and lake associations in the process of creating shared Lake Implementation Action Plans that coordinate and support actions to implement goals and practices named in landowners' management plans. This will create a culture to support resource management and community vitality that grows year after year.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

1. Reach protection goals for 2 of 26 Upper Mississippi Basin Priority Lakes.
2. Engage 2 lake associations in creating a usable Lake Plan to coordinate and compliment individual forest management plans.
3. Provide technical support to 200 landowner.
4. Create a repeatable model for service providers to engage existing local groups around the topic of forest management and support them in using their individual management plans to take management actions.
5. 1 tree planter, site prep equipment purchased.
6. 5,000 native trees and shrubs planted.
7. 2900+ acres of conservation easements.
8. 5,900 new SFIA acres

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Action Planning and Community Outreach – primary focus

Activity Budget: \$79,350

Activity Description:

Pilot projects will focus on Kabekona and Steamboat priority lake systems and partnering with already active lake associations to create a culture of active land and resource management. SWCD staff will engage lake associations in the project area, highlighting the connection between land management and maintaining the health of lake habitat and drinking water alike. Promote the identification of overlap between individual landowner vision and state and local conservation goals where individual actions create meaningful impact. Empower people to have and use individual land management plans to ensure progress toward meeting meaningful goals.

SWCD staff and lake association members work together to create short, usable local Lake Implementation Action Plans for each community to showcase their shared vision and outline a timeline and actions to take toward meeting their shared goals. Lake Implementation Action Plans ensure that management plans become management actions, they also provide a landmark to help measure and document progress as the community completes activities and subsequently updates their plan for new future goals every 2-3 years.

Partnering organizations and service providers are invited to attend lake association events to provide information, technical support and services to landowners to ensure their success in implementing projects and practices.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Hold kick off meeting and information session for project team,	August 31, 2024
2. Create lake association lake planning and land management informational kits	December 31, 2024
3. Build interactive Lake Planning module and story map on existing MN Watersheds Virtual Lab,	December 31, 2024
4. Hold lake planning introduction meetings for 2 pilot project groups and gather input for action plan	January 31, 2025
5. Draft lake implementation action plans, present to respective lake associations, include guest presentations according to plan interests	May 31, 2025
6. Organize services with consulting foresters, DNR and other partners—create access for implementation	December 31, 2026
7. Reach 200+ landowners and connect them to land management resources	May 31, 2027

Activity 2: Action Plan Implementation through technical support – primary focus

Activity Budget: \$80,650

Activity Description:

Organize community habitat improvement opportunities for pilot groups--DNR, consulting foresters, Minnesota Land Trust and SWCD staff will assist landowners in using their management plans to implement improvements and plan for future actions.

This activity must remain flexible to meet the habitat improvement needs and goals that have been identified in individual protected lands management plans in year 2 of the project. While this activity will result in habitat improvements for pollinators and or wildlife, with a preference for reestablishing diverse, native forest floor and understory communities, the overarching goal is to provide the lake association group with a successful hands-on experience using a management plan to take action. Participation in a – “Plan-to-Action” experience is an important step to ensure landowners transfer theory education to confidence and ability to use knowledge for action.

We expect these projects will take place on privately owned lands protected by permanent RIM, MLT or DNR conservation easements. The Lester Lake SNA in the Kabekona Lake sub-watershed is an alternative location which

would provide an opportunity for habitat improvement and public demonstration.

SWCD will support small scale tree planting activities according to small acre management plans utilizing local funds and DNR cost-share.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Note potential restoration or habitat actions identified while writing Lake Implementation Action Plans with pilot groups	May 31, 2025
Review potential actions with pilot groups and engage them in choosing and planning projects	May 31, 2025
Purchase tree planter and site prep tools	August 31, 2025
Complete restoration and/or habitat improvement installation	October 31, 2025
Implement tree planting projects with pilot groups, plant 5000 native trees and shrubs	October 31, 2026
Complete review of restoration and/or habitat improvement projects at 6 and 12 months	May 31, 2027

Activity 3: Strategic forest land protection utilizing easements and SFIA to rapidly reach protection goals for priority lakes.

Activity Budget: \$1,730,000

Activity Description:

Utilize existing tools to rapidly contribute to the incremental protection and long-term management of lakes and adjacent lands that have been cross identified as high priority by DNR, One Watershed, One Plans or Local Water Plans and Landscape Stewardship Plans.

This project will apply existing strategies that have been developed by MN DNR, BWSR, SWCDs, and other partners to focus rapid land protection for water quality implementation on the lakeshed level for each of the priority lakes in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. These lakes are at the intersection of quality, conversion risk, and high impact for water quality protection. We can rapidly ensure future water quality at a reasonable cost by targeting these areas for both small and large acre forest management within the lakeshore communities that are already organized as active lake associations.

Utilize community coordination efforts as an opportunity to engage the specific landowners who will be key in reaching the stated protection goals. Reach those goals within the framework of this project.

Leverage 319 Steamboat HUC10 grant, SFIA, MLT, NWLT and Forests for the Future easement and restoration programs to reach protection goals in Priority Lakes across the Upper Mississippi Basin and transition to long-term management.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase 925 acres of conservation easements with LCCMR funds	December 31, 2026
Enroll 5,900 acres in SFIA	May 31, 2027
Leverage project outreach and MLT programs to purchase 2,900 additional acres of conservation easements	May 31, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lindberg Ekola	Board of Water and Soil Resources	Private Forested Watersheds Protection Coordinator for the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. In this role, he is managing the development of watershed-based landscape stewardship plans. These plans provide guidance on forestland protection and private forest management in ways that support the development and implementation local water plans (1W1Ps).	Yes
Dan Steward	Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District	Primary local project forest landscape management and easement acquisition coordinator.	Yes
Gary Michael	DNR Forestry	Primary DNR Forestry contact and project advisor.	No
Ruurd Schoolderman	Minnesota Land Trust (MLT)	MLT manages a portfolio of 700+ easements totaling 76,000 acres. MLT will use this pilot to connect its landowners with resources together with local partners. Landowner support service priorities include, restoration, invasive species management and habitat improvement with a climate resiliency focus. Pilot results will inform stewardship partnerships and implementation strategies statewide.	No
Keith Karnes	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO)	Primary LLBO contact and project advisor. Provide technical support and outreach within LLBO priority areas.	No
Mitch Brinks	Maps By Mitch	GIS, parcel prioritization specialist - contract	Yes
Dain Erickson	Red Canoe	Outreach materials designer - contract	Yes
Dana Gutzmann	Cass County Soil and Water Conservation District	Provide technical assistance for Cass County Landowners and review requests for Leech Lake River One Watershed, One Plan funds for BMP implementation associated with pilot project management plans.	Yes

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

This pilot is intended to help local implementors transition from the placement of protection tools across the landscape to using those tools in an integrated, activated community approach where landowners work together to maximize private and public benefits of long-term, intentional management.

Partners will create a transferable template for how to implement and coordinate these strategies where high impacts are possible but land is fragmented. It will help partners grow relationships with each other, lake associations and community groups that will be key in creating a self-sufficient program and incrementally meeting our long-term management goals around forests and water quality.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Crystal Mathisrud

Job Title: District Manager

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Crystal Mathisrud will serve as the grant and team coordination manager, while Dan Steward will serve as the local implementation lead.

Crystal is experienced in communication, marketing and sales, managing group dynamics and grant management. She will be available to the group throughout the project and will ensure goals and timelines are met and tracked so we can do an exceptional job of documenting our actions, results and what we learned so that we can share and duplicate these methods.

Dan served as a Board Conservationist for the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) for over 35 years. He recently retired from the state, serving 5 years as the forest landscape stewardship coordinator where he helped local partners secure over \$120 million for private forestland protection in the state. He understands the local geography and interconnections between our lands and waters. As a forestland owner himself, he understands the challenges that private landowners encounter when first learning how to find service providers and individually work to implement a forest management plan.

Partners have been developing watershed assessment / PTM methodology for over ten years and providing land/resource management technical assistance to landowners for decades. Each partner brings their own unique skills and resources to the table to serve private landowners.

Through the Lake Implementation Action Plans partners will work proactively with landowners to implement enhanced management protection on more lands while: Promoting SFIA, Engaging Lake Associations and utilizing their social networks to reach more people and encourage participation, improved group services for small tract landowners, and conservation easements acquired by Forests for the Future (FFF), Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) or Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) programs.

Organization: Hubbard County Soil & Water Conservation District

Organization Description:

HCSWCD's mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance the soil and water resources of Hubbard County by providing leadership, education, and assistance We meet landowners where they are at to provide information, support and access to programs and choices to meet their individual visions.

HCSWCD is governed by a board of 5 elected members who each represent 4-7 townships and who provide oversight and guidance to the district staff. We are tasked with providing on-the-ground assistance to the community and landowners to protect our soil and water resources for present and future generations. Hubbard County consists of a diverse landscape which includes some of Minnesota's most beautiful lake shores, trout fishing streams, farmland, and forestland. We have 639,000 acres total, with 89,500 acres of cropland, 57,510 acres of lakeland, and 415,350 acres of forestland. Our water flows downstate into the Twin Cities region—when we protect our water quality locally, we also protect the drinking water for the most populous part of our state. Hubbard County's population was 22,091 in 2022. Rapid growth in the county is expected through 2030, which will likely create more demands on its natural resources.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Manager		Team coordination, communication and reporting			0%	0.15		\$16,650
Forest-Water Connection Coordinator		Lake Implementation Plan Development and Coordination			0%	0.45		\$24,000
BWSR Easement Staff		Process Conservation Easements			0%	0.9		\$70,000
Forest Resources Technician		Landowner outreach, engagement, small acre plan writing			0%	1.05		\$60,000
							Sub Total	\$170,650
Contracts and Services								
BWSR	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Team training and tool development				0.2		\$12,000
Maps by Mitch	Professional or Technical Service Contract	GIS and prioritization				0.3		\$17,000
Red Canoe	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Marketing and Outreach Material Design				0.2		\$14,000
Various Foresters and SWCDS	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Coordinated partnering, outreach, deliver services to landowners				0.6		\$50,000
							Sub Total	\$93,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

	Equipment	Tree planter and seed sprayer	To enable planting of 5000 trees with landowner groups and restoration activities					\$10,000
	Tools and Supplies	Trees and SHRubs	Restoration and habitat improvement practices					\$9,600
	Tools and Supplies	Native understory ground cover seed mix	restore native ground cover in existing forest					\$5,600
							Sub Total	\$25,200
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
	Conservation Easement Acquisition	Acres: 925 Parcels: 20						\$1,600,000
							Sub Total	\$1,600,000
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	print Lake Management Plans and Brochures	Share lake plans with community for community use and spread the word					\$1,150
							Sub Total	\$1,150
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,890,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
In-Kind	MLT existing funds for easements and acquisitions in project area	Will be used to acquire additional easements that meet the project goals across the basin. This is potential match for the whole 3 year period	Potential	\$5,100,000
			State Sub Total	\$5,100,000
Non-State				
In-Kind	Land Owner Contributions to Habitat Improvement and Tree Planting Projects	Purchase supplies (trees, seeds) and hire services to support completion of non cost-sharable management projects	Potential	\$44,000
In-Kind	NACD Small Acre Forestry Grant	Support plan writing for land owners with smaller tracts than eligible for SFIA	Potential	\$40,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$84,000
			Funds Total	\$5,184,000

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Horseshoe Lake Complex 1	Hubbard	High RAQ 1725 ft Horshoe Lake Shore	Conservation Easement	56	0.32	\$48,960	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 1	Hubbard	Lake Benedict 153 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	39	0.02	\$126,480	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 2	Hubbard	High RAQ 180 ft Shore Lake Benedict	Conservation Easement	39	0.03	\$126,000	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Lake Benedict Complex 2	Hubbard	High RAQ 1600 ft Shore on Lake Benedict	Conservation Easement	57	0.3	\$158,220	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 1		Oak Lake 3000 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	38	0.57	\$66,360	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 2	Hubbard	Oak Lake 850 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.16	\$64,320	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 3	Hubbard	Oak Lake 750 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	19	0.14	\$46,860	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Oak Lake Corridor 4	Hubbard	Oak Lake and Kabekona R 1000 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.19	\$58,620	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Portage lake Stream	Cass	2000 stream ft - Portage lake Connectivity	Conservation Easement	37	0.38	\$10,020	Private	RIM or MLT	Has Not Begun
Spring Lake Corridor	Hubbard	Spring Lake Corridor 470 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	40	0.09	\$35,880	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Spring Lake Corridor 2	Hubbard	Spring Lake Habitat Corridor Forest	Conservation Easement	120	0	\$716,220	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Bay Lae and River Frontage 1	Cass	Steamboat Bay 1500 ft Shore and 1600 ft Steamboat River Stream ft	Conservation Easement	14	0.49	\$17,940	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Bay Lake Complex 1	Cass	Steamboat Bay Lake 1900 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	21	0.36	\$20,880	Private	MLT or RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Bay Lake Complex 2	Cass	Steamboat Bay Lake 1390 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	11	0.26	\$5,040	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Bay Lake Complex 3	Cass	Steamboat Bay Lake 1400 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	20	0.27	\$8,340	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Bay Lake Complex 4	Cass	Steamboat Bay Lake 1400 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	30	0.27	\$24,360	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Complex 1	Cass	High RAQ and 1580 ft on Steamboat Bay Lake	Conservation Easement	49	0.29	\$38,460	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Lake Complex 2	Cass	High RAQ Steamboat Bay Lake Complex	Conservation Easement	38	0	\$25,200	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun

Steamboat Lake Complex 3	Cass	Steamboat Leech Lake Connectivity 1700 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	38	0.32	\$26,760	Private	RIM or MLT	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Lake Complex 4	Cass	Steamboat Lake 500 ft Shoreland	Conservation Easement	21	0.9	\$180,900	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Lake Complex 5	Cass	Steamboat Lake 1000 ft Shoreland	Conservation Easement	23	0.19	\$209,220	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Lake Complex 6	Cass	Steamboat Lake 590 ft Shore	Conservation Easement	17	0.11	\$49,800	Private	MLT or RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Lake Complex 7	Hubbard	Steamboat Lake 300ft Shore N	Conservation Easement	17	0.06	\$40,740	Private	MLT or RIM	Has Not Begun
Steamboat Necktie Stream Corridor 1	Hubbard	Nechtie River Inlet to Steamboat Lake 370 Stream ft	Conservation Easement	42	0.7	\$34,140	Private	RIM	Has Not Begun
Sucker Branch 1		4000 Stream ft Sucker Branch - Kabekona and Lester Lake Connectivity	Conservation Easement	76	0.76	\$36,060	Private	MLT	Negotiations In Progress
Swamp Lake Complex 1	Cass	Swamp Lake Habitat-Wild Rice-Critical Wetland	Conservation Easement	40	0	\$32,100	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Swamp Lake Complex 2	Cass	Critical Habitat, Wild Rice, Wetland, 1000 stream ft	Conservation Easement	83	0.19	\$48,420	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Swamp Lake Complex 3	Cass	Critical Habitat	Conservation Easement	39	0	\$25,620	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Swamp Lake Complex 4	Cass	Critical Habitat - 750 ft Shore Swamp Lake	Conservation Easement	115	0.14	\$110,940	Private	MLT	Has Not Begun
Totals				1,219	7.51	\$2,392,860			

Conservation Easement Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

This project will result in a method for collaborative, science-based restoration of lake-based watersheds (lakesheds) using the following: Prioritize by Water - "P". Categorize the watersheds by land cover patterns at three watershed scales (HUC 8, 10 and 14 levels). Review the relationships between land cover, particularly forests, and water quality. Sort watersheds by dominant land cover, land ownership, geomorphology, and ecological data. Confirm the appropriate blend of resource management strategies (BMPs - ag and urban, PFM - forestland protection and stewardship) for each subwatershed and minor watershed. Target by Land - "T". Prioritize conservation work down to the parcel level. Create spreadsheets that summarize scores for three factors - Riparian, Adjacency, Quality (RAQ) using methodologies developed by BWSR and DNR. Create RAQ Landowner Tables for use by the teams. Metrics for Measuring Success - "M". In each watershed, measure progress toward 75% protection goal of each lake's watershed. Use the 8 categories from the PFM Implementation Toolbox. (see page 41 - <http://landscapeconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Landscape-Stewardship-Guide-USDA-USFS-2011.pdf>)

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Leech Lake River One Watershed, One Plan; <https://www.hubbardswcd.org/portfolio/leech-lake-1w1p/>
Leech Lake River Landscape Stewardship Plan; https://www-dev.bwsr.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/2021-06/Leech_LSP_Complete_doc_FINAL.pdf

3. For any conservation easement acquired, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

All conservation easement acquisitions handled by HCSWCD require a management plan. We have a forest resources technician on our team who is DNR certified to write forest stewardship plans and he is responsible for writing management plans to submit to BWSR with RIM easements. We frequently partner with Minnesota Land Trust or Forests for the Future to match landowners with easement programs and those programs also seek to include a management plan with every easement.

Within our office, we review easement compliance annually and use this process to check in with landowners to see if they have any questions, concerns or wishes to update their management plans. We currently keep all files in both paper and electronic format so they are easy to access for landowners who prefer to meet in person and for landowners who prefer virtual meetings.

We wish to grow our capacity to assist with long-term management according to these plans through this pilot project. We see a lot of potential to do more than our current process of review and general support.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

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5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

The 2020 Minnesota State Forest Action Plan (FAP) recognizes that forests play a critical role in keeping water clean by absorbing and filtering water, preventing erosion through soil stabilization, and allowing for groundwater recharge. Clean water is vital to the ecological, economic and social health of Minnesota. The FAP quoted the National Association of State Foresters: "Water, in all its uses and permutations, is by far the most valuable commodity that comes from the forest land that we manage, assist others to manage, and/or regulate." Watersheds in northern Minnesota are mostly forested with higher levels of public landowners so water quality is high, and often pristine. The primary risk to water

quality is on private lands because they are more likely to be converted or developed resulting in increased storm-water runoff and declining water quality. In all, the Basin's thirteen million acres provide drinking water for 2.5 million Minnesotans, more than 44 percent of the state's residents, including much of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. LSPs and 1W1Ps have identified the locations of land within the watersheds that are critical for protection and restoration. They have also found that preserving water quality in the watershed could result in nearly \$500 million in direct and indirect benefits. These benefits include water- treatment costs, retained property values and taxes, reduced flood damages, retained tourism revenue and jobs, as well as avoided public health costs. Protecting the watersheds that flow into the Mississippi River will avoid billions in future costs; cleaning dirty water is more expensive than protecting clean water. This project is essential not only for the 26 priority lakes but to millions of people downstream.

6. Provide a statement addressing how conservation easements will address specific water quality protection activities, such as keeping water on the landscape, reducing nutrient and contaminant loading, protecting groundwater, and not permitting artificial hydrological modifications.

Forests protect water quality. They absorb rainfall, reduce runoff, and improve infiltration. MN DNR Fisheries research of over 1,300 revealed that phosphorus concentrations in lakes are directly related to land disturbance and maintaining 75% forestland cover in a watershed is critical for water quality. Watersheds in northern Minnesota are mostly forested with higher levels of public landowners so water quality is high, and often pristine. The primary risk to water quality is on private lands because they are more likely to be converted or developed resulting in increased storm-water runoff and declining water quality. This project seeks to identify and protect high quality forested parcels that are also adjacent to priority surface waters and corridors or complexes of protected habitat. The aim of this project is to rapidly acquire easements and forestland protection/management for priority lakes so that we do meet the protection goal and then transition into managing these lands to increase the public benefits while supporting the landowners in meeting their personal visions for forest land management--land owners choose.

7. Describe the long-term monitoring and enforcement program for conservation easements acquired on parcels by your organization, including explanations of the process used for calculating conservation easement monitoring and enforcement costs, the process used for annual inspection and reporting on monitoring and enforcement activities, and the process used to ensure perpetual funding and implementation of monitoring and enforcement activities.

HCSWCD provides long-term monitoring for landowners enrolled in RIM easements. For these easements, BWSR calculates the annual rate for monitoring and enforcement costs. SWCD staff complete projects reviews and meet with our landowners. Frequently the BWSR provided funds do not cover addressing management issues, so in those cases we work with landowners to acquire supporting funds from local funds, community grants or other sources when needed. We supplement our billable time costs with Local Capacity and Conservation Delivery. HCSWCD seeks to find ways to create financial stability and independence.

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

All restoration activities completed with LCCMR funds will occur on lands that are permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

Restoration projects implemented within this project are expected to be focused on forest floor and native understory restoration in existing forests where there is opportunity to restore the native habitat and layers that have been disrupted due to past use change, human activity and plantation tracts. The goal is to identify, plan and install restoration projects with the pilot groups to provide an opportunity to use management plans to plan and take action. All restoration projects include documentation from starting condition through project steps and to immediate and

subsequent year outcomes. We utilize required reporting as well as photographs and videos from field work to measure, document and also tell the story of the project for our annual report and local news outlets. We keep all records and project stories in electronic and hard copy format in our office, filed according to project type, watershed and year of implementation.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

HCSWCD staff partner with DNR and BWSR training staff to ensure that projects follow established guidelines and that an authorized person signs off on project plans and completed project installation.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

Long-term maintenance and management financial needs will be met primarily by landowners and/or cost-share opportunities for projects conducted on privately owned conservation easement protected parcels. HCSWCD will utilize local funds to provide long-term technical support for maintenance and management.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

HCSWCD’s preference is to engage the Conservation Corp of Minnesota if possible. Once a potential project is identified, staff will reach out to the Corp to request a project and availability estimate.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

All restoration and management projects completed with LCCMR funds will be reviewed by a qualified team member initially after the project is completed and again at the 1 year (our policy) and 3-year anniversary of implementation follow-up. The review process will be used to document the successes of the project, whether goals have been met, if any further improvements could be made and recommended, and if lessons learned at the site could be applied elsewhere.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [ad0c085d-2f2.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Pilot Project Area including Kabekona and Steamboat Priority Lake systems with prioritized forested parcels and remaining protection goals highlighted...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
HCSWCD Letter Of Authorization	06209081-667.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration, Conservation Easement Acquisition,

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?

No

