

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Subd: 03e1

Project Title: Final Phase of the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas

Category: A1. Natural Resource Data and Information: Collection

Total Project Budget: \$ 330,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 yrs, July 2012 - June 2015

Other Non-State Funds (secured): \$ 0

Summary:

This will complete the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas, a statewide, comprehensive bird survey, with a final year of data collection and two years to analyze and present the information.

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Location:

Region: Statewide

Ecological Section: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

PROJECT TITLE: Final Phase of the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

We are requesting funding to complete data collection and do initial analysis and data posting for The Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA). The BBA is a comprehensive, statewide survey of the breeding distribution of all bird species in Minnesota. Initiated in July 2008 we have received 4 years of LCCMR funding. This is a 3-year request although we expect most funds to be expended in the first 2-years of the request which are years 5-6 of the project (July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2014) and will finalize the data collection phase. The third year of the request is to cover any unexpected needs in case we have to extend surveys into project year 6. The challenges for this phase include; completing surveys in those parts of the state that were not covered in Years 1-4, primarily townships distant from population centers; conducting quality control on the database; and displaying maps on our website. This information will feed into our final (as of yet unfunded) products which will include; detailed distribution maps, a compilation of the data, and a synopsis of the distribution of each breeding bird species in Minnesota. This information will be available through a website, and we anticipate publishing a book pending other funding. The database with the raw information will be provided to the primary partners including the Department of Natural Resources.

The BBA is consistent with many aspects of the LCCMR State Conservation and Preservation Plan, and fits LCCMR Funding Priority Category “Natural Resource Data and Information.” The BBA’s greatest value will be its contribution to wildlife conservation by identifying areas of high bird diversity, density, and concentration for particular species of concern. It can thus guide habitat protection, restoration, and management efforts by providing essential distribution information for many species and areas for which we have little data.

The BBA is housed at, and day-to-day operations overseen by, Audubon Minnesota, with strategic and technical guidance from numerous project partners. The NRRI at U of MN-Duluth is overseeing statewide point count and habitat data collection. Utilizing an anticipated 1,500 volunteers to collect data on the distribution and abundance of birds, the BBA will directly engage Minnesota’s citizens with bird conservation and our natural resources. As sentinels for Minnesota’s environmental quality, the state’s breeding birds are a window into our goal to provide sustainable resources for future generations. The atlas will be an invaluable tool in helping us monitor our ability to achieve that goal.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Data Collection *Budget:* \$ 253,800

A) Continue ongoing, recruitment and training of project staff and surveyors for final field seasons. We will continue to employ a full-time coordinator reporting to a multi-partner Steering Committee for the 2-year duration of the project. The appropriation will include the last part of the 2012 breeding season, all of the 2013 breeding season, and the initial part of the 2014 breeding season. We anticipate that 2013 will be the fifth and final year of data gathering from all townships in Minnesota; although minimal “mop-up” surveys may be needed in 2014. Most data will be collected by volunteers overseen by 31 volunteer regional coordinators who are recruited statewide, and provided with ongoing training and support.

B) Complete survey and point count data in each township. One 3X3 mi. survey block in each Township will be surveyed for breeding birds. To obtain density and habitat data 10 paid and specially trained seasonal staff will conduct “point counts” these blocks. These data will provide systematic information on the distribution and abundance of bird species across the state as well as habitat association information.

C) Complete counts in inaccessible and incomplete areas. We estimate 43 townships in the BWCAW and 78 townships in other remote areas are “inaccessible” to volunteers and staff without special arrangements and transportation. To provide access to these Townships we will provide additional assistance and special funding. Additionally, we anticipate there will be townships that for a variety of reasons will not be on schedule for completion by volunteer efforts at the end of year 4 and we will utilize the seasonal point count staff and reimburse volunteers for their expenses.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Continued recruitment and training of as many as 1,500 volunteer field surveyors and 31 regional coordinators.	May 2013
2. Completed survey and point count data from 1,830 accessible Minnesota Townships.	August 2013
3. Completed data collection from an expected minimum of 121 inaccessible and 400 incompletely surveyed Townships	August 2013

Activity 2: Data Management and Analysis Budget: \$ 76,200

A) Project Website and Database Maintenance. Both the mnbba.org website, which provides information about the atlas to volunteers and the general public, and the Cornell University data management system, will continue to be operational and upgraded as needed. Through these websites up-to-date data summaries are available by species or geographic area along with preliminary range maps for each species and lists of species by township.

B) Quality Control. We will complete data entry, check for records for completeness, and conduct quality control for all species records over the five years of data collection.

Outcome	Completion Date
1 The Cornell Database will be available for data entry and review	June 30, 2014
2.The project website (mnbba.org) will provide resources and information to volunteers and the general public.	June 30, 2014
3. Data will be reviewed for and quality control of the final products assured.	June 30, 2014

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Audubon Minnesota (\$228,000 - funds) – Mark Martell, Project Manager, Bonnie Sample, Program Coordinator, oversee data management and collection

Natural Resources Research Institute at the Univ. of MN Duluth (\$102,000 - funds) – Dr. Gerald J. Niemi, Professor, systematic point count survey leader.

University of Minnesota (no funds received) - Dr. Scott Lanyon, is Chair of the Steering Committee

Minnesota DNR Division of Ecological Resources and Division of Wildlife and Fisheries (no funds received) – Provide funding and staff time on oversight and technical matters

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (no funds received) – Provide funding and staff time on oversight and technical matters

Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union (no funds received) - Provide funding and volunteer time on oversight and technical matters

B. Timeline Requirements: BBA began in 2008 and will require funding for 5 years of data collection and 2 years of analysis and product completions. Field seasons 1&2 (7/2008-6/2010) were funded by ML 2008, Chap. 367, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(d), field seasons 4&5 (7/2010-6/2012) are included in the 2010LCCMR funding bill. This request is for the fifth and final field season (7/2012 – 6/2013) and 1 years of analysis on product production (7/2013 – 6/2015). This will complete the data gathering portion of the Minnesota Breeding Bird Atlas.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

To produce the book, website, and database we will be seeking funds from the Trust Fund and other sources.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT		
	Audubon	NRRRI	TOTAL REQUEST
Personnel:	\$ 132,400	\$ 44,000	\$ 176,400
Audubon Project Coordinator - Full time for 2 years \$45,675 salary & 0.33% fringe	\$ 122,000		
Administrative Support - part time salary and fringe intended to be spent in the first	\$ 2,400		
Project Supervisor - part time salary and fringe all 3 years	\$ 8,000		
Point Count Survey Technicians - part time, temp, yr 1, 10 staff 6-12 wks @\$660/wk salary and fringe	\$ 44,000		
Contracts:	\$ 7,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 17,000
Website maintenance and updating	\$ 2,000		
Database maintenance - Cornell University	\$ 5,000		
Helicopter Services to access road less areas	\$ 10,000		
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Field equipment including maps, GIS units,	\$ 500		\$ 500
Travel:	\$ 85,000	\$ 46,000	\$ 131,000
Audubon: Funds for mileage, lodging, and food during surveys in remote and undersampled areas of the state - Project Coordinator (\$4,000), Survey Volunteers (\$81,000 to cover 180 remote and inaccessible blocks)	\$ 85,000		
NRRRI: Point Count Supervisor (\$4,000), Point Count Technicians (\$42,000)	\$ 46,000		
Additional Budget Items:	\$ 3,100	\$ 2,000	\$ 5,100
Volunteer Training and Meetings	\$ 3,000		
Postage-Mailings of recruitment materials, information, and supplies to volunteers	\$ 100		
GIS Time at NRRRI		\$ 2,000	
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 228,000	\$ 102,000	\$ 330,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ Audubon Minnesota - \$35,000, Minnesota Ornithologists' Union - \$30,000, USFWS - \$30,000, USFS - \$20,000	\$105,000	Pending
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: MNDNR	\$ 20,000	Pending
In-kind Services During Project Period: Dr. Jerry Niemi salary and fringe	\$ 35,000	Secured
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF 2008 Appropriation (if applicable): 2008 appropriation: ML 2008, Chap. 367, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(d) (\$270,000)	\$ -	
Funding History: 2010 appropriation, Indicate funding secured prior to July 1, 2011 for activities directly relevant to this specific funding request. 2010 appropriation (\$372,000)	\$ 372,000	

Audubon Minnesota: Organizational Description

Audubon Minnesota is the state office of the National Audubon Society. Established in 1979, we share Audubon's 106-year heritage of working to protect our environment. While we are part of the national organization, we establish our own statewide programs and pursue our own funding for Minnesota efforts. The Audubon Minnesota mission is to conserve and restore Minnesota's natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Today there are nearly 17,000 Audubon members in Minnesota, organized into 14 geographically-based chapters from Agassiz Audubon Chapter in Thief River Falls to the Coulee Region Audubon Chapter in La Crescent.

Project Manager – Mark Martell, Director of Bird Conservation – Audubon Minnesota. Mark has an M.S. in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Minnesota. He has worked in bird conservation in Minnesota for over 25 at Audubon Minnesota and the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota. Mark has been project manager on previous LCMR grants most recently the 2007 Breeding Bird Atlas and the 2005 Birding Trails project that produced 3 birding trail guide books for Minnesota. As project director Mark will be responsible for budget and project oversight, ensure full partner participation, and be the direct supervisor of the project coordinator.