

2017 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2023

PROJECT TITLE: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach and Implementation

PROJECT MANAGER: Dusty Van Thuyne

AFFILIATION: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

MAILING ADDRESS: 520 Lafayette Road

CITY/STATE/ZIP: St. Paul, MN 55155

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WEBSITE: www.bwsr.state.mn.us

FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 08k as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2 as extended by M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 3, Subd. 19(a.1) [to June 30, 2022] as extended by M.L. 2022, Chp. 94, Sec. 2, Subd. 19 (c.1) [to June 30, 2023]

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$6,000,000

AMOUNT SPENT: \$5,584,736

AMOUNT REMAINING: \$415,264

The Project Abstract is a separate document from the work plan. Submit the Project Abstract in addition to your work plan. Remove all instructions in italics and brackets from this document before submitting.

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

This project assisted farmers and landowners on environmentally sensitive lands by enrolling in the MN CREP program. Through this project, locally trusted staff in 49 counties were able to promote the MN CREP program and assist landowners in permanently protecting 29,350 acres.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a partnership between the federal Conservation Reserve Program administered by United States Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency and the Reinvest in Minnesota program administered by the Board of Water, Soil Resources (BWSR). The program will benefit water quality (nutrient and sediment load reductions) and wildlife habitat in environmentally sensitive areas in 54 counties through three key conservation practices: riparian buffers, wetlands, and wellhead protection for drinking water.

BWSR awarded grant funds for MN CREP Outreach and Implementation to Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). The MN CREP Outreach and Implementation grants accelerated staff capacity to deliver the MN CREP by providing technical assistance. To be eligible, each SWCD needed to be located within the 54 county [MN CREP area](#). All grantees were required to report quarterly on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments via an invoice to receive reimbursement. These locally trusted individuals worked with landowners through the process of what conservation is best for their land. Conservation materials were provided to 18,776 landowners regarding the MN CREP program. Staff working under this project enrolled 29,350.86 acres into MN CREP on 574 contracts: nine are wellhead protection practices, 108 are filter strip practices, 150 are wetland restoration within the floodplain, and 311 are wetland restorations. These permanently protected acres will provide many water quality and wildlife habitat values.

The critical local support and landowners assisted through this project were an important part of the overall state contribution that enabled RIM to protect tens of thousands of new acres for water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The MN [Conservation Lands Summary](#) was updated each summer of the project period, capturing MN CREP contracts and acres enrolled by locally trusted [staff](#) funded through this [project](#). The updated Conservation Lands Summary was posted each August. Historical Conservation Lands Summary reports can be requested via [email](#).



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
M.L. 2017 LCCMR Work Plan [Final Report](#)

Date of Submission: [August 15, 2023](#)

Date of Next Status Update Report: [Final Report](#)

Date of Work Plan Approval: [_06/07/2017](#)

Project Completion Date: [June 30, 2023](#)

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 YesNo¶

PROJECT TITLE: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach and Implementation.

Project Manager: Dusty Van Thuyne

Organization: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

Mailing Address: 520 Lafayette Road North

City/State/Zip Code: St. Paul, MN 55155

Telephone Number: (651) 508-0000

Email Address: dusty.vanthuyne@state.mn.us

Web Address: www.bwsr.state.mn.us

Location: 54 county CREP project area. (see map attached)

Total ENRTF Project Budget:

ENRTF Appropriation: **\$6,000,000**

Amount Spent: **\$5,584,736**

Balance: **\$415,264**

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Legal Citation: M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 08k as extended by M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2 as extended by M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 3, Subd. 19(a.1) [to June 30, 2022] as extended by M.L. 2022, Chp. 94, Sec. 2, Subd. 19 (c.1) [to June 30, 2023]

Appropriation Language:

\$6,000,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to fund staff at soil and water conservation districts to assist landowners participating in the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This appropriation is contingent upon receipt of federal funds for implementation. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2020, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

[M.L. 2020 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. \[to June 30, 2021\]](#)

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[M.L. 2022 - Sec. 2. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND; EXTENSIONS. \[to June 30, 2023\]](#)

I. PROJECT TITLE: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach and Implementation.
CREP Implementation Phase 1

II. PROJECT STATEMENT:

- Minnesota CREP: upon final agreement between the State of MN and the United States Dept. of Agriculture, MN conservation agencies and partners will embark on a 7-year effort to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to benefit water quality (nutrient and sediment load reductions) and wildlife habitat in 54 counties. CREP will add an estimated 60,000 acres of new water quality protection and wildlife habitat development in environmentally sensitive areas through three key conservation practices: riparian buffers, wetlands, and wellhead protection for drinking water. CREP is a partnership between the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) administered by USDA - Farm Service Agency and the MN RIM program administered by BWSR. Enrollment in the Minnesota CREP will require both a 15 year CRP contract and a permanent RIM easement on the enrolled property. In addition to permanent protection all sites will be restored with native vegetation.
- Leverage: This project will require a state commitment of \$150 million that will leverage \$350 million in USDA CRP payments to landowners. State funding sources are expected to include: Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund, and Capital Investment (bonding) funds.
- Water Quality and Wildlife Benefits: Water Quality benefits will be realized by reducing pollutant load reductions through targeting acres for each of the eligible practices to best locations identified in the MN sediment and nutrient reduction strategies, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy's and other local and state plans and strategies. Wildlife benefits will come from increased grassland and wetland acres providing nesting, brood rearing cover and overall habitat improvement as prescribed in the MN Prairie Plan, MN Pheasant Action Plan, pollinator initiatives and other local and state plans and strategies. BWSR has designed a scoring and ranking process to assure the greatest impact will be achieved with each acre enrolled.
- Delivery: We need a local, trusted, technically competent field presence to provide the very critical work of finding and working with landowners through the process of what conservation is best for their land. This is not simple and we know that local governments are best positioned to establish and maintain important local relationships to achieve success. This ENTRF project will provide critical funding for increased local capacity for the first 3 years of this 7 year effort by adding approximately 26 FTE's/year of CREP technicians employed by SWCDs or under contract with SWCDs (i.e. Pheasants Forever Biologists). This staffing need was determined after a comprehensive workload analysis was completed that identified key CREP tasks to be conducted, from application to restoration, including planning and implementation of the CRP contract and RIM easement. The ENTRF recommendation is a small but significant part of the projected \$300 million that will be utilized in the first three years of the project. This portion of the CREP is essential to secure local staff to fully assist landowners and achieve the water quality and habitat outcomes of the CREP.
- ENTRF Outcomes: When the CREP is completed, a target of 5,000 landowner contacts will be made and 3,000 CREP contracts will be enrolled during the 3 year project. Often it takes numerous contacts with a landowner in order to achieve desired conservation outcomes. This critical local support and landowners assisted, through this ENTRF project, is an important part of the overall state contribution that will enable RIM to protect tens of thousands of new acres for water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands.

CREP will provide permanent protection on an estimated 60,000 thousand acres over the next 7 years to protect water quality, and develop wildlife habitat in environmentally sensitive areas through three key

conservation practices: riparian buffers, wetlands, and wellhead protection for drinking water within the 54 county target area. Distribution of acres between the eligible practices is planned at 50% buffers, 45% wetlands and 5% wellhead protection.

III. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of January 31, 2018:

Project work began in earnest in mid-September 2017. An RFP to SWCDs for CREP staffing grants was opened on September 13, 2017 and is ongoing. As of December 31, 2017, 9.55 full time staff equivalents – roughly 1/3rd of the estimated total project staff – have been approved from 19 applicants covering work in 21 counties. A total of \$1,195,846 of ENRTF funding has been encumbered for these positions through June 30, 2020. During that same reporting period, \$11,976 has been requested from six SWCDs for reimbursement for billable hours completed for CREP. SWCDs are reimbursed on a quarterly basis after submitting an invoice for services rendered. See attachment B for grant tracking.

The CREP coordinator position is open for applications through January 31, 2018, with interviews to follow in February. Once that position is in place we anticipate acceleration of program work.

Project Status as of July 31, 2018:

With one year into this project we are getting staff in place where there have been historic gaps in technical assistance for CREP. We added a couple more positions and grants for a total of 10.75 fte's in 21 SWCD's. A total of \$1,344,047 has been encumbered for these positions through June 30, 2020. We have currently issued payments of \$159,902 for work provided through June 30, 2018. SWCD's continue to be reimbursed on a quarterly basis. See attachment B for grant tracking.

The CREP coordinator was advertised and filled by Dusty Van Thuyne on April 4, 2018. Dusty brings on the ground implementation experience having served as a Pheasant Forever Farm Bill Biologist for over 3 years. He will provide training and employment assistance to SWCD's hiring new staff to implement CREP.

Project Status as of January 31, 2019:

On June 27, 2018 the BWSR board approved several program adjustments to the RIM side of the MN CREP program in response to input from local government partners who had been implementing the program during its first year. On June 28, 2018 training was held to roll out the new changes. At this same time plans were being made for the end of the Federal Farm Bill which would sunset on September 30, 2018 and would have an impact on the CRP enrollment process for MN CREP. BWSR expedited 3 funding approval windows to secure as many new applications for CREP under the soon to expire Farm Bill. The last application window closed on August 20, 2018 and in less than 2 months' time CREP enrollment numbers more than doubled reaching over 12,000 funded acres. Since that time CREP has been unable to approve any new CREP applications as the Farm Bill was only recently signed by the President and implementation is still forthcoming. Although our federal partners have not been able to process new CREP applications since last fall, landowner interest remains strong and SWCD offices, with support from the CREP staffing grants, continue to contact interested landowners and place them on a waiting list for when the program re-opens.

Project Status as of July 31, 2019:

CREP signup resumed on June 3, 2019 after enrollment was stalled in August 2018 due to expiration of the existing Federal Farm Bill and therefore, the CRP program. USDA resumed CRP enrollment June 3rd using existing CRP authority while new rules continue to be developed. The current CRP and therefore CREP signup will run until August 23, 2019. During the program shut down, staff worked to complete the conservation

planning of those projects already enrolled and continued outreach in preparation of notification that USDA would start accepting CRP applications once again. At the end of the June 28, 2019 scoring and ranking period we received 38 new applications for 2150 acres, bringing total CREP enrollment to 13,155 acres.

Currently there are 10.75 FTEs across 20 SWCDs in the CREP area. Reimbursements for existing staffing continue to be made quarterly with a total of \$594,334 paid to date for staff time. As a result of increased interest in the program, we will be funding an additional 21 FTEs at a cost of just over \$1.5m for Fiscal Year 2020. These agreements are currently being processed. These agreements will bring the encumbered portion of the \$6,000,000 grant to approximately \$3,000,000.

Amendment request 7/31/19:

An amendment is requested for a one-year legislative extension for this work to adequately perform the work needed for the project. This project has already experienced a significant delay in the Federal Partnership with USDA with the suspension of the CRP portion of CREP from August 17, 2018 through June 3, 2019 due to the expiration of the Federal Farm Bill. Staff anticipates a second delay will occur on August 23, 2019 when CRP operations will again be suspended while new CRP rules under the current Federal Farm Bill are promulgated and implemented. The completion of the rule work and the CRP program again accepting enrollments is expected around the end of calendar year 2019. It is anticipated that a one year extension to this project will more closely utilize available funding and provide much needed landowner assistance for enrollment in CREP **Amendment Withdrawn 1/31/2020 (see updated amendment below)**

Amendment request 11/15/19:

The BWSR staff person (CREP Implementation Coordinator) working on project administration is currently in an unclassified position with a 3-year maximum term that will be reached before the end of the appropriation if the extension request from the 07/31/19 amendment is approved (see above). BWSR is requesting approval to modify the position to classified to allow current staff to continue administering this program for the duration of funding. This change requires LCCMR approval per Minnesota Statute 116P.09, Subdivision 4, as the position is partially funded by the project appropriation. As required by statute, the CREP Implementation Coordinator position will be canceled when funding for this project is no longer available.

Amendment approved by LCCMR 12/20/19.

Amendment request 12/30/19:

An amendment is requested for a two-year legislative extension for this work to adequately perform the work needed for the project. This project has experienced significant delays in the Federal Partnership with the suspension of the CRP portion of CREP from August 17, 2018 through June 3, 2019 due to the expiration of the Federal Farm Bill and a second delay beginning August 23, 2019 when CRP operations were once again suspended. As of December 30, 2019, we are not accepting CREP applications awaiting further direction from FSA. It is anticipated that a two-year extension to this project will allow BWSR to meet the outcomes listed and provide much needed landowner assistance for CREP enrollment.

Amendment pending further LCCMR and legislative action as of 2/8/2020.

Amendment approved by the legislature and governor 6/29/2021 to extend project to June 30, 2022.

Project Status as of January 31, 2020:

Implementation of the CREP project continues to work through delays in the Federal Farm Bill, which sunset Sept. 30, 2019 and all enrollment in the CRP portion of the project was placed on hold once again. A new Federal Farm Bill and related CRP rules were put in place and CRP enrollment was opened once again on Dec. 9, 2019. With potential changes to the CRP rules to be understood and their implication to the MN CREP agreement we expect to resume CREP enrollment in March after making some changes to the application process and conducting training for staff. To date we have enrolled 24,000 ac. in CREP. The increase in CREP applications can be attributed to the July 1, 2019 increase in CREP staffing assistance within this grant. As CREP implementation will take a couple of years yet, we are hopeful an amendment is awarded to extend available funding through completion. Remaining funding and time extension of 2 years will allow funding, workload and project completion to all land at a similar time.

Project Status as of June 18, 2020:

Project extended to June 30, 2021 by LCCMR 6/18/20 as a result of M.L. 2020, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Sec. 2, legislative extension criteria being met.

Project Status as of July 31, 2020:

Enrollment in MN CREP has been steady during 2020. From March to June, over 130 applications have been received. This large number of applications can be attributed to the backlog that was created locally while the 2018 Farm Bill rules were developed and any implications this had on MN CREP were understood. To date, we have enrolled over 30,000 acres in MN CREP. The 1-year extension that was granted during M.L. 2020, First Special Session was critical as there is continued interest in enrollment into MN CREP and project implementation continues on the 30,000+ acres already enrolled. We will need to seek another 1-year extension to continue project implementation of enrolled acres.

Project Status as of January 31, 2021:

MN CREP applications have been strong with enrollment currently at more than 31,000 acres. We need and anticipate another 1-year extension to this project to finish MN CREP enrollment during FY 2022. There was a slight drop in FTEs funded by this project as some counties exhausted their marketing, while we added 2 new counties to the marketing effort where they demonstrated CREP activity warranting financial assistance to work with landowners. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 12-30, 2021. Staff continue to provide support to landowners interested in applying for the program when it opens for submittal and work on implementation of previously funded easements. Future enrollment will be contingent upon approval of the CREP bonding request.

Project Status as of July 31, 2021:

The enrollment period for MN CREP that was scheduled for April 12-30, 2021 was put on hold due to programmatic changes made to the Conservation Reserve Program. The enrollment period resumed June 14 and ended July 2, 2021. During this time, over 60 applications were received. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be in the first quarter of federal fiscal year 2022. The 1-year extension that was granted during M.L. 2021, First Special Session was critical as there is continued interest in enrollment into MN CREP and project implementation continues on the 32,000+ acres already enrolled. An updated acreage enrollment will be available during the January 2022 status update after funding decisions are made on the batching period that ended July 2.

Project Status as of January 31, 2022:

MN CREP applications have been strong with enrollment currently at more than 34,500 acres after our most recent enrollment period for MN CREP ended December 21, 2021. There was a slight drop in FTEs funded by this project as some counties exhausted their marketing and the appropriation is nearing the end of available funds. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 2022. BWSR is working with partners to determine the exact enrollment period dates. Staff continue to provide support to landowners interested in applying for the program when it opens for submittal and work on implementation of previously funded easements. Future enrollment will be contingent upon approval of the CREP bonding request.

Project Status as of July 31, 2022:

Project extended to June 30, 2023 by LCCMR 6/30/22 as a result of M.L. 2022, Chp.94, Sec. 2, Subd. 19, legislative extension criteria being met.

Update waived per LCCMR staff on 6/30/2022.

Project Status as of January 31, 2023:

MN CREP enrollment is currently at more than 35,000 acres after our most recent enrollment period for MN CREP ended August 12, 2022. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 2023. CREP Technicians continue to provide support to landowners interested in applying for the program when it opens for submittal. CREP Technicians are beginning to prepare for the spring construction season to complete restoration and construction on previously funded easements. The Governor's \$11.88 million recommendation in general obligation bonds for the MN CREP would allow for future enrollment that would extend beyond the life of this appropriation.

Amendment request 2/8/2023:

An amendment is requested to adjust the budget lines reducing the Contracts line from \$5,775,000 to \$5,770,526 and increasing the Personnel line from \$225,000 to \$229,474.

Amendment Approved by LCCMR 4/12/2023

Final Report as of June 30, 2023 (to be submitted before August 15, 2023):

Overall Project Outcomes and Results:

MN Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a partnership between the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) administered by USDA - Farm Service Agency and the MN RIM program administered by BWSR. The program will benefit water quality (nutrient and sediment load reductions) and wildlife habitat in environmentally sensitive areas in 54 counties through three key conservation practices: riparian buffers, wetlands, and wellhead protection for drinking water.

BWSR awarded grant funds for MN CREP Outreach and Implementation to Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). The MN CREP Outreach and Implementation grants accelerated staff capacity to deliver the MN CREP by providing technical assistance. To be eligible, each SWCD needed to be located within the 54 county MN CREP area. All grantees were required to report quarterly on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments via an invoice to receive reimbursement. These locally trusted individuals worked with landowners through the process of what conservation is best for their land. Conservations were had or outreach materials were provided to 18,776 landowners regarding the MN CREP program. Staff working under this project enrolled 29,350.86 acres into MN CREP on 574 contracts. Of the 574 contracts, nine are wellhead

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[protection practices, 108 are filter strip practices, 150 are wetland restoration within the floodplain, and 311 are wetland restorations. These permanently protected acres will provide many water quality and wildlife habitat values.](#)

[The critical local support and landowners assisted through this project were an important part of the overall state contribution that enabled RIM to protect tens of thousands of new acres for water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands.](#)

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IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1: Employ approximately 26 SWCD CREP Technicians, Hire Coordinator, and implement the first three years of the CREP

Description: Employment of approximately 26 CREP Technicians to facilitate the enrollment of an estimated 3,000 landowners in CREP. This request is for three years of work. CREP will provide permanent protection on an estimated 60,000 thousand acres during the next 7 years to protect water quality, and develop wildlife habitat in environmentally sensitive areas through three key conservation practices: riparian buffers, wetlands, and wellhead protection for drinking water within the 54 county target area. Distribution of acres between the eligible practices is planned at 50% buffers, 45% wetlands and 5% wellhead protection. Implementation at the local level will use average SWCD costs of \$40/billable hour for wage, benefits, space, vehicle, computer, and other associated overhead costs. 2080hr.x \$40/hr. = \$83,200/yr. x 26 ft's x 3 year period is approximately \$6,416,667 of which 90% or \$5,775,000 is funded from LCCMR and the rest is funded locally. The SWCD 10% will be provided through space, vehicle, computers and other associated overhead costs. ENTRF funding will not be used to pay for space and other associated overhead costs. In addition, \$225,000 is for Project Coordination.

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Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 6,000,000
 Amount Spent: \$ 5,584,736
 Balance: \$ 415,264

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Outcome	Completion Date
1. Employ approximately 26 FTE/year with SWCD's to process a target of 5,000 CREP contacts prioritized and targeted for water quality and wildlife habitat benefits that will facilitate the enrollment of an estimated 3,000 CREP contracts. This should enroll an estimated 40,000 acres of the 60,000 ac. goal. The costs of landowner payments for CRP and RIM will be paid from funding not directly tied to this project, including the following sources – USDA- FSA CRP, and RIM from - Bonding, ENTRF, Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund.	June 30, 2020
2. Employ 1.0 FTE/year Coordinator. Staff will be based in the field and provide leadership at the field level in hiring, training, tracking and reporting all project activities.	June 30, 2020
3. BWSR will develop and conduct workshops and participate in existing training opportunities in order to train, update and inform the CREP Technicians and others.	June 30, 2020

Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2018:

Grant agreements were completed in November and December, so limited work was covered under the first quarterly reporting period ending December 31, 2017. Reimbursements for CREP work completed during that quarter amount to \$11,976.

The coordinator position should be filled in February 2018.

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Activity 1 Status as of July 31, 2018:

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Grant agreements continue to be processed to add staff in 2018. We currently have a total of 21 SWCD agreements covering 10.75 fte's for a total grant encumbrance of \$1,344,047 as of June 30, 2018. Reimbursements for work completed to date are \$159,902. Since the beginning of CREP we have funded 154 projects covering 5,720 ac.

On April 4th Dusty Van Thuyne was hired as our CREP Implementation Coordinator and is partially funded under this grant. He has been busy collecting reports and helping train local staff to better deliver the CREP program.

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Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2019:

We continue to offer CREP staffing financial assistance grants to SWCD offices on a continuous signup basis. No new grants have been awarded since the last update. A total of \$403,702 has been expended from the grant to support CREP staffing and the project coordinator position as shown in attachment A. Funding from Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund continue to provide a major source of implementation funding for local staff working on CREP.

Activity 1 Status as of July 31, 2019:

Progress continues despite timing uncertainties with USDA and the CRP program. A total of \$672,048 has been expended to date from the grant to support the current 10.75 FTEs as well as project coordination as shown in Attachment A. We continue to make progress with CREP between USDA program shut downs and currently have 297 landowners enrolled and 13,155 acres. We are in the process of adding another 21 FTEs across the CREP project area with this grant. Those agreements will complement the existing 10.75 FTEs and be in effect during FY 2020.

Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2020:

The MN CREP program experienced a significant surge in activity as a result of increased staffing efforts and landowner interest. We currently have 24,000 ac. enrolled and are awaiting a new signup period to be announced for February of this year. We have approximately 5 months of landowner interest and backlog of projects to catch up on once the program resumes taking applications. Currently \$1,336,705 has been spent of the \$2,912,425 encumbered amount from this grant for CREP staffing at the field level as shown in Attachment A.

Activity 1 Status as of July 31, 2020:

The MN CREP program continues to experience a significant surge in activity as a result of increased staffing efforts and landowner interest. We currently have over 30,000 acres enrolled and are awaiting the end of another batching period on August 10. Enrollment after the August batching period will be on hold until the start of the new Federal Fiscal Year. Currently \$2,308,534 has been spent of the \$3,034,867 encumbered amount as of June 30, 2020 from this grant for CREP staffing at the field level as shown in Attachment A. Working under the premise and eventual extension of this grant for one additional year through June 30, 2021 we conducted a Request for Funding and have begun executing new grants to further encumber an additional \$2.3m of the remaining balance of \$3,547,547 for Fiscal Year 2021. The remaining balance in the grant of \$1.255m could go unused on June 30, 2021 without the second year requested extension through June 30, 2022. Remaining funds and timelines fit well with the finalization of CREP enrollment and easement implementation.

Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2021:

Another step to completing the enrollment in MN CREP with an increase to more than 31,000 acres enrolled. Landowner interest remains strong in restoring wetlands while less interest is found with riparian buffers. Currently, we have spent \$3,111,910 on staffing at the local level with an additional \$1,488,896 encumbered to be spent by June 30, 2021. We currently project a balance on June 30, 2021 of \$950,040 as well as any unused funding from the \$1,488,896 encumbered but not fully used by June 30, 2021. Further extension of this project until June 30, 2022 will allow us to meet CREP workload requirements and fully utilize this project funding without returning a significant balance. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 12-30, 2021. Future enrollment periods will be determined by availability of state funding, specifically approval of the MN CREP bonding request.

Activity 1 Status as of July 31, 2021:

The MN CREP program continues to experience a significant surge in activity as a result of increased staffing efforts and landowner interest. We currently have over 32,000 acres enrolled and are awaiting the funding decisions for the batching period that ended July 2. Enrollment will be on hold until the start of the new Federal Fiscal Year. Currently \$4,077,661 has been spent of the \$4,626,738 encumbered amount as of June 30, 2021 from this grant for CREP staffing at the field level as shown in Attachment A. Working under the premise and eventual extension of this grant for one additional year through June 30, 2022 we conducted a Request for Funding and will begin executing new grants to further encumber an additional \$1,649,351 of the remaining balance of \$1,697,339 for Fiscal Year 2022.

Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2022:

MN CREP is nearing the enrollment of 40,000 acres with an increase to more than 34,500 acres enrolled. Landowner interest in wetland restorations in floodplain and non-floodplain settings remains strong while less interest is found with riparian buffers. Currently, we have spent \$4,634,079 on staffing at the local level with an additional \$1,136,498 encumbered to be spent by June 30, 2022. We currently project a near \$0 balance on June 30, 2022. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 2022. Future enrollment periods will be determined by availability of state funding, specifically approval of the MN CREP bonding request.

Activity 1 Status as of July 31, 2022:

Update waived per LCCMR staff on 6/30/2022.

Activity 1 Status as of January 31, 2023:

MN CREP is nearing the enrollment of 40,000 acres with an increase to more than 35,000 acres enrolled. Landowner interest in wetland restorations in floodplain and non-floodplain settings remains strong while less interest is found with riparian buffers. Currently, we have spent \$5,344,659 on staffing at the local level. We currently project a balance of \$400,000 on June 30, 2023. The next enrollment period for MN CREP will be April 3 – 28, 2023. We anticipate the April 2023 batching period to be larger than was seen in previous batching periods and will update current enrollment numbers at the time of the final report.

Final Report as of June 30, 2023 (to be submitted before August 15, 2023):

Final Report Summary:

1. This project resulted in funding, on average, 29 FTEs per year in 49 counties of the 54 county MN CREP area. This included \$1,187,910 in matching funds, which were provided through in-kind work, indirect,

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and direct expenses of the individuals. These locally trusted individuals worked with landowners through the process of what conservation is best for their land. Conservations were had or outreach materials were provided to 18,776 landowners regarding the MN CREP program. Staff working under this project enrolled 29,350.86 acres into MN CREP on 574 contracts. Of the 574 contracts, nine are wellhead protection practices, 108 are filter strip practices, 150 are wetland restoration within the floodplain, and 311 are wetland restorations. These permanently protected acres will provide many water quality and wildlife habitat values. The costs of landowner payments for CRP and RIM will be paid from funding not directly tied to this project, including the following sources – USDA-FSA CRP, and RIM from - Bonding, ENTRF, Clean Water Fund, and Outdoor Heritage Fund.

2. The project employed a CREP Outreach and Implementation Coordinator that served on interview panels for hiring of new staff funded through this project. The Coordinator also trained staff on the MN CREP program and was the point of contact for MN CREP and local reporting of project activities.

Training and supporting information for SWCDs regarding MN CREP is updated and maintained on the BWSR MN CREP for SWCDs webpage. Individual trainings for new employees were also provided. Trainings specific to the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program, which makes up part of MN CREP, can also be found on the BWSR Online Learning webpage.

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V. DISSEMINATION:

Description: Data is collected on staff time spent, acres impacted and landowners contacted on a quarterly basis and is available to project partners and participants. There will be numerous publications, landowner outreach materials, success articles and media events throughout the course of the project. LCCMR and the ENTRF will be noted in all materials.

Tracking of the MN conservation estate can be found at [Summary of Conservation Lands by County](#). This document is updated each year in August and reflects the acres of conservation lands enrolled in programs in MN.

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Status as of January 31, 2018:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated on August 9, 2017.

Status as of July 31, 2018:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary will be updated in August, 2018.

Status as of January 31, 2019:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated on August 17, 2018.

Status as of July 31, 2019:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary will be updated in August 2019.

Status as of January 31, 2020:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated August 20, 2019.

Status as of July 31, 2020:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary will be updated in August 2020.

Status as of January 31, 2021:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated and posted in August 2020.

Status as of July 31, 2021:

Status as of January 31, 2022:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated and posted in August 2021.

Status as of July 31, 2022:

Update waived per LCCMR staff on 6/30/2022.

Status as of January 31, 2023:

The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated and posted in August 2022.

Final Report as of June 30, 2023 (to be submitted before August 15, 2023):

Final Report Summary:

[The MN Conservation Lands Summary was updated each summer of the project period and captured MN CREP contracts and acres enrolled by locally trusted staff funded through this project. The updated Conservation Lands Summary was posted each August. Historical Conservation Lands Summary reports can be requested via email.](#)

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

A. Preliminary ENRTF Budget Overview:

*This section represents an overview of the preliminary budget at the start of the project. It will be reconciled with actual expenditures at the time of the final report.

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: N/A

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000: N/A

Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation: 3

Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation: [Approximately 29 per year](#)

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B. Other Funds:

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
Non-state			
SWCD-10% cash match	\$641,667	\$1,187,910	Direct and/or indirect expense of employee.
TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:	\$641,667	\$1,187,910	

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Note: See attachment for CREP financial plan.

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VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners:

Partners receiving ENRTF funding

- Name, Title, Affiliation, \$ Amount, Role

Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding

- Natural Resources Conservatoin Service (NRCS) technical assistance provider for CRP contracts.
- Farm Service Agency (FSA) enrollment, administrator and fiscal agent for CRP contracts.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:

Provide the means to implement the new MN CREP upon final agreement being signed. An estimated target of 5,000 landowner contacts will be made and 3,000 CREP contracts will be enrolled during the project. Often it can take a few to numerous contacts with a landowner in order to achieve desired conservation outcomes. This critical local support and landowners assisted, through this ENTRF project, is an important part of the overall State contribution.

The MN CREP has been structured to implement the many water quality initiatives such as the MN Nutrient Reduction Strategy, MN Sediment Strategy, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) as well as landscape and habitat plans as found in the MN Prairie Plan and Pheasant Action Plan. Implementation of the CREP will build upon the existing holdings of the RIM program which currently protects over 271,000 ac. of sensitive lands on nearly 6,500 sites. Water quality protection as well as wildlife habitat are not short term goals and require long term permanent protection aforded by CREP.

C. Funding History:

Funding Source and Use of Funds	Funding Timeframe	\$ Amount
No ENTRF funds have been allocated to this new CREP Implementation effort		
The following listing shows Farm Bill Assistance Partnership (FBAP) project funding history which is a model for the CREP Implementation effort. However, please note that these funds are not tied to this CREP and occurred before this CREP is approved.		
ENRTF-Conservation Program Technical Assistance Grants ML 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 04f.	July 1, 2013-June 30, 2016	\$3,000,000
ENRTF-Conservation Assistance Acceleration Project ML 2015, Chp.76, Sec.2, Subd. 08d.	July 1, 2015-June 30, 2018	\$1,000,000
DNR-Section of Wildlife Funds-FY2015	July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015	\$145,000
DNR-Section of Wildlife Funds-FY2016	July 1, 2015-June 30,2016	\$250,000

DNR-Section of Wildlife Funds-FY2017	July 1, 2016-June 30,2017	\$455,000
BWSR-Clean Water Fund-FY2016	July 1, 2015-June 30,2016	\$200,000
BWSR-Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund-FY2017	July 1, 2016-June 30,2017	\$1,195,000

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

- The project is for 6 years, will begin on 07/01/17, and end on 06/30/23 per pending amendment 2022.
- Project status update reports will be submitted January 31 and July 31 of each year, per LCCMR requirements.
- A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2023.

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IX. VISUAL COMPONENT or MAP(S):

See attached map of project area indicating the 54 county CREP project area.

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
M.L. 2017 Project Budget - Final**



Project Title: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach and Implementation

Legal Citation: M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 08k

Project Manager: Dusty Van Thuyne

Organization: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

M.L. 2017 ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 6,000,000

Project Length and Completion Date: June 30, 2023

Date of Report: August 15, 2023

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 1 Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM	<i>Fill in your activity title here.</i>				
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)	\$229,474	\$229,474	\$0	\$229,474	\$0
<i>New unclassified position at an estimated cost of \$75,000/year for salary and benefits. 100% for 3 years=\$225,000</i>					
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts	\$5,770,526	\$5,355,262	\$415,264	\$5,770,526	\$415,264
<i>Contracts with SWCD offices to employ or contract approximately 26 FTE's/year over the 3 year project. 90% of the contract amount will be paid by ENTRF with 10% local match required.</i>					
COLUMN TOTAL	\$6,000,000	\$5,584,736	\$415,264	\$6,000,000	\$415,264

Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Project Area

