

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2009 Phase 2 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 027-A3

Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Mentor Program and Academy

Total Project Budget: \$ \$730,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: July 2009-October 2011

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$0.00

Priority: A3. Technical Assistance for Conserving Land

First Name: Steve

Last Name: Woods

Sponsoring Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

Address: 520 Lafayette Rd N

St. Paul MN 55155

Telephone Number: 651-297-7748

Email: steve.woods@state.mn.us

Fax: 651-297-5615

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

Region:

County Name:

City / Township:

Statewide

Summary: An apprentice program that provides for developing conservationists and increasing the number of projects while transferring practical know-how to the next generation of conservation professionals.

Main Proposal: 1008-2-046-proposal-SWCD Mentor Proposal - Main.doc

Project Budget: 1008-2-046-budget-SWCD Mentor LCCMR 2008 proposal Budget.xls

Qualifications: 1008-2-046-qualifications-SWCD Mentor Proj Mgr.doc

Map:

Letter of Resolution:

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Mentor Academy

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This proposal has two primary objectives: 1) provides for a practical, hands-on apprenticeship to develop Minnesota’s conservationists of tomorrow, and 2) seasonally brings much needed helping hands to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) during the busy construction season. Both objectives increase the number and quality of on-the-ground conservation projects immediately while ensuring Minnesota’s conservation know-how transitions to the next generation.

Why is the Conservation Mentor Program and Academy important?

1. Many of our most experienced conservation professionals and practitioners are nearing retirement age, but due to budget/hiring constraints will not be replaced until they have left employment. Consequently, a great opportunity is missed to transfer knowledge and experience to the next generation responsible for the future of conservation in Minnesota.
2. While our college trained recruits are expected to be well-versed in technology, theory and research methods, the practical on-the-ground and communication-with-landowners elements are vital aspects of achieving conservation results. This can only be gained on-the-job and is best learned from a seasoned conservation professional. Furthermore, interns will infuse emerging technology and other innovations coming from our universities to improve the quality and productivity of current conservation efforts. This allows for a cross-pollination of ideas and solutions for natural resource challenges.
3. Conservation project and program funding from LCCMR, Bonding and General Fund sources plus Federal Farm Bill Conservation programs (EQIP, WRP, CRP) would be accelerated with this cost-effective workforce dedicated to getting projects designed, installed and maintained.

What are some of the benefits?

1. Exposure for tomorrow’s conservation leaders to the variety of land use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats and the landowners of Minnesota.
2. A means to highlight the assets of rural MN, especially to those who might not otherwise have thought to look there for careers.
3. A means to pursue greater diversity of persons interested in conservation careers.
4. A pool of future federal, state, local and private sector conservation and green economy employees with real-world experience in design and construction.
5. Current students have an ability to confirm a career choice and bring the resulting passion to their remaining studies.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Develop academy structure, recruit participating SWCDs, and develop 30 grant agreements.

Budget: \$50,000

Deliverable

Completion Date

Academy structure and participant list

Summer/Fall 2009

Result 2: Recruit, Select and Train Academy Participants

Budget: \$680,000

Deliverable	Completion Date
Recruiting materials for use at U of M, MnSCU, and private institutions with professional and technical curriculums in the environment	Feb/March 2010
Select candidates and develop individual workplans and mentor responsibilities. Place persons at SCWD offices	April - May 2010
Conduct training/academy; BWSR lead, SWCDs assist	May-June 2010
Hold close-out session, evaluate progress and contributions	August-September 2010
Repeat, with adjustments	Feb 2011 – Sept 2011

III. PROJECT STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

A. Project Partners

SWCDs – employ and mentor
 BWSR – grants and training
 NRCS – train and mentor

B. Project Impact

- *Re-establishes a crucial link in the pipeline for developing the future technical workforce
- * Accelerate and enhance conservation project delivery (Clean Water Legacy, RIM/WRP, CRP reenrollment, Cost-Share, EQIP, Flood Recovery, etc.).
- * Establish a strong foundation for the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

C. Time

In order to last long enough to address the majority of anticipated retirements and bridge several university graduating classes, this program will need to run at least four years. We do not see a role for LCCMR funding beyond eight years at the very most.

D. Long-Term Strategy (if applicable)

State and Federal conservation agencies will look to the successful interns as future employees and pursue means to build the **Minnesota Conservation Mentor Academy** into base operations as a long-term strategy.

Project Budget

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT	% FTE
Personnel:		
BWSR: Program developer, trainer, marketer	\$ 100,000	50%
Contracts:	\$ -	
30 SWCD interns for 700 hours per year for two years at \$15/hour salary	\$ 630,000	
Equipment/Tools:	\$ -	
Acquisition (Including Easements):	\$ -	
Restoration:	\$ -	
Other:	\$ -	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$ 730,000	

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Remaining \$ From Previous Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):	\$ -	
Other Non-State \$ Being Leveraged During Project Period:	\$ -	
Other State \$ Being Spent During Project Period: RIM/WRP wetland restoration project realty/design	\$ 380,000	<i>Secured</i>
In-kind Services During Project Period: SWCD/NRCS to provide office space, IT, vehicle/travel costs est at federally approved indirect cost rate of 25%.	\$ 182,500	<i>Estimated</i>
Past Spending:	\$ -	

Project Manager Qualifications**Project Manager: Steve Woods, Assistant Director, BWSR**

Steve Woods has 22 years of management, planning, design, and construction experience obtained with private and public sector organizations spanning the Upper Midwest. Strong leadership, inter-governmental, and technical skills are all leveraged in current position as one of two Assistant Directors at the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Education: Bachelor Agricultural Engineering, University of Minnesota
Masters of Public Administration, Hamline University

Experience:**Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Assistant Director 1999—Present**

As Assistant Director for Statewide Operations, directly supervise three regional supervisors and the agency's performance review coordinator. The 37 regional employees are located in seven field offices and provide financial, technical, and administrative support to a network of 91 soil and water conservation districts, 47 watershed districts, 87 counties, and over 300 wetland regulatory jurisdictions. Responsible for seeing that policies issued from St. Paul reflect the perspectives of the entire state and our stakeholders. This requires travel to field offices, meeting with local governments, and frequent interaction at regional and state association functions.

Montgomery Watson Harza, Inc., Supervising Professional 1987—1999

Served as Office Manager for two years and long-term Manager of the Water Resources Division of this international environmental consulting and design firm's Great Lakes Office. Responsible for managing a variety of hydrologic and environmental restoration projects across the Upper Midwest for on-time and on-schedule completion.

Clients represented a diverse array of hydrologic regimes, environmental goals, and financial structures. Project work included lake restoration, bioengineering, floodplain management, construction management, stream restoration, monitoring, watershed modeling, public outreach, invasive species control, and wetland restoration. Work with local watershed boards led to development of watershed management strategies for 30% of the 7-county Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan area.

Organization Description:

The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will serve as the lead state agency for this grant. The BWSR has the strongest connection with SWCD's and their implementation role of soil and water conservation practices in MN. The BWSR has historically provided similar grant funds to SWCD's to implement statewide conservation efforts. We intend to use that existing financial and administrative processes to provide oversight.