

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

LCCMR ID: 028-A3

Project Title: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

Total Project Budget: \$ \$2,844,750

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 years

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$67,000.00

Priority: A1. Critical Lands Analysis

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Last Name: Kalahar

Sponsoring Organization: Renville Soil and Water Conservation District

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Region:

Central, SW

County Name:

Chippewa, Lac qui Parle,
Redwood, Renville, Yellow

City / Township:

Summary: One thousand acres of rare and unique Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem, located in the Upper Minnesota River Valley, will be preserved and enhanced through perpetual conservation easements.

Main Proposal: 0908-2-002-proposal-2009_main_proposal_template.doc

Project Budget: 0908-2-002-budget-RFP_2009_Project Budget.xls

Qualifications: 0908-2-002-qualifications-Project Manager.doc

Map: 0908-2-002-maps-LCCMR_map_5_county.pdf

Letter of Resolution: 0908-2-002-resolution-lettersofsupport.pdf

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Minnesota River Valley contains exposed ancient granite rock outcrops that provide unique landscape features, as well as habitat for specialized plant and animal communities rarely found elsewhere in Minnesota. Rock Outcrops are threatened by mining, overgrazing and other development interests. Removal of the rock results in severe degradation and permanent loss of these unique landscape features. The Minnesota River Corridor is easily susceptible to fragmentation due to the fact that it is narrow. Past development activities and mining operations have already fragmented large areas of the fragile Minnesota River Corridor. Demand for aggregate is growing as our population and infrastructure grow. It is in short supply in many areas, including the metro, because development has made it inaccessible in those areas. Interest in mining exposed granite rock outcrops in the Minnesota River Valley is high because the rock is readily available and there is no overburden to remove. This encourages the practice of horizontal mining, removing the easiest and most profitable rock, and moving on. Unlike gravel mining operations, there is no reclamation plan possible for replacing this unique landscape feature once it is removed. Rock outcrops are a component of the Minnesota River's riparian zone, and destruction of this unique habitat will degrade the water quality and wildlife habitat of the Minnesota River and its tributaries. This project will offer an economically viable option for landowners to preserve and enhance rock outcrops within a five county area of the Upper Minnesota River Valley.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Habitat Protection through Perpetual Easements Budget: \$2,504,750

This project will protect approximately 1,000 acres of rock outcrop complexes within the Minnesota River Corridor and its tributaries. This will be in addition to the 212.4 acres already protected through the 2007 LCCMR Grant. Using several layers of data, including the MN County Biological Survey, this project will utilize a scoring system to identify and protect the highest quality sites along the Minnesota River Corridor within the five counties. Compensation for easements to willing landowners will be secured using the local cropland rates of the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement program administered through the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Renville, Redwood, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, and Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Easement applications will be prioritized by a local work group comprised of technical experts from local, state, and federal agencies. In the previous grant application, 212.4 acres were protected while an additional 576 acres were not accepted at that time due to limited funding. Currently the five counties report 35 landowners, owning 1,420 acres of rock outcrops, who have expressed a strong interest in entering into the program.

Deliverable

1. 1,000 Easement Acres

Completion Date

June 30, 2011

Result 2: Habitat Protection Species Removal Budget: \$340,000

Implement habitat management practices, including invasive species removal (i.e. Red Cedar & Sumac) and rotational grazing systems on the new acres protected by the easements. We will continue to leverage additional funding from federal, state, local, and private agencies to supplement restoration activities.

Deliverable

2. 1,000 Easement Acres

Completion Date

June 30, 2011

III. PROJECT STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

A. Project Partners

Renville SWCD is the lead for grant administration. Throughout the grant period, SWCD staff in each of the five counties will work with landowners in their respective county to promote and process easements, as well as develop conservation and restoration plans. The US Fish & Wildlife Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will provide staff time for the technical evaluation of easement applications and restoration practices. County Board of Commissioners and SWCD Board of Supervisors are supporting this project, along with the Upper and Lower Sioux Indian Communities.

B. Project Impact

Protecting the rock outcrops is imperative to the Dakota people. To degrade natural resources is to destroy the Dakota Culture. The Dakota consider the Minnesota River Valley their spiritual home. Their relationship with nature calls for reverence, respect, and humility.

Protection and restoration of rock outcrop habitats will benefit the numerous endangered, threatened, and special concern species found in this ecosystem. The rock outcrops, and their associated wetland complexes, are home to the following state and federal rare, threatened, and endangered species (both flora and fauna): **Federal Threatened:** Prairie bush clover. **State Endangered:** Wolf's spikerush, lichen (*Buellia nigra*), Ball cactus, Henslow's sparrow. **State Threatened:** Kittentails, Short-pointed umbrella sedge, Dakota skipper, Ottoe skipper, Loggerhead shrike. **State Special Concern:** Water-hyssop, Larger water-starwort, mudwort, Great Plains prickly pear, Clustered broomrape, Five-lined skink, Bald eagle, Pawnee skipper, Powesheik skipper, Regal fritillary. **Species of Greatest Conservation Need:** Upland sandpiper. **Non-listed/tracked species:** Carolina foxtail, Eastern fox snake, Three-stamened waterwort, Little barley, Virginia forget-me-not, Mousetail.

Removal of invasive species, such as Red Cedar and Sumac, and intensive management will encourage establishment and the spread of specialized plant and animal communities rarely found elsewhere in Minnesota. Mining and intensive grazing disturbance leave the land susceptible to increased soil and mineral erosion and increased nutrient loading. This proposal will protect the water quality of the Minnesota River, its tributaries, and rock outcrop wetlands, by preventing mining and unmanaged grazing on rock outcrops. The protection of the rock outcrop associated wetlands from mining, development, and agricultural production will insure that the inherent benefits of these existing wetlands, such as groundwater recharge and reduced flooding impacts, are perpetuated.

C. Time

\$2,844,750.00 will be required to staff this project and compensate willing landowners for easement procurement and restoration on 1,000 new acres of unique rock outcrop habitats. The project will take two years to complete; from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2011.

D. Long-Term Strategy

In 2007 the LCCMR funded the initial \$563,000 to protect Granite Rock Outcrops and Associated Wetlands in Redwood and Renville Counties. A total of 212.4 acres is enrolled into Perpetual RIM Easements as a result of that grant. The current application seeks to protect an additional 1,000 acres and expands the eligible area to five counties along the Minnesota River. SWCD staff have a list of pending projects and interested landowners and are confident that the 1,000 acre goal of this grant will easily be achieved in the designated timeframe. The long-term goal is to continue to add to the protected areas in the upcoming years and to apply for future acquisition and restoration funds, while continuing to manage the rock outcrop easements through other local, state, and federal funding sources. Prescribed grazing, haying, and prescribed burning will all be essential tools in the future management of this unique landscape. Given the current list of interested landowners, there will likely be at least one more application for easement funds. However, staff have not promoted the program extensively and it is possible the new round of funding may stimulate additional landowner interest by word of mouth.

Project Budget

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT	% FTE
Personnel: Each of the 5 SWCD offices will receive a base amount to promote the program within their county--\$5,000/SWCD office for technical staff	\$ 25,000	6%
Project Manager & Renville SWCD Office Manager will share administrative responsibilities.	\$ 6,250	7%
\$7500/easement for the Easement Specialist in the SWCD where the land is located to process easements & develop conservation plans.	\$ 75,000	16%
Contracts:	\$ -	
BWSR for Easement Processing (\$350 X 10 easements)	\$ 3,500	
Local Attorneys for title work (\$2,000 X 10 easements)	\$ 20,000	
Equipment/Tools: None	\$ -	
Acquisition (Including Easements): 1,000 acres X \$2,400/acre in perpetual RIM easements. Landowners retain ownership	\$ 2,400,000	
Restoration: 1,000 acres X \$315	\$ 315,000	
Other: N/A	\$ -	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$ 2,844,750	

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Remaining \$ From Previous Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):	\$ -	N/A
Other Non-State \$ Being Leveraged During Project Period:	\$ 40,000	Pending US FWS Partners For Wildlife Program
Other State \$ Being Spent During Project Period:	\$27,000	Pending from DNR & BWSR Native Buffer Cost-Share Program
In-kind Services During Project Period:	\$ 9,600	Pending DNR & US FWS Staff for app scoring
Past Spending: Trust Fund 2007	\$ 563,000	Completed

LCCMR Proposal 2009

Renville Soil & Water Conservation District

Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

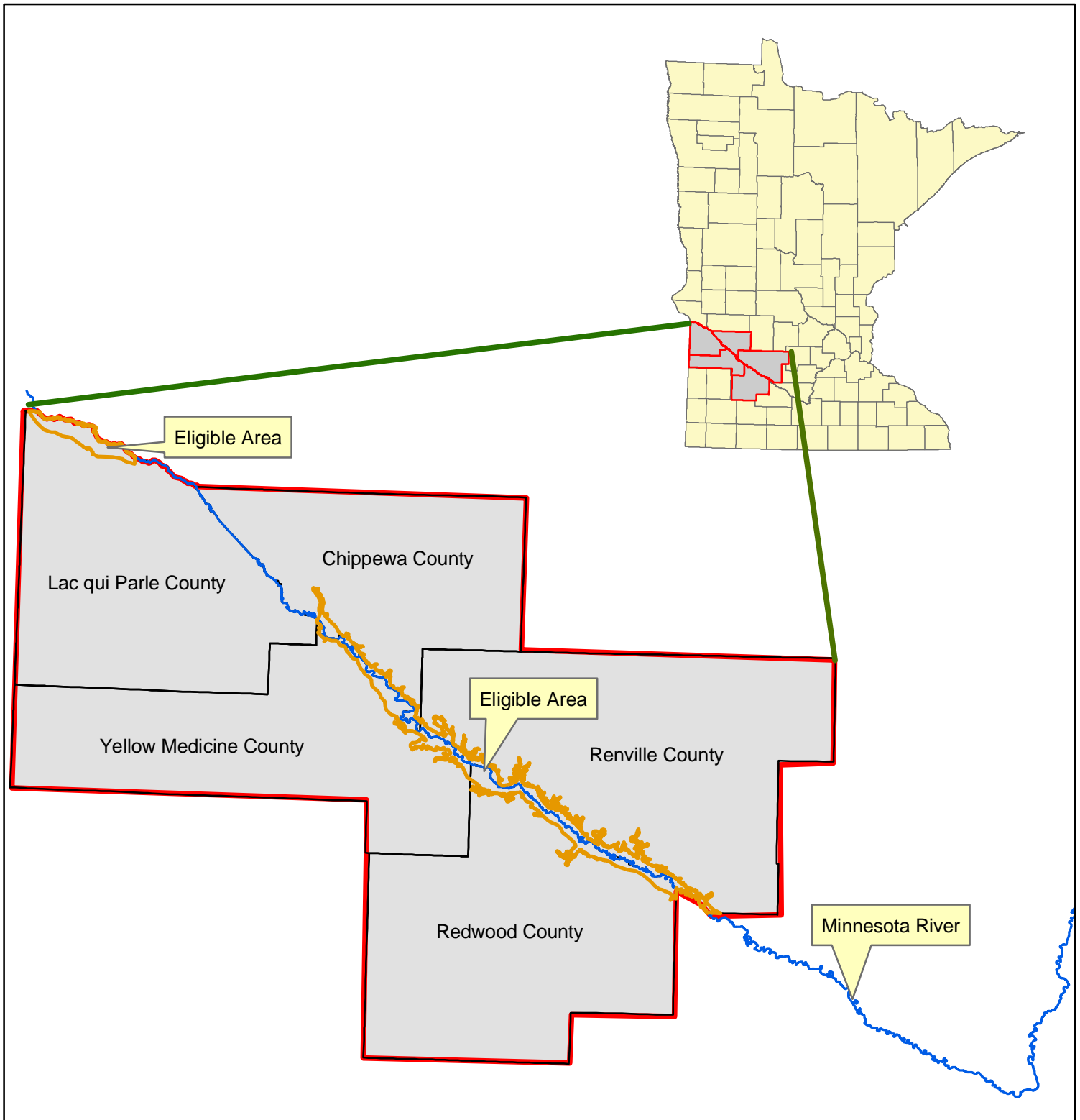
Project Manager: Thomas J. Kalahar, District Technician, Renville Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Olivia MN

Tom Kalahar has nearly 30 years of experience as a technician at the Renville SWCD. His experience includes administration of the State of Minnesota easement programs since their inception in the late 80's. Renville SWCD has had nearly 400 easement applications funded by the RIM, PWP & CREP programs. Tom has carried the bulk of the responsibilities for promoting the easements, doing the easement processing, as well as working with landowners on practice implementation and long-term maintenance. He has worked extensively with the easement staff at the Board of Water & Soil Resources and has an excellent working relationship with both the local attorney handling the legal work and the Renville County Recorders office. He has a good working relationship with the Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Chippewa, and Lac qui Parle SWCD staff who also have extensive experience with easement promotion and processing.

Tom would be the lead staff person in promotion, administration, and implementation of the grant. He would oversee any staff working with landowners and with the overall easement process.

Organization Description: Renville Soil & Water Conservation District is a Local Unit of Government which employs three full-time technicians and an administrative assistant. All of the employees have a solid understanding of natural resources as well as conservation easement program management. The SWCD Staff & the five elected Supervisors are committed to conserving the natural resources of Renville County and are committed to working with other Soil & Water Conservation Districts as well as other local, state and federal agencies to preserve and enhance the natural resources of the State of Minnesota.

LCCMR Granite Rock Outcrop Grant Eligible Area



0 10 20 40 60 80 100 Miles

Legend

- Participating Counties
- Grant Eligible Area
- MN River

Upper MN River Valley

Maps are for graphical purposes only. They do not represent a legal survey. While every effort has been made to ensure that these data are accurate and reliable within the limits of the current state of the art, Renville SWCD cannot assume liability for any damages caused by any errors or omissions in the data, nor as a result of the failure of the data to function on a particular system. Renville SWCD makes no warranty, expressed or implied, nor does the fact of distribution constitute an warranty.