

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

LCCMR ID: 029-A3

Project Title: MN Farm Bill Assistance Project

Total Project Budget: \$ \$1,575,000

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

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$675,000.00

Priority: A3. Technical Assistance for Conserving Land

First Name: Tabor

Last Name: Hoek

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

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Region:

Central, SW, SE

County Name:

Becker, Big Stone, Chippewa,
Chisago, Clay, Cotton

City / Township:

Summary: The MN Farm Bill Assistance Program provides funding for technical staff critical for insuring conservation programs, such as CRP, remain in place or are replaced with appropriate conservation programs.

Main Proposal: 0908-2-020-proposal-MN Farm Bill Asst - Main.doc

Project Budget: 0908-2-020-budget-MN Farm Bill Asst Project - Budget.xls

Qualifications: 0908-2-020-qualifications-MN Farm Bill Asst - Pro Mngr.doc

Map: 0908-2-020-maps-map2009farm_bill_assistance.pdf

Letter of Resolution:

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: MN Farm Bill Assistance Project

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The MN Farm Bill Assistance Project was started by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), MN Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) and Pheasants Forever (PF) as an implementation mechanism for the conservation provisions of the USDA Farm Bill and DNR Working Land Initiative. Since its inception in 2002 more than 50 Soil and Water Conservation Districts have participated and hired technical staff to work with private landowners to secure contracts on over 240,000 acres of grasslands and wetlands.

We are presently in Phase #8 of grants between local SWCD's and BWSR (see attached map) but have no continuation plans beyond June 30, 2009 due to agency budget reductions within the partnership. This will leave the existing 31 SWCD's with a loss of staff and capacity to implement key practices like CRP at the local level. USDA does not have the ability to do program outreach on individual farms. Not only will we continue to lose CRP acres at an alarming rate – as much as 120,000 acres in 2011, but will not see any retention of critical areas for water quality and wildlife habitat. This proposal would extend the program and allow for increased staffing to target at areas with the greatest loss of CRP acres. All funds will go directly to the costs of employing field technicians to work with landowners. The BWSR provides administrative support and the DNR and PF provide oversight at no charge to the project.

Continuing the Farm Bill Assistance project addresses the **Technical Assistance for Conserving Land** funding priority of the 2009 Phase 2 RFP. Additionally, this project will work to address the concerns of the **Conservation Reserve Program Lands** priority. It will allow for knowledgeable technicians to contact landowners with expiring CRP contracts and work to insure that existing conservation practices remain or are replaced with another appropriate practice.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Employment of 25 Farm Bill Assistance Staff **Budget:** \$ 1,575,000

Continue and expand the current Farm Bill Assistance Project to 25 full time equivalents housed within SWCD offices to work with private landowners to enroll in grassland and wetland conservation programs. Funding will cover 70% of the cost for two years of staffing and will provide 40,000 acres of water quality and wildlife habitat projects annually. The remaining costs are funded through local match, including partnerships with Pheasants Forever. Applications for program funding are submitted to BWSR. The committee reviews and selects recipients with the BWSR Board providing final funding approval. The BWSR coordinates contracts, maintains data on program impacts and results and develops final report on program success.

Deliverable	Completion Date
1. SWCD application/Selection by committee	August 1, 2009
2. Contract with SWCD's for 25 FTE's	June 30, 2011
3. BWSR publishes program impacts and results	August 31, 2011

III. PROJECT STRATEGY AND TIMELINE**A. Project Partners**

The Farm Bill Assistance Committee is made up of three organizations. The BWSR provides overall coordination of project and completion of contracts to SWCD's. The DNR farmland wildlife program assists in reviewing program applications and targeting to Working Lands Initiative priority areas and programs. Pheasants Forever coordinates with local PF chapters to provide financial match for positions. The committee serves as the decision making body and provides oversight and accountability for funding expended. There are no grant funds used for committee activities.

B. Project Impact

Service to over 3,000 private landowners and their related projects resulting in 40,000 acres of habitat and water quality projects each year of this effort within the 23 million acre agricultural zone of MN. Priority is placed upon those counties experiencing the greatest loss of CRP acres in critical watersheds.

Since this program is a continuation of current activities, there is a tremendous opportunity for success, based on a proven track record. The partners know how to implement the program and there will essentially be no start up time required.

C. Time

This project will run from July 1, 2009 until June 30, 2011. To fund 25 FTE technical SWCD staff there is a cost of \$45,000/FTE or \$1.125M annually. Over two years there would be a total cost of \$2.25M of which local SWCD's would match on a 70:30 basis. The 30% SWCD match to this effort would be \$810,000 cash plus vehicle, rent, and related overhead.

D. Long-Term Strategy (if applicable)

This partnership has been successful in securing 8 phases of grant funding to keep this project going. Due to state agency budget reductions and other workload priorities established by the MN Legislature, there will not be continued funding of this effort beyond June 30, 2009. Local SWCD's may try to arrange for continued funding of their staff as grant funds expire.

Project Budget

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT	% FTE
Personnel:	\$ -	%
	\$ -	%
	\$ -	%
Contracts: SWCD's for up to 25 FTE Farm Bill Asssitance staff (70% of total cost) for a two year period.	\$ 1,575,000	
	\$ -	
	\$ -	
Equipment/Tools:	\$ -	
Acquisition (Including Easements):	\$ -	
Restoration:	\$ -	
Other:	\$ -	
	\$ -	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$ 1,575,000	

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Remaining \$ From Previous Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):	\$ -	
Other Non-State \$ Being Leveraged During Project Period:	\$ 675,000	<i>Pending</i>
Other State \$ Being Spent During Project Period:	\$ -	
In-kind Services During Project Period: Vehicle, office space, support staff, postage, phone,supervision	\$ 500,000	
Past Spending:	\$ 2,216,728	

Project Manager Qualifications:

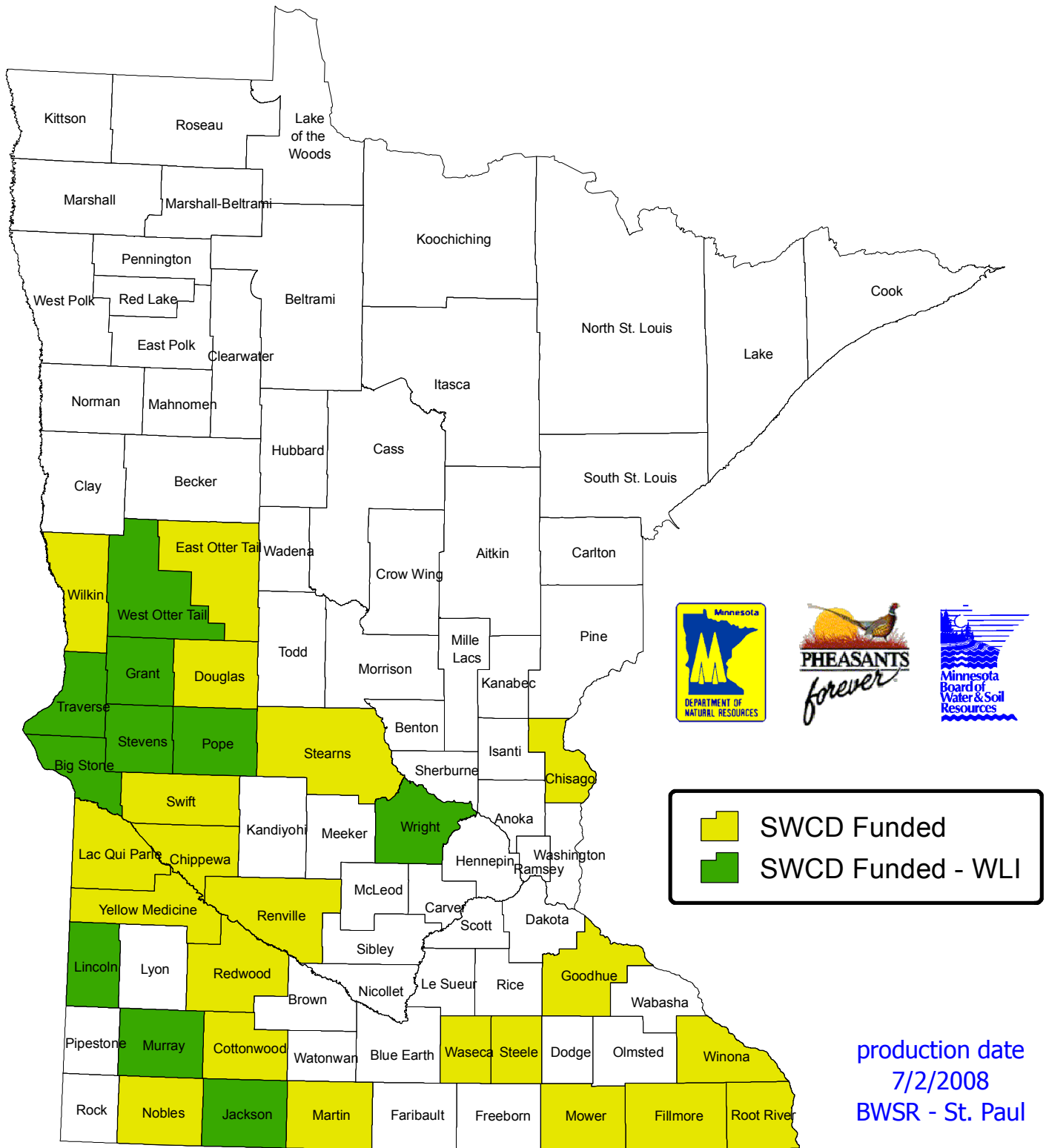
The project manager for the grant will be Tabor Hoek, BWSR Private Lands Coordinator, located in the Marshall BWSR office. Tabor has over 15 years experience in coordinating state conservation programs implemented by SWCD's. Tabor has been the lead agency contact for all past efforts of the Farm Bill Assistance Project that is the foundation for this grant request.

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 this type of work. We intend to use that existing process to provide financial and administrative oversight.

Farm Bill Assistance Positions

PHASE VIII - July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009



FARM BILL STAFFING SUMMARY

20.33 FTEs in 31 SWCDs

