

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2010 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**LCCMR ID: 084-C**

**Project Title:**

Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

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**LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:**

C. Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Acquisition

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**Total Project Budget: \$** \$3,000,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 years, 2010 - 2012

**Other Non-State Funds: \$** \$3,000,000

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**Summary:**

Acquire land and conservation easements to protect up to 450 acres of critical shoreland habitat along the St. Croix River and its tributaries.

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**Sponsoring Organization:** Washington County

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**Location:**

**Region:** Metro

**County Name:** Washington

**City / Township:**

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_____ Knowledge Base	_____ Broad App.	_____ Innovation
_____ Leverage	_____ Outcomes	
_____ Partnerships	_____ Urgency	_____ TOTAL

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# MAIN PROPOSAL

## PROJECT TITLE: Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

There is no slow down in land sales for shore land, particularly along the St. Croix River where land remains highly sought after for residential development. Washington County has a rare opportunity to protect significant habitat along the St. Croix River and its tributaries. For a limited time, several riparian landowners have offered to work with the county to keep their land in its natural state. These projects include some of the few remaining large parcels along the St. Croix River in Washington County.

We will limit development, management and use of the protected properties to activities that are consistent with preserving their conservation values, including:

- Preserving a continuous three-mile ecological corridor along the St. Croix River;
- Avoiding additional negative impacts to Lake St. Croix, a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency-designated impaired water body;
- Protecting soil stability and improving the quality of the overland flow of water into the St. Croix River;
- Maintaining recharge of water into groundwater aquifers;
- Protecting drinking water supplies from contamination in an area that has a very high sensitivity to groundwater contamination; and
- Providing a natural buffer to and maintaining scenic vistas from the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the St. Croix Scenic Byway, the St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park and the future St. Croix Valley Regional Trail.

Washington County will provide at least a 50% match to acquire land and perpetual conservation easements within the focus areas and will hold the interests in the land that it acquires. The county follows the standards and practices of the Minnesota Land Trust and the National Land Trust Alliance, thus ensuring long-lasting conservation easements. The county monitors each of its conservation easements annually. The county attorney enforces the county-held conservation easements. The conservation easements require the landowner to prepare and follow a natural resources management plan approved by the county that identifies opportunities to restore natural communities to some of the disturbed areas and to improve the quality of other areas.

### II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

The proposed projects address habitat recommendations #1 and #2 in the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan. Recommendation #1 to protect priority land habitats identified the St. Croix River valley as having high conservation priority. Recommendation #2 to protect critical shore lands of streams and lakes suggested that high priority shore lands be protected via economic incentives and other tools such as conservation easements. In addition, retaining natural shore lands along the St. Croix River is part of the Trust for Public Land's Conservation Campaign's 50-Year Vision for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region.

We will help meet the goals of several landscape-scale conservation plans: properties are within the published Metro Conservation Corridors priority protection areas with portions of the properties located within the highest priority Regionally-Significant Ecological Areas; portions of the properties are identified in the DNR's Minnesota County Biological Survey as having high biodiversity significance; and

## Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

the properties provide habitat for a variety of species in greatest conservation need as established by the DNR's plan *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and the Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota's Wildlife, Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 2006*. This habitat protection will provide a natural buffer to the proposed St. Croix Valley Regional Trail that Washington County is in the process of acquiring.

**Result 1:** Protect Significant Habitat through Land Acquisition

**Budget:** \$ 3,000,000

Washington County will complete 4-6 permanent conservation easements or fee title acquisitions on up to 450 acres of critical habitat along the St. Croix River and its tributaries.

### Deliverable

### Completion Date

1. Protect up to 450 acres of critical habitat, including over one mile of St. Croix River frontage and 1.5 miles of frontage along tributaries to the St. Croix River.

6/30/2012

## III. PROJECT STRATEGY

### A. Project Team/Partners

Washington County will carry out the majority of work on the proposed activities. Washington Conservation District, Belwin, and Friends of the Mississippi are under contract to develop the required management plans and are available to assist with restoration and enhancement activities. Carpenter Nature Center is involved in a long-term strategy of protecting the corridor along the St. Croix River and establishing a recreational trail in the project area. Washington County, the Minnesota Land Trust and Belwin formed the Valley Creek Land Protection Partnership to complete projects that protect land along Valley Creek, one of the metro area's remaining viable trout streams. The county has received letters of support for its St. Croix River land protection efforts from the following organizations: National Park Service, Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, St. Croix River Association, St. Croix Scenic Byway, St. Croix Scenic Coalition, and Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center.

### B. Timeline Requirements

The owners of each parcel applied to the county's Land and Water Legacy Program and are willing sellers. After being screened for relevance and excellence against the site evaluation criteria and being recommended by a citizen advisory committee, Washington County chose their projects as the highest priority. Appraisals have been completed on three properties. With receipt of the state funds, the projects could be completed within 12-18 months.

### C. Long-Term Strategy

Washington County has completed or participated in seven projects protecting 200 acres of land since 2000 when it began its private land protection activities. The county accelerated its efforts and established its Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP) in 2007 after voters approved a \$20 million bond referendum to acquire interests in property for the preservation of water quality, woodlands and other natural areas. With the passage of the bond referendum, Washington County is poised to leverage the state's investment in protecting important natural communities that serve the citizens of the entire state.

## Project Budget Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

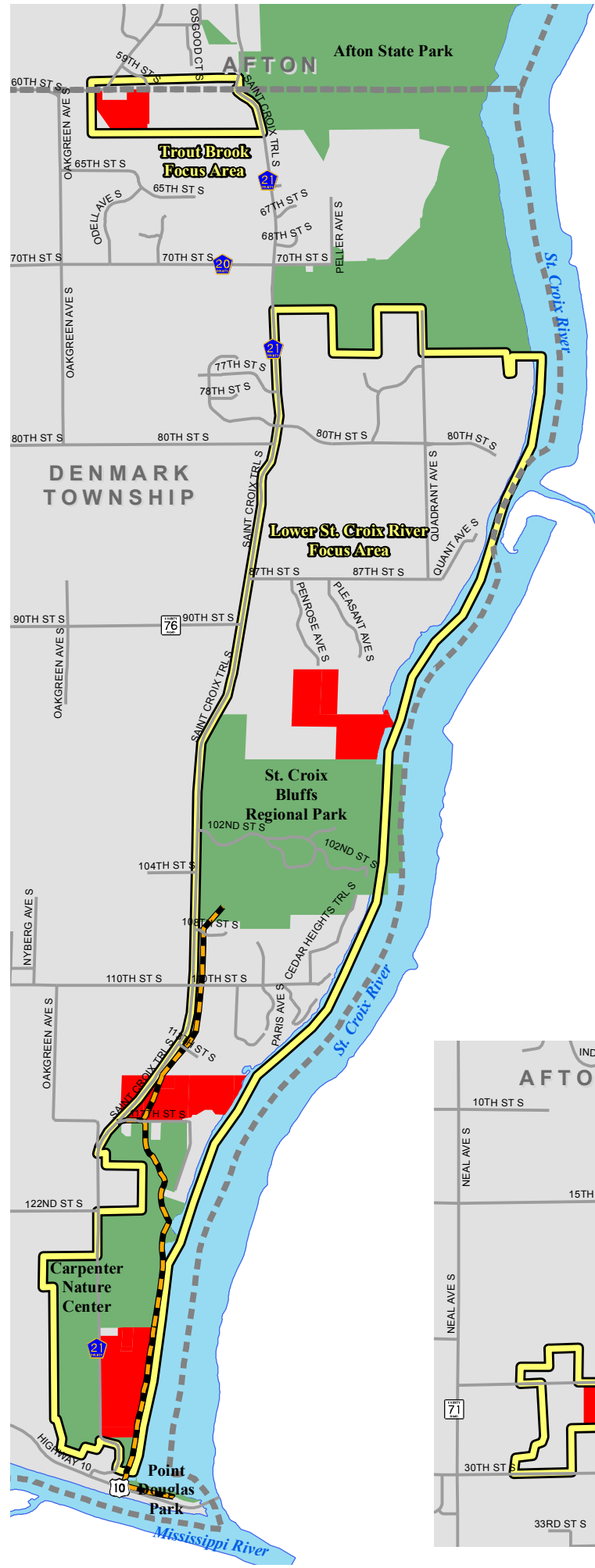
### IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (2 years)







<b>BUDGET ITEM</b> <i>(See list of Eligible &amp; Non-Eligible Costs, p. 13)</i>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
<b>Personnel:</b>	NA
<b>Contracts:</b>	NA
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b>	NA
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):</b> <i>Result #1 includes purchase price, title work, appraisals, surveys, recording fees, and other costs associated with acquiring a conservation easement or fee title on up to 450 acres of land. Washington County will hold title to or the interest in any land that is acquired.</i>	\$3,000,000
<b>Travel:</b>	NA
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b>	NA
<b>TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR</b>	\$ 3,000,000

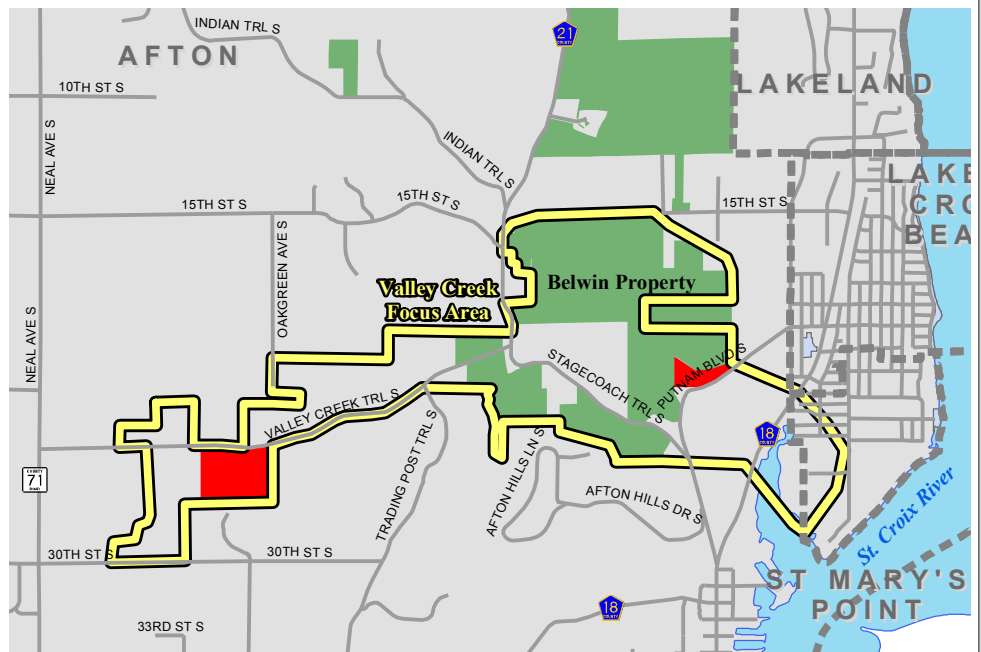
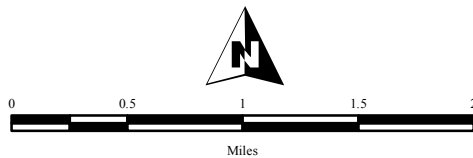
### V. OTHER FUNDS

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> <i>Washington County Land and Water Legacy Bond Funds: Washington County intends to issue bonds in 2010.</i>	\$ 3,000,000	<i>pending</i>
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b>	NA	
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> Staff time.	\$ -	
<b>Remaining \$ from Current Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):</b>	NA	
<b>Funding History:</b>	NA	

# Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection Opportunities



-  Focus Area
-  Current Land Protection Project
-  Already Protected Areas
-  Future St. Croix Valley Regional Trail
-  Roads
-  Municipal Boundary



Map Prepared by: The Washington County GIS Support Unit, 04/27/2009

## **Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection**

### **Organizational Description**

Washington County is a local governmental unit located to the east of St. Paul. It is bordered by the St. Croix River to the east and the Mississippi River to the southwest. Nearly 250,000 people live in the county. Washington County's physical environment is very diverse. Important natural features are the Mississippi River, a popular recreational and important commercial waterway; the bluffs and ravines along the St. Croix River; the county's abundant streams, wetlands, lakes, forests and groundwater; and the prime farmland soils of the southern half of the county. Through its Land and Water Legacy Program, the county has begun preserving some of the county's most precious remaining natural resources. Land protection priorities are lands adjacent to waterways, recreational trails, parks and other public facilities; lands adjacent to already protected lands; and lands serving multiple public purposes and allowing public access; and projects that leverage additional dollars from other sources.

### **Project Manager Qualifications**

Jane Harper is the Project Manager of the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program. In that role, she is solely responsible for all aspects of the county's program from landowner outreach, project evaluation, landowner negotiations, real estate transactions, and stewardship. She is currently working on more than a dozen land protection projects. Jane has worked on land protection activities for Washington County for the past ten years. She successfully managed a LCMR-funded grant in 2000 – 2001 to complete 4 conservation easement projects as part of the county's pilot to test the program procedures. Jane was a founding member of the Washington County Land Trust (later reincorporated as the Minnesota Land Trust). She was on the Metro Greenways Planning Task Force that created the 'greenprint' for the DNR's Metro Greenways Program. Jane has extensive experience in grant management and large project management. She is very much results driven and has a proven track record in completing projects on time and within budget. Jane has a bachelor's degree in Geography from Macalester College and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Minnesota. She has worked for Washington County for 20 years as a physical development planner and prior to that for the Minnesota's Natural Resources and Agriculture departments in various planning positions.