

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 066-C1+2

Project Title: Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program, Phase II

Category: C1+2. Protection, Restoration, and Enhancement

Total Project Budget: \$ 750,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 yrs, July 2011 - June 2014

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

Accelerated implementation of Phase I Conservation Easement Stewardship Plan for existing easements through monitoring, Baseline data collection and report completion, corrective surveys, researching current fee ownership and enforcement protocol development.

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Sponsoring Organization: DNR

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Location

Region: Statewide

Ecological Section: Western Superior Uplands (212K), Northern Superior Uplands (212L), No. Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains (212N), Paleozoic Plateau (222L), Minnesota and NE Iowa Morainal (222M), North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ Employment	_____ TOTAL _____%

2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Conservation Easement Stewardship & Enforcement Program, Phase II

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Minimum standards for conservation easement stewardship require baseline property reports for all easements, regular monitoring, landowner relations, record keeping and enforcement to address easement violations. This project accelerates implementation of DNR's agency-wide Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan developed in Phase I by addressing time-sensitive, one-time needs, by training staff and by facilitating the transition to DNR's use of a new conservation easement administration computer application built in Phase I. Project goals are to bring stewardship of at least 250 (over 25%) of DNR's existing conservation easements (primarily trout stream, scenic river and prairie bank) up to minimum standards; to refine the new computer application; to train staff; and to identify and contact all fee owners of existing conservation easements. Goals will be achieved by monitoring, collecting baseline data, as needed, and completing baseline reports for at least 250 easements; by performing corrective survey work on approximately 30 easements (mainly prairie bank and scenic river); by utilizing and refining the computer application; by researching current easement ownership, updating the land records system (LRS) and developing a process for future ownership updates; by developing a staff training program and conducting training; by developing enforcement protocols; by developing easement-specific electronic monitoring forms for existing easements; and by producing a newsletter for easement landowners about DNR's conservation easement stewardship program. Activities will be coordinated with divisional staff to support their simultaneous implementation of the Program Plan with respect to all easements.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Monitoring, Baseline Data and Reports, Survey Work, Application Refinement Budget: \$610,000

Stewardship of at least 250 conservation easements will be brought up to minimum standards by monitoring per methods developed in Phase I and, where needed, by collection of baseline data. Easements included will be of the highest priority for monitoring (e.g., sites of high biodiversity significance, sites with factors that increase the risk of violations). Baseline property reports, tailored to the easement type, will be completed for at least 250 conservation easements (which may or may not be the same as those monitored). Corrective survey work will be done on about 30 prairie bank, scenic river and other easements. Project staff will utilize the new computer application for conservation easement administration. Based on experience gained through this utilization, the application will be refined.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Monitor at least 250 of DNR's conservation easements and collect baseline data for those without existing baseline property reports	6/30/2014
2. Complete baseline reports for at least 250 conservation easements	6/30/2014
3. Complete corrective surveys, legal descriptions for about 30 easements	6/30/2014
4. Utilize and refine conservation easement administration application	6/30/2012

Activity 2: Conservation Easement Stewardship Training Budget: \$50,000

A training program will be developed for DNR staff whose duties include conservation easement administration and/or stewardship. Training will address baseline reports, monitoring, use of the new computer application, record keeping, landowner relations, resolving violations and handling enforcement issues. At least 10 workshops to train 150-175 staff will be conducted.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Develop conservation easement stewardship training program	6/30/2012
2. Conduct at least 10 workshops, train 150-175 staff	6/30/2013

Activity 3: Conservation Easement Enforcement Protocols Budget: \$15,000

Agency-wide conservation easement enforcement protocols will be developed and implemented. The protocols will outline specific steps for staff to take when a violation is detected and will ensure that all easement violations are addressed in a prompt, fair and consistent manner, in accordance with all legal requirements for easement enforcement.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Develop and implement conservation easement enforcement protocols	12/31/2012

Activity 4: Landowner Data and Outreach, LRS Forms Development Budget: \$75,000

Research will be conducted to verify and update fee ownership and owner contact information for all existing DNR conservation easements (936, based on the inventory currently underway). In coordination with DNR's Land Records Project, project staff will develop a process to regularly update this information in the LRS in the future. Easement-specific monitoring forms for existing easements will be developed and LRS data updated to include these forms within the easement administration application. A newsletter about DNR's conservation easement stewardship program will be produced and distributed to all conservation easement landowners.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Research ownership and contact information for all DNR conservation easements, update LRS as necessary, develop process for future updates	12/31/2012
2. Develop easement-specific monitoring forms; update LRS	6/30/2012
3. Produce and distribute conservation easement stewardship newsletter	6/30/2013

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Project staff in the Lands and Minerals Division will be responsible for overall project coordination, baseline report preparation and all of Activities 2-4. Field staff, who will be based in DNR area offices, and Conservation Corps Minnesota will be hired for most monitoring and baseline data collection. Contractors will perform survey work and computer application refinement. Project staff will collaborate with DNR conservation easement administrators as they implement the Program Plan developed in Phase I, and with DNR's Land Records Project.

B. Timeline Requirements

Funding for three years (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2014) is requested to provide multiple field seasons for monitoring and baseline data collection.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

A \$15,000 appropriation partially funded a minimum standards report. (ML 2007, ch. 57, art. 1, § 4, subd. 2). A \$520,000 appropriation from the ENRTF (ML 2008, ch. 367, § 2, subd. 5(h)) funds Phase I of this project. DNR's Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program will rely largely on funding sources as recommended in Phase I of the project in the long term. Phase II is designed to address one-time needs and to jump-start Program Plan implementation. Future requests for ENRTF appropriations for conservation easement stewardship are expected to be limited to one-time needs or to address emerging issues.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

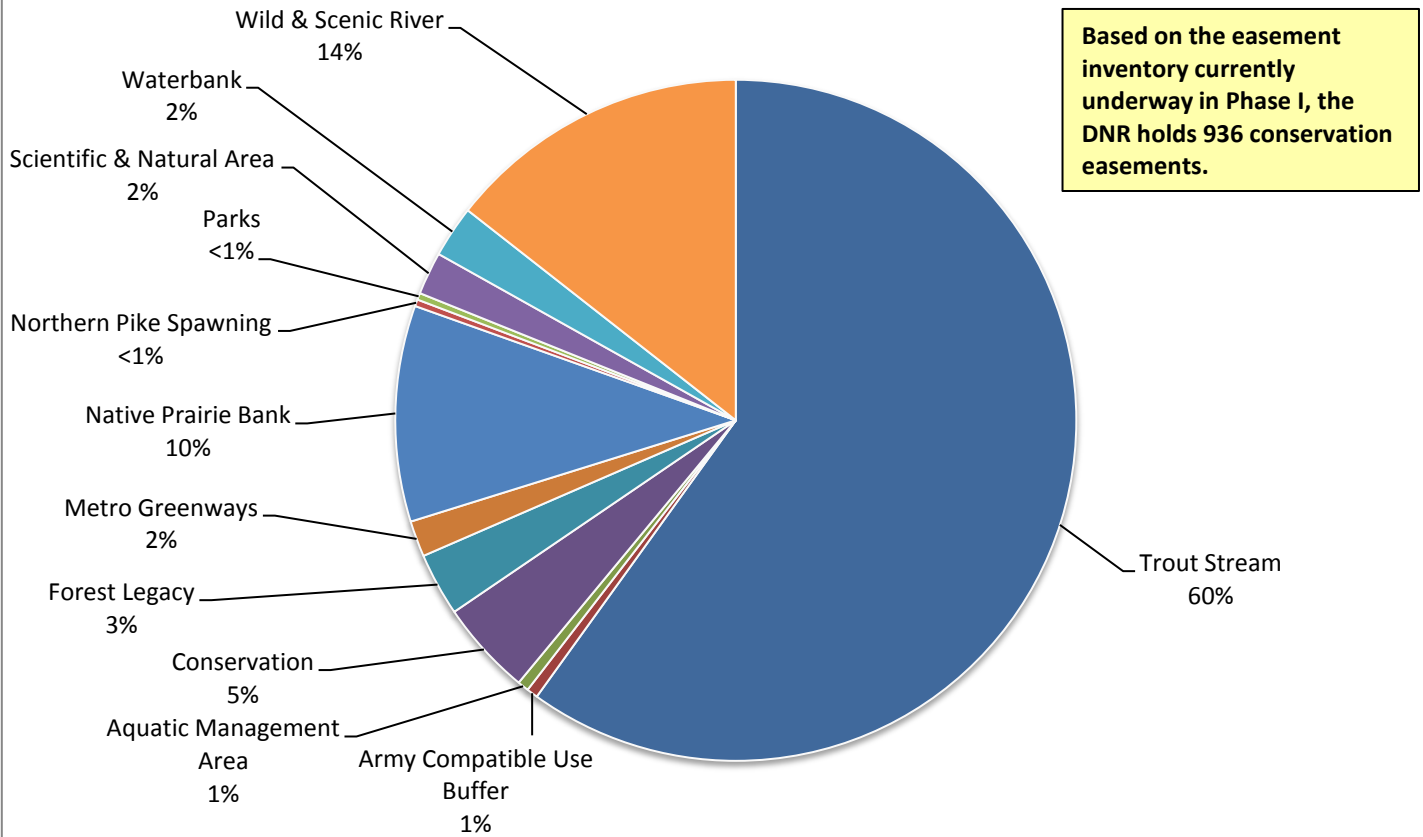
IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel:	
1. <u>Activities 1-4:</u> Project consultant (1 FTE, 3 years, unclassified). 77% salary/23% fringe benefits	\$257,760.00
2. <u>Activities 1-4:</u> Project analyst (1 FTE, 3 years, unclassified). 77% salary/23% fringe benefits	\$170,280.00
3. <u>Activities 1,3:</u> Field staff/analyst (2 FTE's, 1 to 2 years, unclassified or classified paid almost exclusively with special project funds). 77% salary/23% fringe benefits	\$146,560.00
Contracts:	
1. <u>Activity 1: Survey contract.</u> (Professional/technical state bid). Contractor will determine and permanently mark boundaries on approximately 30 conservation easements that were not surveyed at the time of acquisition, will draft corrective legal descriptions where needed and will create GIS files of easement boundaries.	\$105,000.00
2. <u>Activity 1:</u> Conservation Corps Minnesota will conduct field visits to and collect baseline data on approximately 50 conservation easement properties.	\$ 33,400.00
3. <u>Activity 1: Information technology contract.</u> (Professional/technical state bid). Contractor will refine conservation easement administration application.	\$ 25,000.00
Travel:	
<u>Activities 1, 2, 4.</u> In-state travel (non-fleet mileage, lodging and meals) essential to complete project activities. Calculations are based on travel from St. Paul to 10 regional/area offices to conduct staff training, travel to four counties without electronic parcel data to conduct landowner research, travel from St. Paul to work areas (likely including Fillmore, Houston, Meeker, Pine Counties and counties in DNR's SW Region) for project quality control, travel by staff based in area offices (e.g., Lanesboro) to conservation easement sites.	\$ 12,000.00
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 750,000.00

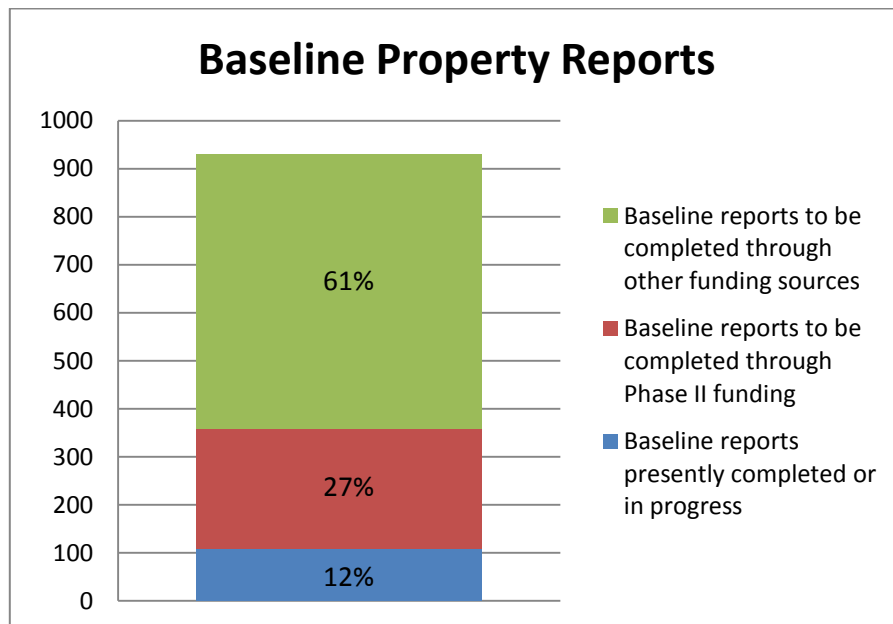
V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<u>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</u>		
1. Shared services costs	\$ 66,312	N/A
2. Additional divisional support not included in calculation for the previous line (based on Division of Lands & Minerals costs)	\$ 98,628	N/A
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation: ENTRF 2008 Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan (\$520,000 appropriation)	\$ 206,434	The unencumbered appropriation balance is \$129,917. An additional \$76,517 is encumbered, but unspent for FY2010.
Funding History: ML 2007, ch. 57, art. 1, § 4, subd. 2 appropriated \$15,000 toward a minimum standards report. ML 2008, ch. 367, § 2, subd. 5(h) appropriated \$520,000 from the ENRTF for Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan.	\$535,000.00	

Percentage of Total DNR Conservation Easements by Type



Baseline Property Reports



Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Project Manager Qualifications

Susan Damon received her B.A. degree from Western Michigan University and M.A. degree from Middlebury College. She received her J.D. degree, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1990. She was judicial clerk for The Honorable Thomas J. Kalitowski at the Minnesota Court of Appeals from 1990-91. Between 1991 and 2008, she was a Special Assistant and Assistant Attorney General for the State of Minnesota, representing several state agencies and licensing boards. Since 2008, she has been employed at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as the project consultant and lead worker for the Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan, Phase I.

Organization Description

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is a state agency. The DNR's mission is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life. The DNR consists of several divisions based on the state's natural resources, such as Fish and Wildlife, Forestry, Lands and Minerals, Parks and Trails, and Ecological Resources and Waters, as well as four regions and four support bureaus.