

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

LCCMR ID: 076-C3+4

Project Title: Conservation Options for Urbanizing Communities

Category: C3+4. Technical Assistance and Community-Based Planning

Total Project Budget: \$ \$824,600

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 yrs, July 2011 - June 2013

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

This project provides local officials and staff of growing communities with natural resource-based workshops and matching grants to obtain needed land cover information, land use assessment tools, and conservation ordinances.

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Sponsoring Organization: DNR

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Web Address: _____

Location

Region: Statewide

Ecological Section: Statewide

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 Options for Urbanizing Communities

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The State demographer continues to project that there will be over 1.3 million new residents in Minnesota by 2030. While most population growth and urbanization will occur in communities situated in the State's growth corridor stretching from St. Cloud to Rochester, other areas in the state will also be faced with growth and the need to convert remaining natural habitats to urban uses (see map for major areas showing positive population growth). Although the major urbanizing areas in the state collectively constitute only a small percentage of total surface area, the majority of the State's population resides in these areas. As a consequence, local decisions about future development have the potential to contribute disproportionately to fragmentation, loss, and degradation of remaining land and water habitats valued by community residents.

The goal of this project is to provide urbanizing communities with a range of conservation options to better protect land and water resources as development occurs. These options include: 1) matching grants that provide local government decision-makers with better natural resources information and tools to address challenging conservation-development decisions and tradeoffs; 2) annually organized peer-to-peer information sharing events for all recipients of community conservation assistance grants; and 3) offerings of new and existing conservation-focused workshops targeted to local government officials and staff and offered in partnership with Government Training Services. Project focus on these activities is based on four years of effort by the DNR and other practitioners in delivering conservation assistance to over 30 local governments in the 11-county region. Local governments, including cities, townships, counties, and watershed districts have requested conservation assistance in three primary areas: 1) completion of natural resources/land cover inventories to identify remaining sensitive natural resources that can guide the placement of development; 2) creation of land use assessment tools to add scientific rigor and greater certainty to conservation and development decisions; and 3) new ordinance development to implement conservation objectives expressed in local comprehensive plans.

The conservation niche filled by community conservation assistance can best be demonstrated by three examples of how DNR project support has positioned local governments to better address conservation of natural resources: 1) Monticello's 2008 Comprehensive Plan recommended a land cover inventory of its 10,000 acre Orderly Annexation Area and Mississippi river banks to identify what natural areas remained. The inventory identified 7 high quality natural habitats in public and private ownership and the final report to the City suggested several options to protect these areas as growth occurs. 2) To "...adopt new approaches to balance growth with natural resources protection", fast growing Scott County sought a community assistance grant to explore how to structure a land protection program to manage conservation easements within its Natural Areas Corridors. Through a series of facilitated meetings, the local work group was able to recommend a land management approach that the county felt it could finance and administer. 3) "At a crossroads in its development", the City of Minnerista is expected to increase its households by 50% with the construction of a very large development Woodland Cove in order to meet Met Council residential density standards. After five failed site proposals, the City applied for a community assistance grant to undertake a collaborative process between the City and the new site developer. With the assistance of a process expert, project discussions have been very successful, have mayoral support, and have

resulted in the City revising its PUD (planned unit development) ordinance to incorporate conservation into all future PUDs.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Conservation Assistance to Urbanizing Areas Budget: \$770,000

This activity provides incentives to local governments facing growth and development to: 1) obtain baseline land cover inventories, 2) develop and apply land use assessment tools, and 3) revise or create new ordinances that guide development to less sensitive areas and conserve natural habitats. Proposals are requested annually and competitively evaluated by an interagency review group using established criteria, including a) presence of quality natural habitats in the community, evidence of development pressure on remaining natural resources, clear intent to use the deliverables, a dissemination plan so others benefit from the work, and evidence that the desired project outcomes support other local conservation efforts.

Outcomes	Completion Date
1. 30-35 competitively awarded grants to urbanizing areas to obtain needed information and/or tools to conserve natural habitats as future growth occurs – match amount to be determined	6/2013

Activity 2: Workshops and Peer-to-Peer Learning Opportunities Budget: \$ 54,600

This activity provides the development and delivery of new and existing workshops for local government officials and staff in partnership with Government Training Services (GTS); workshops focus on how to apply state-of-the-art natural resources information and highlight successful local examples on how to incorporate natural resource considerations into local plans and project designs. Also provided by this activity is a daylong meeting, offered annually, that brings together all community assistance grantees to share their results with other urbanizing communities.

Outcomes	Completion Date
1. 10-12 workshops for approximately 350 local government officials and staff through GTS's "Working Nature into Land Use Decisions" series	6/2013
2. Development and delivery of 2-3 new workshops targeted to local governments and their planning consultants; locations to be determined	6/2013
3 Two annual peer-to-peer day long information exchange meetings of grantees to learn from and share knowledge with each other	6/2013
4. Approximately 125 hours of MIS expertise to develop GIS maps and analysis in support of workshop development and delivery	8/2013

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Principal Project Partners

Overall Leadership and Coordination: New Waters/Eco Division; Community Assistance unit
Results 1 and 2 – Community Assistance Grants and Workshop Development and Delivery:
 Government Training Services – partner in Natural Resources Land Use Series for local governments; land use subject matter experts; local government associations including Metro Cities, League of Mn Cities, Association of Mn Counties, Mn Association of Townships; Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, U of MN; 1000 Friends of MN; other State agencies

B. Timeline Requirements – 2 years

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs – The State's investment in grants to urbanizing local governments to influence their future conservation and development decisions will help to fill a huge financial gap created by recent losses in local government aid and the decline in development and associated fees that have been used in the past to support land and water conservation locally.

2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

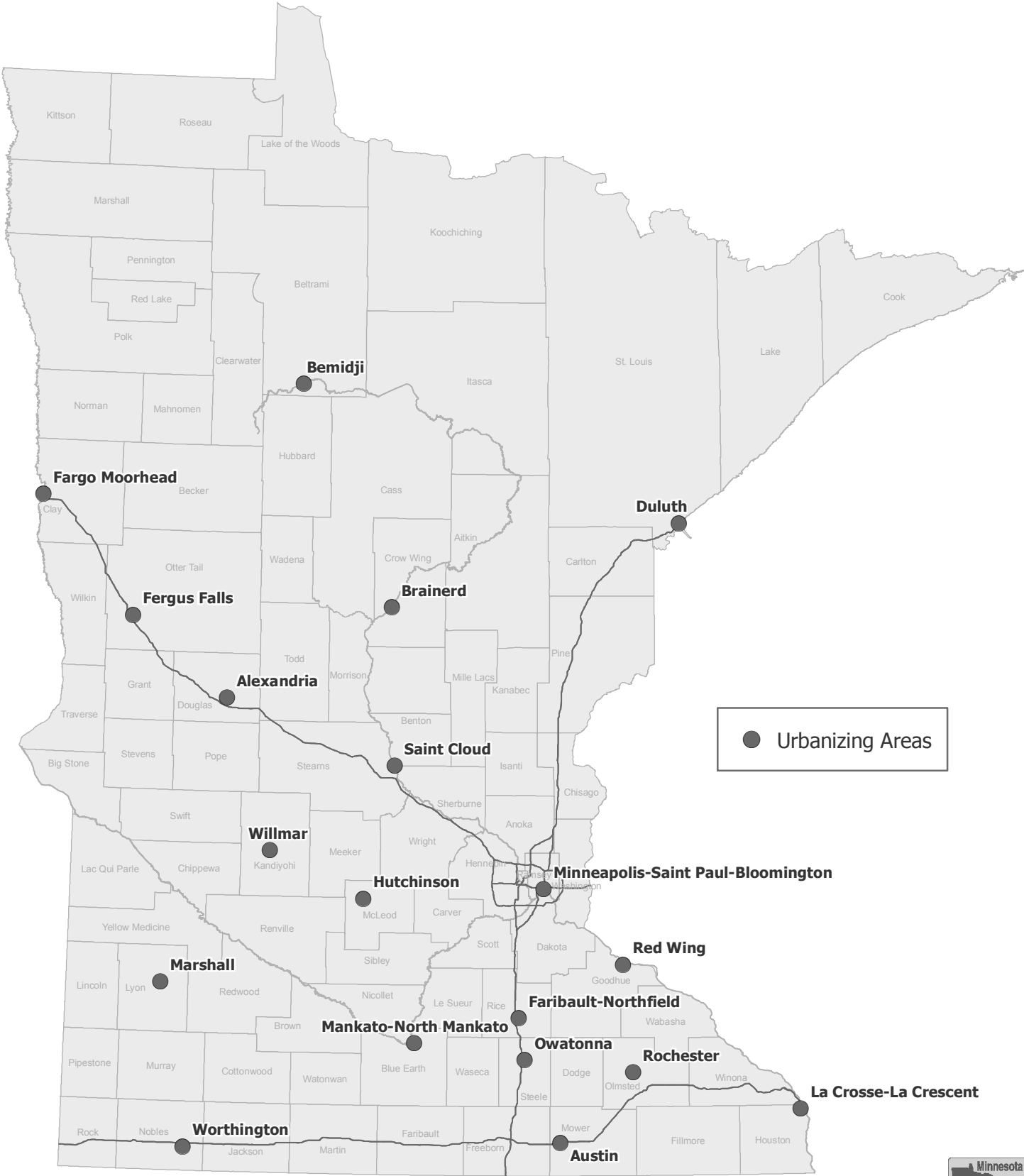
IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: 1.0 FTE unclassified Community Assistance position to manage a matching grant program that supports a range of conservation options for 19 urbanizing areas in the state; 70% salary; 30% benefits	\$170,000
Contracts: Contracts to acquire subject matter expertise to develop and deliver natural resource-based workshops for local governments, including: a) Government Training Services to deliver annually the "Natural Resources Land Use Series" for local government commission members; b) GIS mapping and analysis for workshops; c) land use experts in land use law, process, and policy	a) \$10,000; b) \$10,000; c) \$30,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	\$ -
Travel: Community assistance meetings with local government staff, elected, and appointed officials; nonprofits; other State agencies	\$ 4,000
Additional Budget Items: a) Space and copied materials for two annual peer-to-peer meetings of all program grantees to share lessons learned and conservation deliverables produced; b) 30-35 competitively awarded grants to local governments in urbanizing areas to support the incorporation of natural resources conservation into future development plans and projects	a) \$600; b) \$600,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$824,600.00

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Local government in-kind or non-state match to all grants (25% minimum match); pro bono by consulting firms in workshop development	\$155,000	pending
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: estimated shared services	\$ 17,234	N/A
In-kind Services During Project Period: Participation by DNR and other State agency, nonprofit, and private sector staff in workshop and training development; local government outreach via association newsletters; cross-organizational coordination, communication, and information-sharing	\$30,000	pending
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):	\$ 115,000	will issue RFP in May 2010 for remainder
Funding History: Since 2004, \$590,000 in external funding (Bush and McKnight Foundations) has supported a concentrated effort to develop a community assistance focus by the DNR. With the creation of DNR's Community Conservation Assistance grant program in 2007, \$350,000 has been awarded to 21 local governments. By July 2010, a total of \$450,000 will be awarded to an estimated total of 25 communities through this program.	\$450,000	Past support

Conservation Assistance for Urbanizing Areas in Minnesota



Community assistance grants to decision makers in these 19 urbanizing areas will support land and water conservation as growth and development occur.

04/07/10



Community Assistance has been identified as an important function by the Waters/Eco division and is also profiled in the DNR's Conservation Agenda as a key strategy to achieve conservation at the landscape scale. To enhance the division's capacity to provide assistance to local governments, four Community Assistance staff situated in DNR's Central Region since 2007 will move into the Waters/Eco division in FY2010, where this project will be housed.

As project proposer and Community Assistance Manager, Sharon Pfeifer supervises three direct reports in the 23-county DNR Central Region. Sharon has participated in DNR's leadership and supervisory training programs as well as in the Department of Administration's Core Manager Training Program. She holds a doctorate in ecology and a masters degree in environmental policy and is a two-time recipient of the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) Diplomacy Fellowship. In 2005, she completed a Bush Foundation Leadership Fellowship on Green Infrastructure. If funded, Sharon will be directly involved in this project and will work with staff and partners responsible for implementing Activities 1 and 2. Sharon has effectively partnered with others in the private and public sectors to produce important and useful outcomes in the last decade, including 1) a regional scale assessment of growth pressures on natural resources; 2) an identification of regionally significant ecological areas in the 7-county metro; and 3) the initiation of DNR's Metro Greenways Planning Grant Program. In May 2008, Sharon and private and public sector partners received the 2008 Partnership Award from the Mn Environmental Initiative (MEI) for the development of several natural resource based land use planning workshops and roundtables for local governments.