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

LCCMR ID: 211-G

Project Title: Minnesota River Public Outreach - Restoration Success Stories

Category: G. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: $ $148,880

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

Other Non-State Funds: $ 0

Summary:

Key Minnesota River Basin water quality restoration activities will be depicted in online video clips featuring experts and landowners accompanied by educational materials and community forums.

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Location

Region: Central, Metro, SW

Ecological Section: North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

County Name: Stearns, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Waseca, Watonwan, Yellow Medicine

City / Township:

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

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota River Public Outreach – Key Restoration Practices

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Minnesota River is one of the most threatened rivers in the state and the nation with a wide range of pollutants affecting water quality. Considerable public funding and effort has gone into restoring the Minnesota River and progress has been made in many areas to improve water quality but more work remains. The overarching goal of this project is to profile key restoration practices for improving water quality across the Minnesota River Basin. The concept is to translate traditional field demonstration tours into an online tour in order to provide information about these practices to a broader audience. This project aims to create a clearinghouse of information about effective restoration practices. This will increase public accessibility and exposure to experts and landowners explaining restoration practices.

Numerous basinwide stakeholder meetings, plans and studies identify the need to better engage stakeholders and strengthen information flow and communication across the basin. Currently, information about restoration activities is housed in a diverse array of publications and web sites. In order to highlight effective restoration practices and help to garner public support, this project will 1) distill key restoration activities in rural and urban areas 2) create video clips profiling those restoration practices, 3) provide online access with supplemental educational materials, and 4) promote these conservation measures in a series of community river forums.

This project will commence by assembling an advisory team of representatives from the state agencies and local governments responsible for restoration activities. They will brainstorm a list of the top ten urban and top ten rural conservation practices and identify compelling case studies to highlight in video and written format online. Key restoration practices will likely include wetland restoration, buffer strips, septic upgrades, and municipal stormwater programs, among many others. These online video clips will be linked to the rich array of existing materials about restoration practices and augmented with additional educational materials where needed. A series of community river events will be held across the basin to highlight these restoration practices and publicize the project.

Overall GOALS:

- Engage the basin residents and to promote and change individual land management behavior.
- Develop a list of key rural and urban restoration activities to help improve river water quality.
- Produce video clips for the web and other media sources about key restoration practices across the basin detailing how these successes might be replicated.
- Utilize information from existing sources to develop educational fact sheets, articles and interviews for the web, podcasts, radio broadcasts and written media.
- Place all information on an updated, revised and expanded Minnesota River Basin Data Center web site (originally produced through a LCMR grant).
- Host a series of community forums to highlight effective restoration practices from across the basin.

Direct Impacts:

- Provide video clips and educational materials about effective land management practices across the basin for the public (potentially reaching thousands through web site and other media).
- Create innovative online tools to support local government agencies responsible for implementing restoration practices (e.g. SWCDs, county environmental staff, conservation groups).
- Provide information directly to approximately 600 people attending 6 community forums over two years.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Develop field-based interviews with restoration experts and landowners, Budget: 79,867

- Produce 20 conservation expert interviews for the web, radio broadcast and podcast downloads; Compile existing materials and develop additional educational materials as needed and publicize using a variety of print and online media venues.

Result 2: Conduct Minnesota River Community Forums and Outreach Budget $46,277

- Host 6 community forums publicizing the Minnesota River and key restoration practices.

Result 3: Create a web site to showcase key restoration practices. Budget $41,674

- Update and expand the Minnesota River Basin Data Center web site to include video clips, and other interactive features, and associated educational materials.

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

The project team from the MSU Water Resources Center includes: Scott Kudelka, Watershed Assessment Specialist – project manager, conduct interviews, develop education materials, promotion; Kimberly Musser, Assistant Director – web site development, conduct interviews, develop education materials, promotion; Rick Moore, GIS Specialist – create maps and interactive features and conduct interviews; Scott Bohling, Water Resource Analyst – conduct interviews, develop educational materials, promotion. Citizen and conservation advocates serving as an advisory team to review products and help develop educational materials include: Tom Kalahar, District Technician - Renville SWCD; Lauren Klement, Le Sueur County Water Planner; Jennifer Hoffman, Chippewa River Watershed Project; Kevin Bigalke, Executive Director – Nine Mile Creek Watershed District; Brooke Patterson, Water Plan Coordinator – Brown County Planning and Zoning office; Jesse Anderson, Environmental Specialist – Lower Sioux Indian Community; Emily Deaver, Associate Professor of Environmental Science – Southwest Minnesota State University; Brad Cobb, President/CEO – Green Corridor Project; Lisa Coons, Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry; and Audrey Arner, facilitator. We will also assemble an advisory team of representatives from the main state agencies and local governments responsible for administering and installing conservation practices.

Project Timeline:

July 2011 – June 2012

- Assemble advisory groups to identify effective Minnesota River restoration practices, plan community forums and conduct interviews.
- Develop and host 3 community forums.
- Produce 10 restoration practices video clips, educational materials, and web site.

July 2012 to June 2013

- Develop and host 3 community forums.
- Produce 10 restoration practices video clips, educational materials, and web site.
- Work with advisory groups to obtain feedback and finalize products.

IV. LONG TERM STRATEGY

Our goal is to increase public awareness about the state of the Minnesota River and to garner support to clean it up. Highlighting successful restoration practices from across the basin will help to further this goal. This project will be integrated into a broader web site that serves as a clearinghouse of information about the river basin (Minnesota River Basin Data Center). A series of public river forums will further our goal to get people more aware of the state of the river and the steps needed to improve water quality. We will be providing tools to clarify how people can work together to create a healthier Minnesota River for today and future generations. Ultimately, greater awareness leads to increased involvement and positive behavior changes that affect water quality.

Project Budget

Minnesota River Public Outreach: Restoration Success Stories

Water Resources Center, MSU Mankato

BUDGET ITEM: STAFF	**AMOUNT**
Faculty - Kimberly Musser- 30% employment/yr (salary 100% soft money)- 2 yr period. Assistant Director: website development, conduct interviews, develop education materials and promotion. 74% salary - 26% benefits	$ 34,264.90
Staff - Scott Kudelka - 23%/ year employment (salary 100% soft money) - 2 yr period. Project Manager: conduct interviews, develop education materials and promotion. 60% salary - 40% benefits	$ 39,806.97
Staff- Richard Moore - 13% employment/yr (salary 100% soft money) - 2 yr period. GIS Specialist: create maps and Google flythroughs and conduct interviews. 60% salary - 40% benefits.	$ 21,136.50
Staff - Scott Bohling - 10% employment/yr(salary 100% soft money) - 2 yr. period. Water Research Analyst: assist with interviews, develop education materials, conduct community forums and promotion	$ 12,375.84
Students -one, maybe 2 - 63% employment/yr (salary 100% soft money)- 2 yr period. Website development; transcribing interviews; assisting with education materials. 98% salary - 2% benefits (work done during school year-FICA paid during summer)	$ 11,696.25
Budget Item: STAFF TOTAL	**$ 119,280.46**

BUDGET ITEM:Non-staff expenses	**AMOUNT**
Contract - Facilitator, Advisory Committee, Travel	$18,040.00
Printing Costs	$2,000.00
Editing Software	$1,500.00
Community Forums	$6,000.00
Travel:	
Travel for interviews and meetings- 20 interviews with natural resource scientists and citizens on environmental issues of the MN River - estimated 2,000 miles @ $0.52/mile	$ 2,060.00
Budget Item:NON-STAFF EXPENSES TOTAL	**$29,600.00**
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	**$ 148,880.46**

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	**AMOUNT**	**Status**
In-kind Services During Project Period:		
WRC Staff Time	$ 16,538.00	Secured
Computers & Printing	$ 1,500.00	Secured
Travel (use of WRC/MRB van)	$ 900.00	Secured
TOTAL In-Kind	**$ 18,938.00**	

Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

In his role of watershed assessment specialist and communication coordinator, Scott Kudelka has developed, implemented and taught a wide range of environmental education programs to students of all ages. His responsibilities include organizing community events, web site development, and communicating Minnesota River Basin issues through a quarterly newsletter, weekly email update, watershed calendar and other avenues. Recently, Scott was the co-author of the Minnesota River Basin Trends Report (a comprehensive look at a wide range of trends in the basin including water quality, biological indicators, agricultural statics, recreational usage and demographics) and the project leader for the Minnesota River Basin Progress Report (highlighting success stories involving water quality improvements). Before coming to the Water Resources Center, Scott worked on two watershed projects (High Island Creek/Rush River and Lac qui Parle – Yellow Bank) developing and promoting conservation practices for both rural and urban residents. Scott has worked on a variety of information/educational-related natural resource projects including creating a Wetland Educator's Guide, managing the Gunlogson Nature Preserve and overseeing the Turtle Mountain Environmental Learning Center. Scott received a Bachelor of Science degree in Public History from North Dakota State University, Fargo and is the author of a ten-book series on North Dakota State Parks and a Hiking Guide of North Dakota.

The Water Resources Center (WRC) of Minnesota State University, Mankato was created in 1987 to serve as a regional center for environmental research and information exchange. The mission of the WRC is to gather, interpret, and distribute data of environmental significance to help citizens enhance the quality of regional lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. This is accomplished through faculty and student applied research, educational programming, technical assistance, and water resource planning.

Since its beginning, the WRC has participated in over 100 research, educational, and planning projects involving partnership with dozens of public and private organizations. These projects range from groundwater and lake assessment studies to water quality workshops to communication of Minnesota River issues to development of watershed-based plans for surface water quality protection. Our stability since 1987 stands as a testament to the objective and quality products we produce.

Long-term partnerships with counties, nonprofit organizations, and state agencies have resulted in many important and far-reaching land and water resource initiatives. Some of our major projects include the Minnesota River Basin Data Center (http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu) and working with the Minnesota River Board (http://www.minnesotariver.org). We have a dedicated staff and look forward to enhancing the connection of the public to the Minnesota River.