

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2012-2013 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 067-D

Southeast Minnesota Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP)

Topic Area: D. Land Acquisition & Restoration

Total Project Budget: \$ 1,638,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 yrs, July 2013 - June 2016

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

Through the Southeast Minnesota Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP), 5 SWCDs and MLT are proposing to acquire permanent easements on high diversity private lands in the SHPP Priority Area.

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Sponsoring Organization: Winona County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Location

Region: SE

County Name: Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Olmsted, Wabasha, Winona

City / Township:

<input type="checkbox"/> Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Base
<input type="checkbox"/> Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgency
<input type="checkbox"/> Capacity Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Leverage	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL <input type="checkbox"/> %



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2012-2013 Main Proposal

PROJECT TITLE: Southeast Minnesota Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP)

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Fillmore, Goodhue, Olmsted, Root River (Houston), and Winona Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) propose to provide protection to the mapped SE MN Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP) priority area through acquired, donated, and partially donated permanent conservation easements on important private lands.

The designated SHPP priority area comprises only 1.4% of Minnesota’s 53.7 million acres, yet it holds the highest biological diversity of plant and animal species in the state, including 37% of the 439 state-listed rare species. Within this biologically diverse environment, more than 90% of land is in private ownership, thereby making conservation easements a strategic protection tool within the priority area. The SHPP priority areas were determined by a group of conservation professionals, including Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) personnel. This project provides essential public benefits including protecting and enhancing some of Minnesota’s most unique wildlife habitats, preventing water quality degradation of important southeast streams, and helping to maintain the scenic and cultural heritage of the region.

Factors Used to Determine the SHPP Priority Area:

- Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) – over 50 types of native plant communities.
- Rare Species – 164 state-listed rare plant and animal species
 - 30 endangered species.
 - 46 threatened species.
- Bedrock Geology – Map steep slopes that contain:
 - Seeps.
 - Dry bedrock prairies.
 - Fens.

External Threats to Habitat within the SHPP Priority Area:

- Fragmentation.
- Over-grazing of woodlands and pastures.
- Invasive species.
- Mining of the bedrock parent material; the basis of these rare communities.

Environmental Impact of the Threats:

- Destroy rare, fragile, and environmentally sensitive native plant & animal communities.
- Remove the natural groundwater filters.
- Allow contaminants direct access to the surface and groundwater.
- Remove natural processes, primarily fire.

Priority Ranking Score Components (target scores of 75 or greater):

- Environmental Benefits Index from BWSR (development funded by LCCMR) – 50% of score
- Pre-Settlement Vegetation from DNR – 25% of score
- Groundwater Susceptibility from MPCA/LMIC – 25% of score

Evaluation Criteria

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Priority Ranking Score | • Proximity to Documented Rare Species |
| • Current Cover Quality | • Number of Acres within the Priority Area |
| • Cover of Adjacent Properties | • Proximity to Sensitive Surface & Ground Water |
| • Proximity to other Permanent Habitats | • Currently Enrolled in CRP |
| • Immediate Threat to Habitat | • Donated/Reduced Payment Rate |

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Budget Total: \$1,638,000

Activity 1: Acquisition of Conservation Easements

Budget: \$1,250,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. MLT: Protect 1,200-1,500 acres by acquiring 12-15 conservation easements - \$1,025,000. (Anticipated break-down as follows): a. Easement Payments to Landowners - \$675,000 (an average of \$450/ac for 15	June 30, 2016

<p>projects, with an estimated minimum of \$225,000 in donated value.)</p> <p>b. Identify and contact landowners, evaluate and select projects, and all other staff time - \$195,000 (Average \$27/hr plus benefits for 1 FTE per year).</p> <p>c. Appraisal, title, insurance, and survey work when needed - \$150,000 (Average \$10,000/easement).</p>	
<p>2. MLT: Dedicated funds for long-term monitoring and enforcement - \$225,000 (average \$15,000/easement).</p>	<p>Perpetual</p>

Activity 2: Outreach & Conservation Plans

Budget: \$ 33,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<p>1. SWCDs: Outreach and landowner meetings - \$18,000 (\$50.00/hr not to exceed \$3,000/district. A total of \$3,000 will be awarded to SWCDs working in Wabasha county as well).</p>	<p>June 30, 2016</p>
<p>2. SWCDs: Develop Conservation Plans. - \$15,000 (\$50.00/hr not to exceed \$1,000/plan).</p>	<p>June 30, 2016</p>

- Funds not used for outreach and Conservation Plans will be redirected to fund additional easements.

Activity 3: Enhancement Activities

Budget: \$ 355,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<p>1. SWCDs: Assist landowners with contractor selection and oversee the work completed. – \$17,000 (\$50.00/hr).</p>	<p>June 30, 2016</p>
<p>2. Conservation Corps Minnesota (CCM), or private contractors: Enhancement activities such as prescribed burns, seeding, invasive species removal, etc. - \$338,000 (\$1,500/ac for an estimated 225 acres).</p>	<p>June 30, 2016</p>

- Cost-share will be available at a rate of \$1,500/acre due to the unique and expensive seed mixes required and complexity of the sites' topography.
- Funds not used for enhancement will be redirected to fund additional easements.

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partner Activities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Administration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winona County SWCD • Outreach/Landowner Contacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SWCDs/MLT • Site Evaluation/Scoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SWCDs/MLT/DNR. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easement Acquisition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MLT • Conservation Plan Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SWCDs/DNR • Enhancement Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DNR/SWCDs/CCM/Private Contractors |
|--|---|

B. Timeline Requirements

- Easement acquisition: 6-30 months.
- Restoration practices: 6-12 months, depending on weather and timing of easement acquisition.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

This proposal is structured as a first phase pilot project, and depending on interest and results, we anticipate the possibility of a larger longer-term project or effort that may require additional investment over time than is being requested here.

Letters of support have been supplied by the Fillmore, Goodhue, Olmsted, Root River, and Winona SWCDs, the DNR Ecological and Water Resources Division, and the Winona County Board of Commissioners.

2012-2013 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

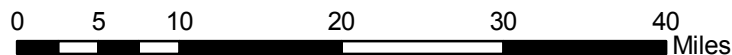
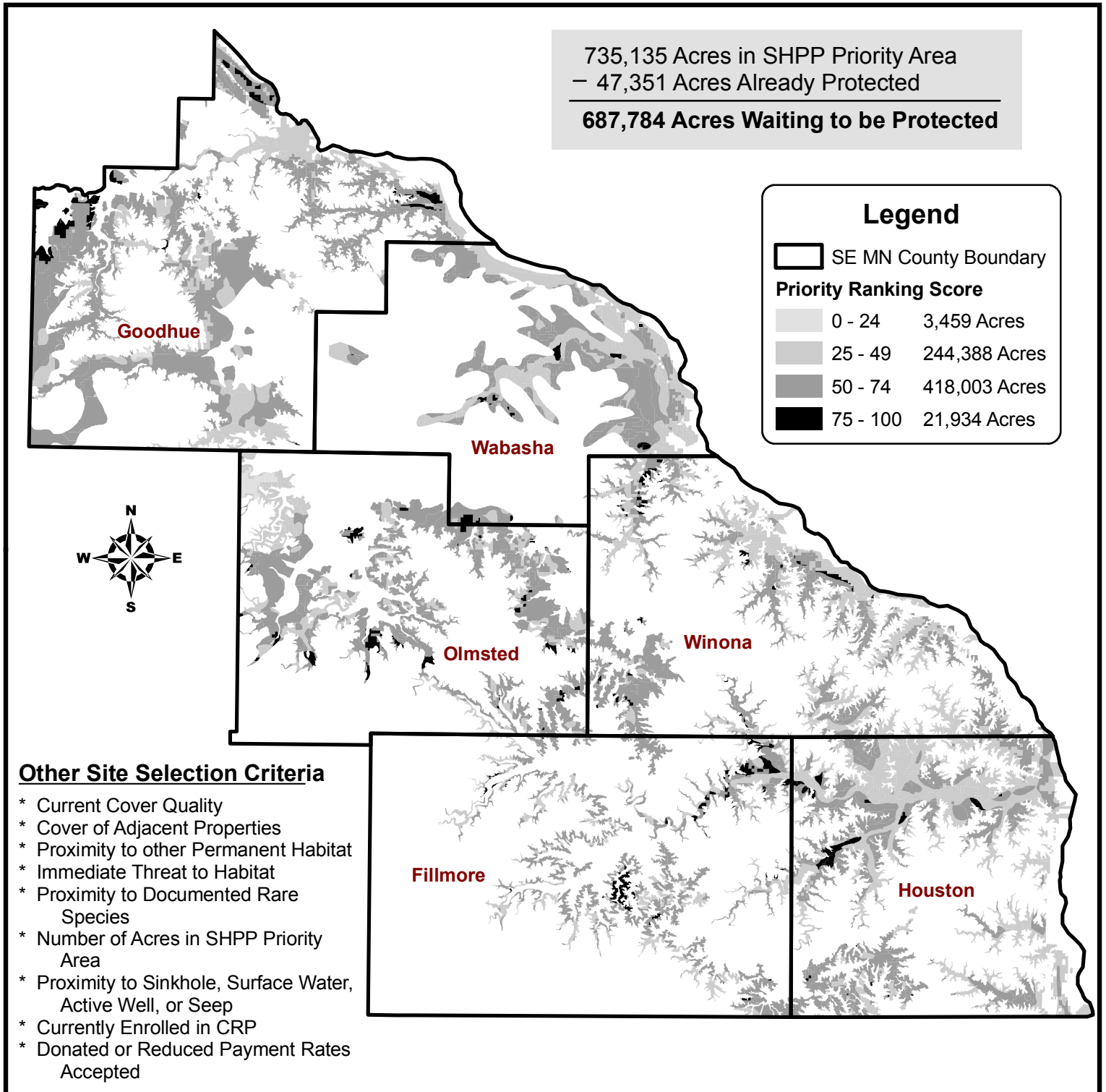
<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel:	
<u>SWCDs:</u> Staff expenses including salaries, eligible benefits and related costs for time spent on outreach, landowner contacts, Conservation Plan development, and enhancement activities. Based on \$50.00/hr, not to exceed: \$3,000 for outreach/landowner contact per county boundary; \$1,000 per Conservation Plan developed; and dollars spent on enhancement activities will depend on the projects. (5 districts at approximately 3.2% FTE/district/yr)	\$ 50,000
<u>Minnesota Land Trust:</u> Staff expenses including salaries (at an average of \$27.00/hr) plus eligible benefits and related costs for approximately 100% FTE for each of the 3 years as follows: Conservation directors or other land protection staff (approximately 70% FTE/yr), legal staff and other support staff (approximately 30% FTE/yr).	\$ 195,000
Contracts:	
<u>Conservation Corps Minnesota, or other private contractors:</u> Complete enhancement projects such as prescribed burning, seeding, tree removal, etc. Expected to enhance 225 acres at an estimated \$1,500/acre.	\$ 338,000
Travel:	
<u>Minnesota Land Trust:</u> Mileage and related travel expenses in Minnesota. Estimated at 9,009 miles at the IRS reimbursement rate, currently \$.555 per mile.	\$ 5,000
Acquisition (Permanent Easements): Includes purchase price of conservation easements - \$675,000 (based on an average of \$450/ac for 15 projects); and other acquisition expenses - \$150,000 (average \$10,000/easement), such as title work, insurance, etc.; maps, GIS (including project mapping by Community GIS); other (including appraisals, surveys, recording fees, etc.) to protect 1,200-1,500 acres of land through permanent conservation easements held by the Minnesota Land Trust.	\$ 825,000
Conservation Easement Monitoring & Enforcement Fund: Funds dedicated to perpetually monitor and enforce 12-15 easements acquired and held by the Land Trust. Estimated at an average of \$15,000 per easement.	\$ 225,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 1,638,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Estimated at \$225,000 - These other funds represent an estimate of the potential of easement value donated to the Land Trust under this project. The donated easement value is difficult to predict, but the Land Trust believes it will achieve at least a 25% donation of conservation easement value.	\$ 225,000	Pending - dependent upon actual projects completed.
In-kind Services During Project Period: The DNR will provide technical assistance when requested for no charge. While the Land Trust and SWCD's do not itemize the specific value of in-kind services, substantial amounts of unreimbursable staff time and overhead are required to complete land protection projects with ENRTF funding.	Unknown	

Southeast Minnesota Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP)

Through this grant, we plan to focus primarily on the areas that score between 75 -100.
The primary target area total acreage is 21,934 acres.



Priority Ranking Scale was determined by overlaying the BWSR Environmental Benefits Index raster layer (EBI) (Derived from the Ecological Ranking Tool funded by LCCMR), the DNR

Project Manager Qualifications/Organization Description

Project Manager:

Daryl Buck, District Manager for the Winona County SWCD, will be the Project Manager for the Southeast Minnesota Sensitive Habitat Protection Program (SHPP). Daryl has over 24 years of experience with the Winona Co. SWCD. During those 24 years, his primary duties included working with the numerous grants administered by the SWCD and also with numerous RIM Reserve, CREP II and RIM/WRP easement programs. To date, the Winona Co. SWCD has assisted the State in acquiring 74 easements in Winona County on nearly 1700 acres. Daryl has assisted with the writing of this grant application and has supplied vast amounts of knowledge and expertise.

Grant Administrator:

Brein Maki, Office Administrator for the Winona County SWCD, will be the primary Grant Administrator for the SHPP. Brein has over 7 years experience administering grants, reporting, auditing, and managing contracts and financials at the local, state, and federal level. Currently Brein administers 15 grants for over \$2 million.

Winona County SWCD:

Vision Statement - To encourage preservation and conservation of the natural resources of Winona County through advocating sustainable use and respect of the uniqueness and aesthetic value of our landscape for present and future generations.

Mission Statement - We are a locally elected unit of government promoting soil and water conservation and environmental protection through landowner assistance, educational and planning activities, and coordination of public and private efforts and by serving as a forum on natural resource issues.