

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 093-E2

Conservation Easement Stewardship Program, Phase III

Topic Area: E2. NR Info Collection/Analysis

Total Project Budget: \$ 684,476

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 yrs, July 2013 - June 2015

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

Acceleration of DNRs ongoing work to bring existing conservation easements up to minimum standards through monitoring, baseline data collection and baseline report preparation; development of technology to enhance monitoring efficiency.

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Location

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

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: Conservation Easement Stewardship Program, Phase III

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This is Phase III of a three-phase project. Phase I (Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan-DNR, July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2011) included an inventory of DNR’s conservation easements, an assessment of DNR’s needs to bring its conservation easements up to minimum standards and development of a conservation easement stewardship plan for both DNR’s existing conservation easements and future acquisitions. Phase II, which is currently in process, includes monitoring and preparation of baseline property reports for 180 existing conservation easements, development of a conservation easement stewardship training program, development of conservation easement enforcement protocols and identification of current fee title owners of all properties subject to DNR conservation easements.

Minimum standards for conservation easement stewardship include baseline property reports for all easements, regular monitoring and record keeping. As the holder of 980 conservation easements, the DNR must maximize efficiencies to meet its stewardship obligations. Phase III focuses primarily on conservation easements that were acquired before current minimum standards were developed. The project accelerates DNR’s ongoing efforts to bring stewardship of all existing conservation easements up to minimum standards and evaluates the use of technology to enhance conservation easement monitoring efficiency. Project goals are to monitor and prepare baseline property reports for 420 existing conservation easements (trout stream, wild and scenic river, native prairie bank and metro greenways), to monitor another 200 conservation easements through remote sensing methods, to develop GIS tools that will enhance conservation easement stewardship efficiency and to evaluate the efficacy of these methods and tools. Goals will be achieved through on-site easement monitoring and baseline data collection; completion of baseline reports that document property conditions in relation to easement terms; easement monitoring through remote sensing, using GIS, current aerial photographs and LiDAR, and evaluation of efficacy of this monitoring method; and development and evaluation of GIS tools to automate some mapping and violation detection functions that are essential components of conservation easement stewardship.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Monitoring, Baseline Data and Reports

Budget: \$584,476

Stewardship of 420 existing DNR conservation easements (trout stream, wild and scenic river, native prairie bank and metro greenways) will be brought up to minimum standards through on-site monitoring visits, collection of baseline data and completion of baseline property reports. This Activity will fully address DNR’s unfunded baseline report backlog identified in Phase I of this project. Methods and forms for conservation easement monitoring and baseline property report preparation developed in Phase I and refined in Phase II will be used for Activity 1.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Monitor 420 existing DNR conservation easements and collect data for baseline property reports	6/30/2015
2. Complete baseline property reports for 420 conservation easements	6/30/2015

Activity 2: Easement Monitoring Through Remote Sensing

Budget: \$ 100,000

Remote sensing methods will be used on at least 200 existing conservation easements to assess compliance with easement terms. Methods will include use of GIS with current aerial imagery and/or DNR’s existing LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data to evaluate easement properties. On-site visits will be conducted on a sample of the easements to evaluate the efficacy of detecting violations through remote sensing. Monitoring reports will be provided to easement administrators for follow up, and the results of the evaluation of efficacy will be documented.

This Activity will also develop and evaluate GIS tools used in conjunction with fused LiDAR and aerial imagery (1) to identify buildings, structures and other conditions that would warrant special attention during monitoring visits; and (2) to automatically adjust digital riparian conservation easement shapes (which are used for mapping and automatic updating of ownership information) to match changes in water courses over time.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Monitor at least 200 existing conservation easements with remote sensing methods; prepare monitoring reports	6/30/2015
2. Conduct on-site visits to a sample of easements monitored to evaluate efficacy of remote-sensing methods; document results of evaluation	6/30/2014
3. Develop and evaluate GIS tools to identify buildings, structures and conditions for special attention during monitoring visits and to automatically adjust digital shapes of riparian conservation easements to changes in water courses	6/30/2015

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Lands and Minerals Division staff will be responsible for overall project management and most of Activity 2. Field staff based in other DNR divisions and a Conservation Corps Minnesota conservation easement specialist will conduct monitoring, data collection and baseline report preparation under Activity 1 and some on-site testing to evaluate the efficacy of Activity 2.

B. Timeline Requirements

Funding for two years (July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015) 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)) funded Phase I, and a \$500,000 appropriation from the ENRTF (ML 2011, 1st Special Session, ch. 2, art. 3, § 2, subd. 4(m)) funds Phase II of this project. DNR’s Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program will rely on funding sources as recommended in Phase I of this project in the long term. Phase III is designed to continue Phase II work to bring existing easements up to minimum standards and to explore using technology to enhance efficiency. Future requests for ENRTF appropriations for conservation easement stewardship will be for the purpose of addressing emerging issues.

2012-2013 Detailed Project Budget

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel:	\$ -
<u>Activities 1-2:</u> State program administrator (project manager) (1/3 FTE, 2 years, unclassified) 72% salary/28% fringe benefits	60,000
<u>Activities 1-2:</u> Project specialists/field staff (7 FTE's, 1-2 years, unclassified) 65% salary/35% fringe benefits	451,000
<u>Activities 1-2:</u> Project specialist (.5 FTE, 2 years, unclassified) 67% salary/33% fringe benefits	70,000
Contracts: <u>Activity 1:</u> Field visits to conservation easements, collect data and complete baseline property reports	\$ 35,700
Travel: In-state travel (mileage, lodging and meals) for conservation easement site visits essential to complete project activities	\$ 26,000
Additional Budget Items: Direct Support Services (DNR used a rate of 6.5% to calculate costs for direct support services, which are DNR's direct and necessary business services required to support this proposal.)	\$ 41,776
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 684,476

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):	\$419,455	Not encumbered/ Unexpended
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. ML 2011, 1st Special Session, ch. 2, art. 3, § 2, subd. 4(m) appropriated \$500,000 for the Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program, Phase II.	\$ 1,035,000	

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 a 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 by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Lands and Minerals. She was the project consultant and lead worker for the Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program Plan, Phase I and is currently the project manager for the Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program, Phase II.

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 and Water Resources, as well as four regions.

