

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Request for Proposals (RFP)

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Project Title:

Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 4,216,275

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 Years, July 2014 - June 2017

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

Over 700 acres of rare and unique Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem, located in the Upper Minnesota River Valley, will be preserved and enhanced through perpetual conservation easements.

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Sponsoring Organization: Renville County Soil & Water Conservation District

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Location

Region: Central

County Name: Big Stone, Brown, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Nicollet, Redwood, Renville, Yellow Medicine

City / Township:

MP: 0613-2-081-proposa

Budget: 0613-2-081-bud

Qual: 0613-2-081-qualifi

Map: 0613-2-081-map-M

Resolution: 0613-2-08

List: 0613-2-081-list-201

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



PROJECT TITLE: *Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystems*

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Minnesota River Valley contains a narrow ribbon of exposed ancient granite rock outcrops that provide unique landscape features, a spiritual homeland for the Dakota people, as well as, habitat for specialized plant and animal communities rarely found elsewhere in Minnesota. Rock outcrops are threatened by aggregate mining, overgrazing and other development interests. Removal of the rock results in severe degradation and permanent loss of these unique landscape features. This project will offer an economically viable option for landowners to preserve and enhance rock outcrops within an eight county area (Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood, Brown & Nicollet) of the Upper Minnesota River Valley. The rock outcrops, and their associated wetland complexes, are home to state and federal rare, threatened, and endangered species (both flora and fauna). Protection and restoration of rock outcrop habitats will benefit the species found in this ecosystem.

The 2010 Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan identified several focus areas. Included for protection in the plan is protection of the rock outcrop areas within the Upper Minnesota River Valley (see map). Privately held conservation easements play a major role in the protection of this area as less than 5% of the total land base in this region is in public ownership. This grant application requests funding to protect 733.69 acres of Rock Outcrops on privately owned land located in the eight project partner counties.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement applications have already been taken by the eight (8) partner Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in this initiative. These easements will be processed by the local SWCD offices and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The State of Minnesota will be the easement holder. There are currently 21 applications totaling 733.69 acres currently on file.

Activity 1: *Establishment of Perpetual Easement of Rock Outcrop*

Budget: \$4,060,875

Number of Easements 21 Total Acreage 733.69

All of the current applications qualify for funding. Applications will be prioritized based on a comprehensive scoring system that incorporates many of the criteria used in the EBI including current condition, proximity to various other natural features, size of contiguous protected parcel, proximity to other perpetually protected habitats, management of species of greatest conservation need, propensity to conversion and resource loss, societal benefits, management requirements, and financial considerations. Activity 1 budget includes the cost of the easement (landowner payment) which is based on the BWSR 2012 RIM cropland payment rates and it also includes BWSR and SWCD processing costs and an administrative payment to the Project Manager SWCD for recordkeeping, reporting and coordinating with BWSR accounting staff.

Activity 2: *Habitat Management/Restoration*

Budget: \$105,000

Number of Projects 10 Total Acreage 300 acres at \$350/acre

SWCD staff will partner with the MN DNR Prairie Bank staff to develop the conservation plans required by the RIM Easement and to develop management plans on all easements. Sites may require prescribed burning, invasive species control, or tree removal. We anticipate 350 acres will require initial management within the grant period. Based on past history and after consulting with contractors, \$350/acre is an average cost. In addition to the usual tools for restoration and management, haying and/or grazing can be components of the management regime when appropriate. Restoration is an on-going task. Federal, state, and local groups are



interested in maintenance of these sites and have been willing partners in the past. Management funds have been available from a variety of sources in the past.

Activity 3: *Evaluation*

Budget: \$50,400

Per BWSR Policy, RIM easement site evaluations will be conducted annually by SWCD staff for the first five (5) years following easement recording. After the initial five (5) years of monitoring, easements are inspected every third year. Easements are evaluated to ensure they comply with the easement language, and, in the case of non-compliance or practice failure, the established RIM process will be followed.

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Easements</i>	<i>5/30/2016</i>
<i>2. Management/Restoration</i>	<i>5/30/2017</i>
<i>3. Easement Evaluation</i>	<i>On-going</i>

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Project Manager is Tom Kalahar, a District Technician at the Renville SWCD. Staff from Renville, Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Brown, Nicollet and Big Stone SWCD offices will promote the program within their County. They will process easements and work with landowners on developing conservation plans for each easement. BWSR easement staff will process the easements at the state level and be responsible for easement payments to landowners and disbursement of funds to the SWCD offices for administration and reimbursement.

DNR staff and others, including local SWCD staff, will score applications as needed to determine funding priorities. SWCD staff will work with other federal, state and local agencies to develop conservation plans and to acquire funding for restoration and maintenance. In the past, USFWS, MN DNR, NRCS and other local, state and federal agencies have partnered to fund restorations and invasive species removal. SWCD staff are dedicated to finding funding from sources other than the ENRTF for the necessary restoration, invasive species removal and future maintenance of easements. Under this application, \$105,000 is budgeted for restoration based on \$350/acre for 300 acres. This cost per acre is based on past experience and consultation with contractors.

B. Timeline Requirements

Three years is required to do the easement processing and to complete any restoration work funded through this grant. We expect all easements will be recorded by 6/30/2016. Management and restoration will not be conducted until easements have been recorded. There are several vendors who conduct prescribed burning, invasive species control, and tree removal. Vendor schedules and weather can create delays in completing work.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

Granite Rock Outcrops are rare and unique landscape features found along the Minnesota River Corridor. Because of their uniqueness, they are home to many rare, endangered and threatened species of flora and fauna. The Rock Outcrop Easement Program was developed by local SWCDs in response to requests from landowners and County Commissioners. The program offers landowners a choice between protection and exploitation. SWCD's are committed by RIM policy to assist landowners on long-term management of their easements. All the land protected by the rock outcrop easements are located in the Minnesota Prairie Plan's core area, therefore the likelihood of management assistance in the future is expected to be high.

2014 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET for a 3 year period

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: The participating SWCD offices will be paid \$3,000/easement for easement promotion, travel, easement processing and for developing conservation plans and working with landowners and contractors on restoration and/or invasive species removal (\$3,000 X 21 = \$63,000). Also budgeted is \$5,000 to Renville SWCD for Project Manager duties including recordkeeping and reporting.	\$ 68,000
BWSR processes easements on behalf of the State of Minnesota. Per their policy, they receive \$5,000/easement (\$5,000 X 21 = \$105,000) to develop and process all paperwork associated with easement processing and to reimburse the local SWCD for the cost of title insurance, legal fees and recording fees. In addition, their policy requires \$2,400/easement to cover payments to the local SWCD for 12 required site inspections on each easement (\$2,400 X 21 = \$50,400)	\$ 155,400
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): Twenty (21) perpetual conservation easements protecting 733.69 acres of Granite Rock Outcrop ecosystem located in eight counties in the Upper Minnesota River Valley. Cost per acre based on BWSR RIM payment rates dated September 2012.	\$ 3,887,875
Additional Budget Items: Site Restoration and invasive species removal on 300 acres at \$350/acre.	\$ 105,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 4,216,275

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: With past grants, we have secured restoration, maintenance and invasive species removal funds from the USF&WS, Local sportsmens groups, Pheasants Forever, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.	Based on need	<i>Pending</i>
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Staff in all eight partner counties will make application for any appropriate BWSR grant funds to be used on these projects. In the past the Native Buffer Cost-Share program was used. This program is no longer available but there are numerous competitive grant programs we can utilize as the need arises.	Based on need	<i>Pending</i>
In-kind Services During Project Period: DNR staff & others began scoring applications as they were submitted. Initial scoring is completed and the scoring team will make site visits to the eight counties to complete the process. Budget amount based on four employees X five days at \$30/hr. (40 hrs/employee X 4 employees = 160 hours X \$30)	\$ 4,800	<i>Secured</i>
Funding History: ML 2007 5(b) perpetually protected 212.4 acres at a total cost of \$563,000. ML 2009 4(h) perpetually protected 560.4 acres at a cost of \$1,442,119 and ML 2010 4(e) protected 748.4 acres at a cost of \$1,790,379. Total acres protected 1,521.2. Total funds expended \$3,795,498. There are no funds remaining.	\$ -	completed

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List**

Project Title: Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem
Project Manager Name: Tom Kalahar, Renville SWCD Technician
ENRTF \$ Request: \$4,185,875

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		County	Estimated Cost	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
		Latitude	Longitude								
1	Starr	44.612843	-95.169761	Redwood	\$ 145,985.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	30.1		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
2	Flaata	44.665719	-95.331256	Redwood	\$ 32,436.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	6.8		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
3	Gaasch	44.544662	-94.977817	Renville	\$ 112,953.60	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	19.2		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
4	Grannes, M	44.681625	-95.322933	Redwood	\$ 35,775.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	7.5		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
5	Ross	44.694335	-95.350674	Redwood	\$ 152,640.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	32		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
6	Moritz	44.591249	-95.142534	Redwood	\$ 445,715.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	91.9		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
7	Grannes, O	44.660282	-95.296242	Redwood	\$ 59,625.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	12.5		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
8	Clark	44.918644	-95.69236	Chippewa	\$ 103,243.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	21.5		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
9	Eckstein	44.303171	-94.426586	Nicollet	\$ 164,424.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	25.5		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
10	Kanne	44.55741	-95.012945	Renville	\$ 173,316.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	31.2		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
11	Sannerud	44.785662	-95.520882	Yellow Medicine	\$ 23,212.80	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	4.68		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
12	Frommel	44.787921	-95.541551	Yellow Medicine	\$ 194,233.60	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	39.16		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
13	Monson	44.810658	-95.575599	Yellow Medicine	\$ 158,632.65	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	32.85		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
14	Meyer	44.813755	-95.571974	Yellow Medicine	\$ 33,513.26	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	6.94		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
15	Westby	44.663877	-95.263999	Renville	\$ 422,134.70	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	73.3		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
16	Nedrud	44.842956	-95.605887	Yellow Medicine	\$ 32,837.20	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	6.8		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
17	Dolezal	44.595792	-95.113161	Renville	\$ 1,089,012.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	192.3		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
18	Lindblad	44.915097	-95.727835	Yellow Medicine	\$ 50,366.47	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	10.43		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
19	Hayes	44.622775	-95.164623	Renville	\$ 155,451.80	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	25.9		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
20	Grannes, M(2)	44.685233	-95.326869	Redwood	\$ 112,572.00	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	23.6		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
21	Carter	44.820999	-95.554805	Yellow Medicine	\$ 190,280.42	Granite Rock Outcrop	Easement	39.53		Private Landowner	State of MN RIM - BWSR
Totals					\$ 3,888,359.50			733.69			

NOTES: These landowners have already submitted applications. All sites qualify for the program and all are considered by local SWCD staff to be priority areas. Total easement cost is the amount needed to pay lando



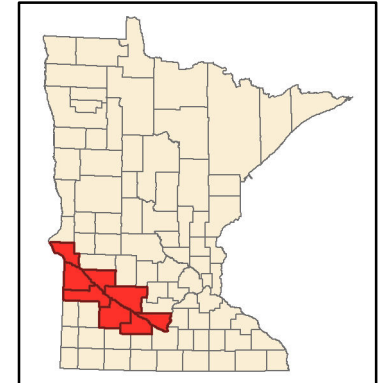
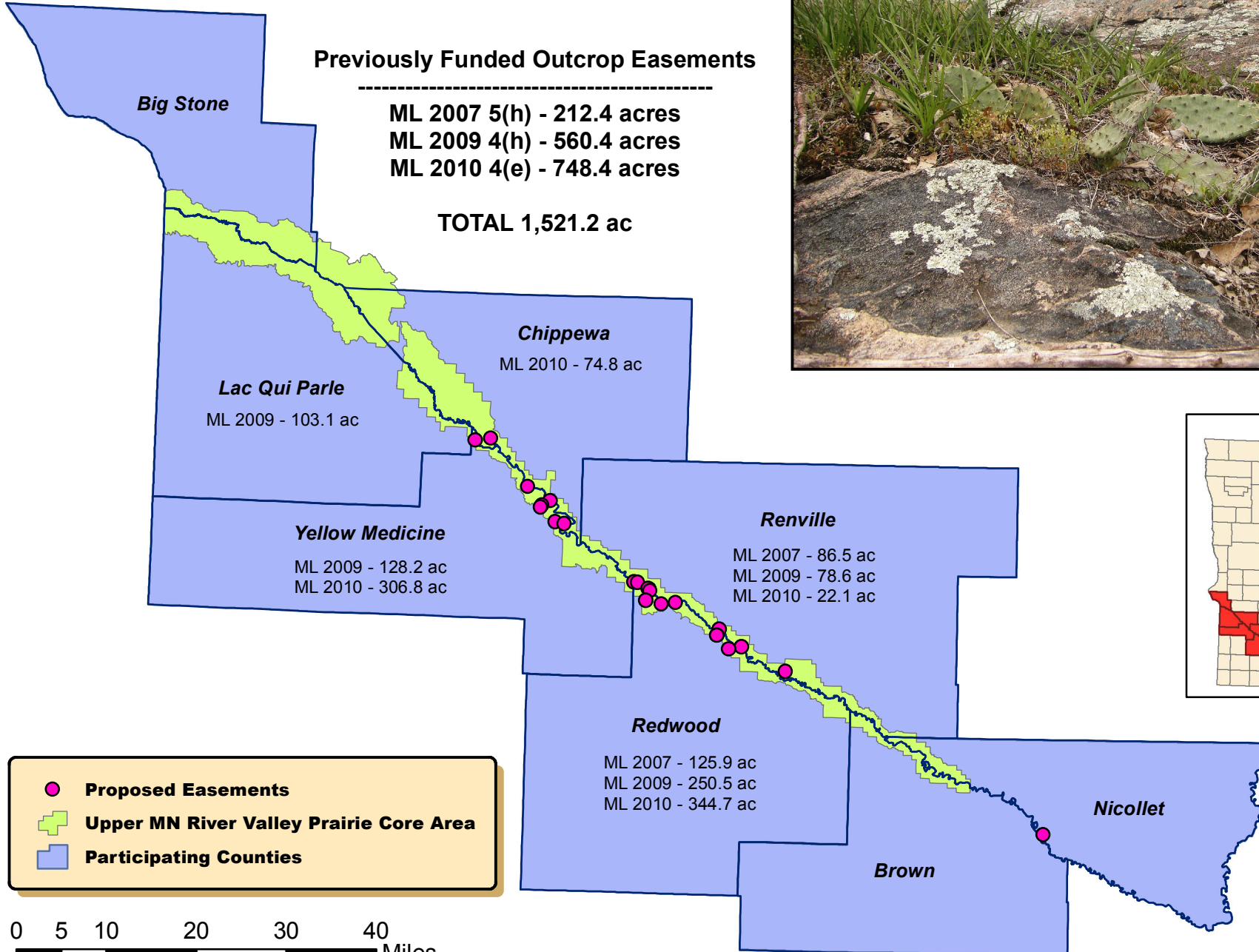
Granite Rock Outcrop Easement Proposal



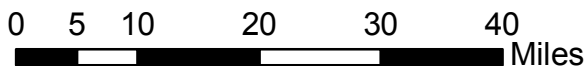
Previously Funded Outcrop Easements

ML 2007 5(h) - 212.4 acres
ML 2009 4(h) - 560.4 acres
ML 2010 4(e) - 748.4 acres

TOTAL 1,521.2 ac



- Proposed Easements
- Upper MN River Valley Prairie Core Area
- Participating Counties



LCCMR Proposal 2014

Renville Soil & Water Conservation District

Protection of Granite Rock Outcrop Ecosystem

Project Manager: Thomas J. Kalahar, District Technician, Renville Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Olivia MN

Tom Kalahar has 34 years of experience as a technician at the Renville SWCD. His experience includes administration of the State of Minnesota easement programs since their inception in the late 80's. Renville SWCD has over 400 recorded easements funded by the RIM, PWP & CREP programs. Tom has carried the bulk of the responsibilities for promoting the easements, doing the easement processing, as well as, working with landowners on practice implementation and long-term maintenance. He has worked extensively with the easement staff at the Board of Water & Soil Resources. He has a good working relationship with the Redwood, Yellow Medicine, Chippewa, and Lac qui Parle, Big Stone, Nicollet and Brown SWCD staff who also have extensive experience with easement promotion and processing.

Tom will be the lead staff person in promotion, administration, and implementation of the grant. He will oversee any staff working with landowners and with the overall easement process.

Organization Description: Renville Soil & Water Conservation District is a Local Unit of Government which employs three full-time technicians and an administrative assistant. All of the employees have a solid understanding of natural resources, as well as, conservation easement program management. The SWCD Staff & the five elected Supervisors are committed to conserving the natural resources of Renville County and are committed to working with other Soil & Water Conservation Districts and with local, state and federal agencies to preserve and enhance the natural resources of the State of Minnesota.

