

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2017 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 173-G

Dakota County Natural Area Protection and Restoration

Category: G. Land Acquisition, Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 600,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2017 - June 2020

Summary:

Achieving Dakota County's land conservation vision continues, with focus on land acquisition, water resource protection and restoration projects, guided by approved plans, extensive land cover data, successful programs and partnerships.

Name: Lisa West

Sponsoring Organization: Dakota County

Address: 14955 Galaxie Ave
Apple Valley MN 55124

Telephone Number: (952) 891-7018

Email lisa.west@co.dakota.mn.us

Web Address www.co.dakota.mn.us

Location

Region: Southeast

County Name: Dakota

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Representative Land Acquisition and Restoration Project Location Map

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



PROJECT TITLE: MeCC 10: Dakota County Natural Area Protection and Restoration

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

This project is a continuation of Dakota County’s work to achieve its comprehensive land conservation vision through successful acquisition and restoration programs and partnerships that have resulted in the protection of more than 10,800 acres since 2003. Dakota County’s abundant natural resources, including major bordering rivers (Minnesota, Mississippi and Cannon), and interior rivers, streams, and scattered lakes, including designated trout streams (Vermillion River and Trout Brook) continue to be impacted by agricultural use and residential development. The project will protect an estimated four to eight properties, ranging in size from 15 to 40 acres, for an estimated total of 120 acres of priority natural areas through acquisition of fee title or permanent conservation easements from willing landowners throughout the County. Focus areas will include: the rivers and streams bordering and traversing the County and their tributaries; lakes and wetlands; and unique features, habitats, and other sensitive areas throughout the County, including woodlands, wildlife corridors, geologic structures, and wellhead protection areas. Natural Resource Management Plans and baseline Property Reports will be completed for all permanent conservation easements and approximately 120 acres of protected property will be restored/enhanced.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Acquisition of Land or Conservation Easements **Budget:** \$300,000

The completed, LCCMR-funded Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan and Vermillion River Corridor Plan, as well as up-to-date Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) data, and state-of-the-art County Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping and data provide the basis for land protection throughout the County. The plans integrate and prioritize the combined protection and improvement of water quality, wildlife habitat and appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities; and MLCCS and GIS data and information are used to refine and target high-quality focus areas. A system of established criteria is used to evaluate and rank projects. Permanent conservation easements do not require public access, but projects including some level of public access receive higher scores. County-held conservation easements are one tool to permanently protect land, natural resources and wildlife habitat. The County also acquires fee title to land outside its park system for natural resource habitat and potential recreational purposes, and partners with other entities, such as the Minnesota DNR, to acquire and transfer ownership for ongoing state management. Projects are identified through an annual application process, along with ongoing, unanticipated opportunities from willing sellers.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Permanent protection of an estimated four to eight properties totaling an estimated 120 acres of high priority natural resource lands through fee title or permanent conservation easement acquisitions.	June 30, 2020

Activity 2: Natural Resource Management Documents and Restoration **Budget:** \$300,000

All permanent conservation easements require a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and baseline Property Report (PR), jointly developed by the County and the landowner. The NRMP and PR describe the current and preferred habitat and other conditions, with recommendations on how to achieve mutual natural resource management goals. A detailed, multi-year work plan, describing priority activities and responsibilities, is completed as a core element of the NRMP. Up to eight projects will require the preparation of these important guidance documents. Additionally, an estimated four to eight projects totaling an estimated 120 acres of previously or newly protected land will be restored or enhanced. Restoration may include initial habitat enhancement to implement multi-year NRMP work plans.



Outcome	Completion Date
1. Completion of NRMPs, PRs, work plans and restoration plans for fee title or easement acquisitions, as appropriate.	June 30, 2020
2. Restoration and enhancement of 120 acres of previously or recently protected land.	June 30, 2020

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This proposal is part of the Metro Conservation Corridors Partnership proposal. Dakota County has used a collaborative approach to its land conservation efforts over the past 13 years. Land and easement acquisitions involve willing sellers – most often acquired on a bargain sale basis. The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization has contributed funds or in-kind services on past projects and is likely to continue its support during this project phase. The eleven townships in the County support ongoing conservation efforts. The Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District and Friends of the Mississippi River are critical partners in providing outreach, technical assistance, document preparation and easement monitoring services. The County has and is working cooperatively with the Minnesota DNR on a number of land acquisition projects, from contributing funds to new or expanded Aquatic Management Areas, Scientific and Natural Areas, and Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), to transferring County-purchased lands for the new Hampton Woods WMA and jointly managing the Vermillion Highlands complex. The Natural Resource Conservation Service has been a critical partner in facilitating the use of over \$12M of federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) funds to the County to acquire permanent easements along waterways each year since 2003. Restoring some of these lands, whether purchased with County and state or County and federal funds, is a focus of the restoration component of this proposal.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

The Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan, the Vermillion River Corridor Plan, and the 2008 Park System Plan provided the foundation for the County’s ambitious, comprehensive, long-term approach to land and water conservation and enhancement, through a vision and strategic implementation plan in 2011. This vision/plan integrates acquisition of: private inholdings and strategic additions to Regional Parks and Park Reserves; new County Park Conservation Areas; development of a 200-mile, multi-purpose (wildlife habitat, water quality and recreation) greenway system, with nearly all of the cities in the County; expanding and enhancing riparian and lakeshore buffers beyond statutory requirements; and protecting and restoring priority natural areas and agricultural areas, with additional water quality and wildlife habitat benefits. In addition, the County is in the process of developing a Natural Resource Management System Plan for existing parks, greenways and conservation easements totaling nearly 14,600 acres. This project will allow the County to continue protecting and restoring remaining unprotected and non/under-managed priority areas as part of its long-term vision. The County’s conservation efforts benefit its communities, but also reach beyond its borders as more and more non-residents seek outdoor experiences in Dakota County.

C. Timeline Requirements

Although the County has well-developed programs, processes and capabilities, the application process involving willing sellers, and the many complexities of acquisition projects will require three years to complete the acquisition projects. Completion of required natural resource management documents will also generally follow the three-year timeline. Initial restoration and longer-term restoration and enhancement projects on lands previously protected through County programs with partial state or federal funding will require three years.

2017 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: MeCC 10: Dakota County Natural Area Protection and Restoration

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET: 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	
Contracts will be for to-be-determined private, local government, and non-profit entities to plan and implement restoration/enhancement activities on an estimated 120 acres of public or private land already or soon-to-be owned or protected by a permanent conservation easement. Services will include completion of Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMP) and associated Property Reports for easements. RFPs will be issued if necessary.	\$ 64,000
Contracts will be for to-be-determined private, local government, and non-profit entities to plan and implement restoration/enhancement activities on an estimated 120 acres of public or private land already or soon-to-be owned or protected by a permanent conservation easement. Services will be based on priorities within the NRMP and Landowner Agreements and include a wide variety of natural resource management activities, equipment and supplies. RFPs will be issued if necessary.	\$ 236,000
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	
Acquiring an estimated 120 acres in fee title or through permanent conservation easements, including acquisition, appraisal and closing costs. Public ownership will be held by Dakota County or the State, and permanent conservation easements will be held by Dakota County.	\$ 300,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 600,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$ 600,000	<i>Secured</i>
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$ -	<i>NA</i>
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$ 168,000	<i>Pending</i>
Unknown landowner land value donation and time contributions as specified in NRMP Landowner Agreements		<i>Pending</i>
Funding History:	\$ 2,164,465	
ENRTF for ML 2013-MeCC VII: Dakota County Lakeshore and Riparian Protection	\$ 368,000	
ENRTF for ML 2011-MeCC VI: Dakota County Lakeshore and Riparian Protection	\$ 1,035,000	
ENRTF for ML 2008: Vermillion River Corridor Plan	\$ 509,965	
ENRTF for ML 2000: Implementing Dakota County Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan	\$ 51,500	
ENRTF for ML 1999: Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan	\$ 200,000	
Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation:	\$ 263,069	<i>Obligated</i>

Project Title: MeCC 10: Dakota County Natural Area Protection and Restoration

Project Manager Name: Lisa West

Organization: Dakota County

ENRTF \$ Request: \$300,000

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates		Estimated Cost	County	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
		Latitude	Longitude								
Acquisition											
1	1. Vermillion River				Dakota	Designated trout stream					Dakota County
2	2. North, Middle, and South Creeks of Vermillion River				Dakota	Portions of designated trout stream					Dakota County
3	3. South Branch of Vermillion River				Dakota	Portions of designated trout stream					Dakota County
4	4. Chub, Dutch, Mud and Hazelwood Creeks				Dakota	Streams and tributaries with high fish diversity that flow to the Cannon Scenic State River					Dakota County
5	5. Chub Lake				Dakota	Large lake/wetland complex; wildlife habitat					Dakota County
6	6. Cannon River				Dakota	Scenic State River					Dakota County
7	7. Lake Bylesby				Dakota	Part of Scenic State River area					Dakota County
8	8. Darden, Pine and Spring Creeks				Dakota	Streams and tributaries with high fish diversity that flow to the Cannon Scenic State River					Dakota County
9	9. Trout Brook				Dakota	Trout stream					Dakota County
10	10. Wetlands				Dakota	Water quality filtering systems and wildlife habitats					Dakota County
11	11. Woodlands				Dakota	Diverse wildlife habitats					Dakota County or MN DNR
12	12. Unique Features				Dakota	Rare/uncommon/unique natural features					Dakota County
13	13. Sensitive Areas				Dakota	Areas sensitive to groundwater contamination; rare species habitats					Dakota County
<p>NOTES: Project priority will be given to riparian, lakeshore and wetland habitats, significant woodlands, unique natural features and habitats, and sensitive areas throughout Dakota County. Projects would include those on tributaries to the main rivers and creeks listed.</p>											

Project Title: MeCC 10: Dakota County Natural Area Protection and Restoration

Project Manager Name: Lisa West



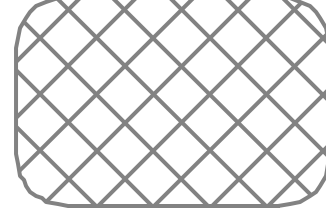

Organization: Dakota County

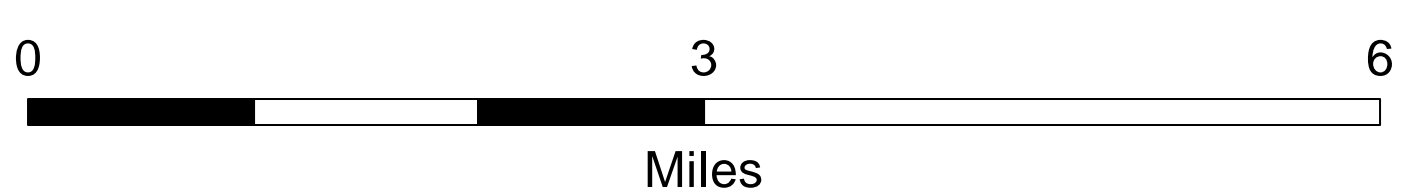
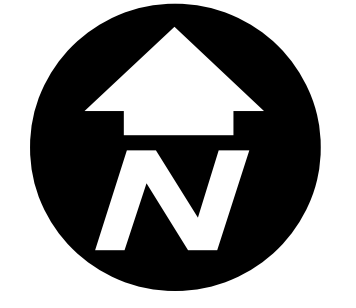
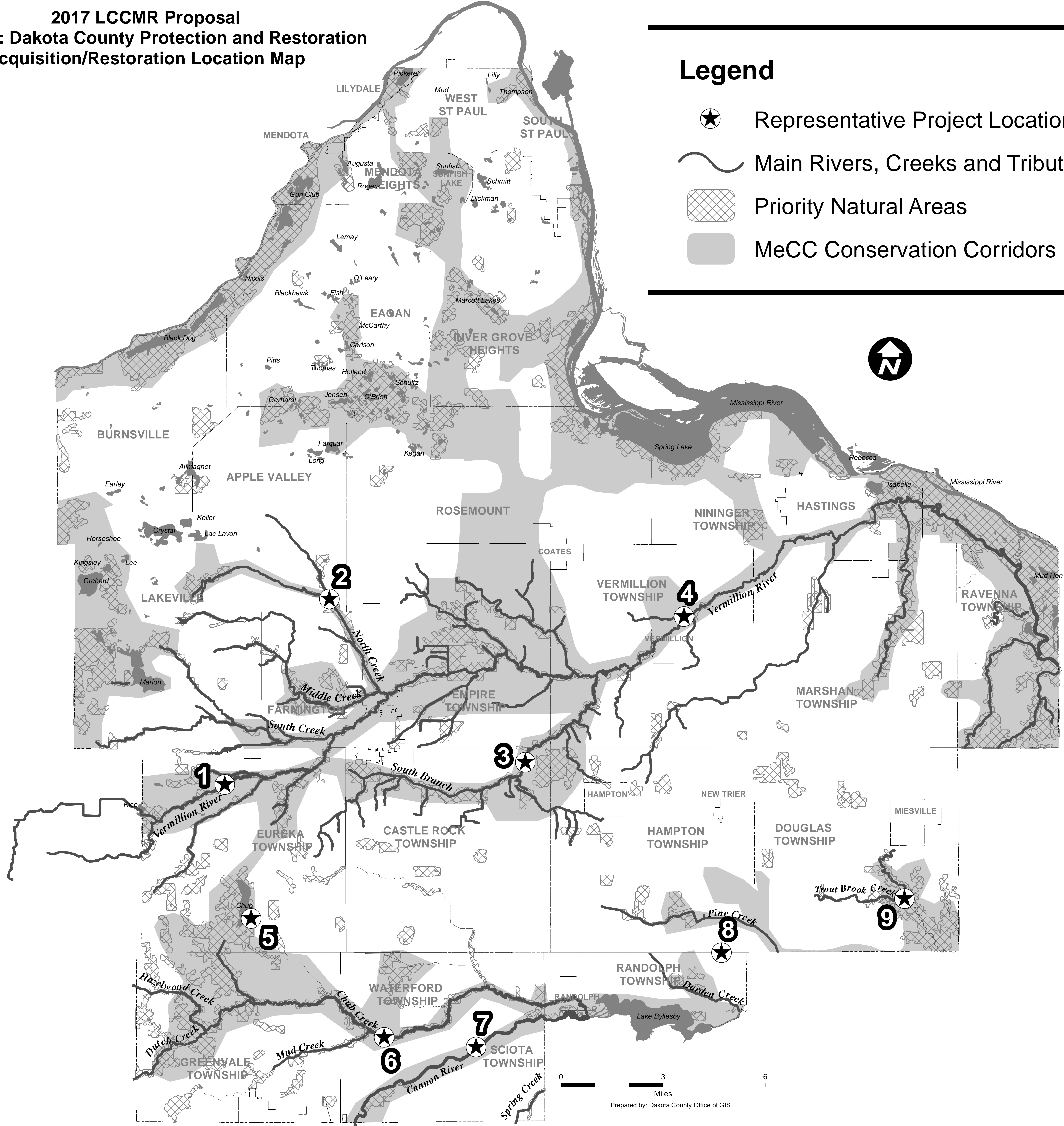
ENRTF \$ Request: \$300,000

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates		Estimated Cost	County	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
		Latitude	Longitude								
Restoration											
1	1. Vermillion River				Dakota	Designated trout stream					Dakota County
2	2. North, Middle, and South Creeks of Vermillion River				Dakota	Portions of designated trout stream					Dakota County
3	3. South Branch of Vermillion River				Dakota	Portions of designated trout stream					Dakota County
4	4. Chub, Dutch, Mud and Hazelwood Creeks				Dakota	Streams and tributaries with high fish diversity that flow to the Cannon Scenic State River					Dakota County
5	5. Chub Lake				Dakota	Large lake/wetland complex; wildlife habitat					Dakota County
6	6. Cannon River				Dakota	Scenic State River					Dakota County
7	7. Lake Byllesby					Part of Scenic State River area					Dakota County
8	8. Darden, Pine and Spring Creeks				Dakota	Streams and tributaries with high fish diversity that flow to the Cannon Scenic State River					Dakota County
9	9. Trout Brook				Dakota	Trout stream					Dakota County
10	10. Wetlands				Dakota	Water quality filtering systems and wildlife habitats					Dakota County
11	11. Woodlands				Dakota	Diverse wildlife habitats					Dakota County or MN DNR
12	12. Unique Features				Dakota	Rare/uncommon/unique natural features					Dakota County
13	13. Sensitive Areas				Dakota	Areas sensitive to groundwater contamination; rare species habitats					Dakota County
<p>NOTES: Project priority will be given to riparian, lakeshore and wetland habitats, significant woodlands, unique natural features and habitats, and sensitive areas throughout Dakota County. Projects would include those on tributaries to the main rivers and creeks listed.</p>											

2017 LCCMR Proposal
MeCC 10: Dakota County Protection and Restoration
Acquisition/Restoration Location Map

Legend

-  Representative Project Locations
-  Main Rivers, Creeks and Tributaries
-  Priority Natural Areas
-  MeCC Conservation Corridors



Prepared by: Dakota County Office of GIS

Project Manager Qualifications for Lisa West

2005 to Present Dakota County Senior Project Manager

- Administer, coordinate and lead current land conservation efforts under Land Conservation Manager, including expending or committing nearly \$20M of County funds to permanently protect more than 10,000 acres, with a value of \$100 million as an outcome of two successive LCMR-funded projects in 1999 and 2001.
- Lead easement and fee title acquisitions, including project management, appraisal review, landowner negotiations, County Board approval, project finalization and closings
- Prepare cost estimates and budget use of County, state and past federal grant funding
- Lead and coordinate multi-department/division/agency staff groups to complete projects and implement programs
- State Grant Project Manager – multi-project grant writing, submittal, amendments, administration and reporting, including: ENRTF ML 2011 and 2013; and LSOHC ML 2012, 2013, and 2014.
- Past annual federal grants – multi-project grant writing, submittals, and administration for Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

1999 to 2005 Dakota County Senior Planner

- Completed County Environment and Natural Resource Chapter of Comprehensive Plan
- Completed Vermillion River Watershed Plan
- Completed County Watershed Governance Study Report
- Completed two County Groundwater Protection Plans
- Prepared approved joint powers agreement to Cannon River Joint Powers Board
- Prepared successful plan and general budget for Cannon River Joint Powers Board for State funding
- Prepared successful Minnesota Board of Government Innovation and Cooperation (BGIC) grant application for Vermillion River Watershed governance study
- Managed innovation grant study progress and report preparation; prepared and submitted grant reports to BGIC Facilitated County Aggregate Task Force; completed and presented final report
- Former County Feedlot Pollution Control Officer
- Chair of Cannon River Joint Powers Board Technical Committee and liaison to the Joint Powers Board
- Established governing and financing structures for the Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization

1993 to 1999 Dakota County Environmental Specialist

- Completed two Solid Waste Master Plans for the County
- Developed County Hauler Financial Incentive Payment Program
- Chaired multi-county Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board Technical Committee

1990 to 1993 Dakota County Resource Recovery Analyst

- Responsible for permitting and other work associated with the multi-million dollar waste-to-energy facility proposed by the County.

1989 to 1990 HDR Engineering, Inc. Environmental Specialist

- Project management: permitting Hennepin County waste transfer station facilities
- Project management: preparing Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessment Worksheets

Organization Description

Dakota County is Local Government Unit bordered by the Minnesota, Mississippi and Cannon Rivers with almost the entire Vermillion River located within in its boundaries. Nearly 400,000 people live in the County that is comprised of 14 fully developed and developing suburbs; 6 small, rural towns; and 13 mostly rural townships.

The County adopted a comprehensive land conservation vision that includes: the regional park system; a 200-mile greenway system that integrates water quality, wildlife habitat and recreation; natural area protection throughout the County, with a focus on rivers, streams and undeveloped lakeshore; and farmland protection. The County's vision is supported by: its Farmland and Natural Area Protection Plan, partially funded by a LCMR grant; its Vermillion River Corridor Plan, partially funded by a LCCMR grant; and the ongoing land conservation programs that began implementing these plans in 2002.