**PROJECT TITLE: Web-based Natural Resource Information Network Model**

1. **PROJECT STATEMENT**

The overall goal of this collaborative project is to create a web-based application and network that will serve as a model for natural resource information collection, management and sharing within and across partner organizations with increased access by the general public and private landowners. Specifically, this project will initially focus on natural resource information for Dakota, Hennepin and Washington counties.

Easily accessible, up-to-date, relevant, comprehensive, and reliable information is critical for planning, prioritizing, implementing, and assessing natural resource protection and restoration projects. Natural resources, watersheds, and parks often transcend political boundaries while adjoining counties and cities usually have different information systems, different levels and types of information, and varied capacity to share data with each other. Although there is growing availability of publically supported natural resource data, there is limited capacity for natural resource professionals to access and share proprietary and other datasets imperative for natural resource planning and prioritization. The general public and private landowners often cannot access or contribute to this information. The expanding number of natural resource-oriented web-sites provides important general information, but these sites and links could potentially be utilized in a more effective manner.

Partners will assess the available natural resource information to prioritize information needs and sources and identify gaps. Partners will determine the technological feasibility and options to effectively utilize/link information sources for both internal county use and external use by cities, townships, SWCDs, watershed districts, schools, organizations, general public and consultants,. Key components will be internally managing data to track and assess natural resource restoration efforts and facilitate increased citizen science efforts to utilize and contribute important, contemporary information. Protocols and policies for collecting and distributing information with necessary security measures, robust analytic opportunities, and a governance and sustainable operational model for long-term network viability will be developed.

Dakota, Hennepin, and Washington counties were chosen as the framework for the network since they represent diverse and complex landscapes, have demonstrated conservation leadership, have proven capacity and experience, often coordinate, and are responsible for broad natural resource planning and implementation efforts.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

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| **Activity 1 Title: Inventory and Complete Gap Analysis of Existing Natural Resource Information****Description:**Partners will inventory and assess available natural resource information, sources, and platforms to compile a collective inventory. Gaps, conflicts, and issues will be identified. Information types and sources will be prioritized. A contractor will be hired to assess existing natural resource websites to determine feasibility of information-sharing and technological considerations. Preliminary recommendations will be developed and shared with selected potential users for refinement.**Activity 2 Title: Technological Design Development** **Description:** Contracted software designers will be hired todesign an information network that meets the preferred requirements of the three counties for archiving, inputting, updating, securing, accessing, and sharing information across potential user groups.**Activity 3 Title: Develop Policies, Protocols and Governance for New Network****Description:** Partners will inventoryexisting website policies and information protocols for collecting updating, managing, and sharing information, including linkages to selected websites; and providing information for different purposes and different users. Governance and operational options for maintaining the network will be developed, evaluated and established. **Activity 4 Title: Launch, Test and Implement New Network****Description:** The recommended network model will be beta-tested internally, refined and then tested externally among selected users and web sites for use and evaluated for necessary refinements.**ENRTF BUDGET: $400,000** |  |

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| **Outcomes** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Inventory and Gap Analysis of Existing Natural Resource Information
 | *December 31, 2020* |
| 2. Technological Design and Testing | *March 31, 2023* |
| 3. Network Policies, Protocols and Governance  | *March 31, 2023* |
| 4. Network Model Established | *June 30, 2023* |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

 Carpenter Nature Center

 Dodge Nature Center

 Hennepin County

 Three Rivers Park District

 Washington Conservation District

**IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:**

Until the network is designed, implemented and evaluated, it is difficult at this time to determine the most

 effective operator and operational needs, including funding for maintaining or even expanding the network.

 If the model proves to be successful, it may be more feasible to be operated by or for the State. There may

 also be opportunities to utilize data analytics to generate operational revenue.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet**

**F. Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description**

**G. Letter or Resolution**