**PROJECT TITLE:** *St. Croix**Terrestrial Invasive Species Awareness, Prevention, and Control*

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

This project will prevent the introduction and reduce the spread of terrestrial invasive species (TIS) that threaten ecological, economic, and recreational integrity of the St. Croix River watershed.The St. Croix River Association will coordinate a comprehensive approach to long-term regional TIS management across Washington, Chisago, Pine, Kanabec and Carlton counties.We will engage, educate, and empower professionals and private landowners to take action against the devastating effects caused by TIS such as riparian erosion; loss of native habitat, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity; diminished value of public and private lands; and degraded working lands.

By establishing a regional partnership of stakeholders among watershed counties, this project will build regional capacity, capitalize on available resources, and facilitate cross-county communication for collaboration and prioritization. We will educate private landowners and other key stakeholders to raise awareness of the threats and impacts of TIS while addressing alternative control techniques. We will also expand the resources, services and methods available to private landowners and increase local professional capacity for TIS management and restoration, enabling and empowering landowners to take action on their properties.

The native ecosystems of the St. Croix watershed remain largely intact, but are under increasing threat from TIS encroaching from more developed areas and spreading along the Riverway and its tributaries. High rates of private landownership, various pathways of introduction, inconsistent local capacity, and limited landscape-level coordination further intensify this threat. Regional coordination efforts have proven successful models for controlling TIS at a landscape-scale, but are absent within Minnesota’s St. Croix basin. The St. Croix River Association is uniquely posed to fill this gap and coordinate TIS management across county boundaries, filling a much-needed niche for TIS engagement, education, and assistance for private landowners.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1:** *Minnesota St. Croix River Watershed Partner Coordination*

**Budget: $36,000**

The St. Croix River Association will establish and facilitate a coordinated effort by key stakeholders, including local, regional, and state agencies and nonprofit organizations, to address regional TIS. This team will collaborate on TIS planning, outreach, and control prioritization to maximize TIS awareness, prevention, and management. Annual reports will share changes in invasive species distributions, identify opportunities for growth and increased capacity, and summarize outreach activities, upcoming events, and other accomplishments.

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Recruit local, regional, and state stakeholders for coordinated TIS planning, prioritization and management efforts*  | *6/30/2021* |
| *2. Facilitate quarterly partner meetings* *to share information regarding emerging TIS threats, available resources, education opportunities and management efforts* | *12/31/2023* |
| *3. Create and disseminate information on progress and outcomes (ie. Annual Reports)* | *12/31/2023* |

**Activity 2:** *Targeted Outreach and Education*

**Budget: $76,800**

The St. Croix River Association will educate landowners about the threats of TIS and provide resources to enable them to take management action. Outreach efforts will include targeted campaigns to prioritized landowners, educational workshops, and field trainings. These efforts will result in increased TIS awareness, detection, prevention, and control activities by landowners in priority areas across the watershed.

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Develop and distribute targeted outreach campaigns focused on the identification and impacts of priority species; provide available resources to up to 3,000 landowners.* | *11/30/2022* |
| *2. Host at least three regional workshops* *to educate landowners and key stakeholders on identification, impacts, management alternatives and restoration for priority species* | *9/30/2023* |
| *3. Host at least three field trainings to educate landowners and stakeholders about TIS obligations, impacts, identification, management and restoration.*  | *10/30/2023* |

**Activity 3:** *Increase Resources for Terrestrial Invasive Species Management by Private Landowners*

**Budget: $79,140**

The St. Croix River Association will build professional capacities to assist with TIS management and increase the TIS resources available to landowners. By collaborating with agency partners to train local professionals to integrate invasive species considerations into existing land and conservation planning tools, we will increase the management options and resources available to landowners. Where existing planning mechanisms are not available to prioritized landowners, SCRA will offer TIS assessments to help landowners identify present TIS, weigh management options and plan for restoration activities. This work will identify existing gaps in landowner services and help generate long-term solutions and models for landowner assistance.

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Host at least two continuing education workshops to teach local professionals and stakeholders about landowners about TIS obligations and significance is created* | *04/30/2021* |
| *2. Connect at least 100 landowners to local TIS-trained professionals for plans or projects with TIS considerations* | *11/30/2022* |
| *3. Deliver at least 30 TIS assessments to prioritized landowners, outlining present TIS, management recommendations, and available resources and professional contacts* | *11/30/2023* |
| *4. Facilitate implementation of at least 10 TIS assessments by prioritized landowners* | *9/30/2023* |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**
*Project Partner Receiving Funds:* The St. Croix River Association

*Project Partners/Collaborators Not Receiving Funds* (All will provide technical support and implement strategies):

* National Park Service at the St. Croix National Science Riverway
* Washington County Conservation District
* Additional local, state, and federal agency, nonprofit organization, and other partners will be sought

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

In the long term, this St. Croix terrestrial invasive species program will protect, improve, and restore native ecosystems and biodiversity in the St. Croix River watershed. By developing a lasting community awareness, adopting innovative management approaches, and increasing regional capacity for TIS prevention and control, we can empower both key stakeholders and landowners to take action in the long-term protection of public and private lands. These efforts will all either integrate into existing funded programs, or aim to establish community commitment to ensure longevity beyond the funding period. This project has potential to be highly visible to the public, and if successful, could be duplicated in other Minnesota landscapes.