**PROJECT TITLE: Pollinator & Beneficial Insect Strategic Habitat Program**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

Dramatic declines of bees, butterflies, dragonflies and other beneficial insects that support our ecosystems and food systems have been raising significant alarm amongst scientists and conservation professionals both locally and globally. The *Pollinator and Beneficial Insect Strategic Habitat Program* proposed here will build a new BWSR initiative to restore and enhance approximately 1000 acres of diverse native habitat over 100 projects strategically located across Minnesota. Project placement and seed mix design will be tailored to address the habitat needs of a wide diversity of insects, including at-risk species. This program will align with the Governor’s new pollinator executive order (EO 19-28), address several habitat goals and recommendations of the Governor’s Committee on Pollinator Protection (including GCPP recommendations 1.1 and 1.2), and help attain goals of the Interagency Pollinator Protection Team.

**Program and Project Types**: Funding through this new initiative will be distributed through BWSR’s Cost-share process and a competitive grant RFP. Eligible projects will include public lands or private lands with a public investment, including existing RIM easements, CRP, city parks, county parks, and protected natural areas. Projects will focus on:

**1)** establishing new floral rich plots or riparian plantings 0.5 to 5 acres in size and/or

**2**) enhancing prairie, savanna, wetland, and shoreline communities that provide high value habitat. Projects will be planned to benefit a variety of beneficial insects in need of habitat improvements, including at-risk species (e.g., rusty-patched bumblebees), and other declining insect guilds (e.g., dragonflies, native bees, butterflies).

**Project Selection/ranking**: Project areas will be selected based on The Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan, Minnesota’s Wildlife Action Plan, pollinator habitat mapping, and range maps of at-risk species. Within these areas, sites will be selected based on size, protection from pesticide drift, proximity to other permanently protected habitat and riparian areas, and likelihood of project success. Regional ranking criteria/assessment forms will be developed, and technical experts around the state will assist with the ranking of projects, aligning funding with conservation programs, identifying matching funds, and working with landowners.

**Standards:** New pollinator–beneficial Insect conservation plans will be developed to establish diverse, local ecotype vegetation that benefits priority insect species and protects and restores natural plant communities.

**Outreach:** Four regional pollinator habitat workshops with Xerces Society and local conservation partners will be held and new pollinator-beneficial technical information will be added to BWSR’s Pollinator Toolbox. “Success Information” will be requested from practitioners working with the funding and this information along with featured case studies will be added to BWSR’s “What’s Working” webpage.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity 1:**Develop project ranking criteria and pollinator-beneficial insect conservation plan templates, conduct four regional pollinator workshops.  **ENRTF BUDGET: $59,000** | |  |
| **Outcome:** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Assemble an advisory team from DNR, TNC, SWCDs, USFWS, Xerces Society, Pheasants Forever, and other conservation partners to guide program development, combine available habitat maps, and develop regional project ranking criteria. | *December 2020* |
| *2.* Collaborate with Xerces Society to develop two pollinator – beneficial insect conservation plan templates, one for new habitat installations, and one for enhancement/management of existing habitat, based on Xerces’ existing habitat guidance. | *January 2021* |
| *3.* Collaborate with Xerces Society on four regional pollinator workshops to present program requirements, best practices and new conservation plan templates. | *December 2021* |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity 2:**Restore and enhance approximately 1000 acres across 100 sites on conservation lands.  **ENRTF BUDGET: $720,000** | |
| **Outcome:** | **Completion Date** | |
| *1.* SWCDs or their designees develop pollinator-beneficial insect conservation plans/conservation plan updates for awarded projects on protected lands. | *December 2021* | |
| *2.* Conduct site preparation, planting and management of projects with the goal of establishing and maintaining high diversity plantings. | *April 2022-*  *January 2023* | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity 3:**Assess disseminate results, findings, and best practices.  **ENRTF BUDGET: $1,500** | |
| **Outcome:** | **Completion Date** | |
| *1.* Assemble the advisory team to discuss results of project assessments, successes of the program, areas of improvement, and next steps to continue refining the grant program and pursuing additional funding sources. | *April 2023* | |
| *2.* Add ENRTF signage at all project sites | *June 2023* | |
| *3.* Document successful planning, design, installation and management strategies and case studies on BWSR’s “What’s Working” webpage. | *June 2023* | |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

**Partners receiving ENRTF funding**

* BWSR (Grant Coordination) (14% FTE)
* Xerces Society (Plant template development and workshop assistance)

**Partners not receiving ENRTF funding**

* Redwood SWCD, Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
* Advisory Team Members: BWSR’s Senior Ecologist, SWCD Conservation Specialists, BWSR Easement Program Staff, State Pollinator Coordinator, DNR’s Invertebrate Ecologist, Xerces Habitat Specialists and TNC, USFWS and Pheasants Forever staff.

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

This proposal enhances existing investments in long-term conservation as part of a solution to the decline of at-risk species and other important insects. The project will develop and implement plans that will guide the long-term management and monitoring of protected lands. Once the new BWSR program is established BWSR will pursue other funding sources for the program such federal grants and foundation funding.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet**

**B. Pollinator-Beneficial Insect Graphic**

**D. ENRTF Project Requirements for Restoration**

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