**PROJECT TITLE: Water Quality, Habitat, and Recreational Improvements to Whiskey Creek and Mississippi River, Baxter, MN**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

Project will purchase 13.8 acres and construct water quality, habitat, and recreational improvements to protect the Mississippi River from contaminants in the 400-acre, highly impervious, Trunk Highway 371 watershed in Baxter, Minnesota. A total of 20.6 acres will be converted into a stormwater best management practice (BMP) and a green space enhanced with newly planted pollinator species and recreational trail connections. The Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB), in association with the City of Baxter (the City) and other stakeholders, will:

* Remove nearly four tons of phosphorus and 512 tons of sediment in water discharging to the Mississippi River over the next 20 years.
* Protect the Mississippi River drinking water supply used by almost 20% of Minnesotans1.
* Plant pollinator-friendly native plants that reduce runoff and absorb excess nutrients in stormwater.
* Provide flood control and damage prevention upstream and downstream of the project area.
* Create a public recreational feature with access to the Paul Bunyan Regional Trail.
* Restore stream banks and instream habitat features of Whiskey Creek.
* Reduce pollutants discharged to the Mississippi River from impervious surfaces of TH 371 travel corridor.

The proposed stormwater BMP will remove phosphates, suspended solids, and other pollutants from the surface water runoff of the watershed area for Whiskey Creek. Out of the 400 miles along the Mississippi River, this watershed has the highest amount of development, with 50% of the land classified as developed and an increase of 208 people per square mile from 2000 to 20103. The 20.6-acre area is the last opportunity to provide these improvements in the 400-acre drainage area. In a study conducted by MHB, this project was ranked 2nd highest for removal of phosphorus out of 59 projects in the region2.The green space will improve land value, create corridor connections to the Paul Bunyan State Regional Trail, and provide protection and connection to the Northland Arboretum.

Restoring the stream banks of Whiskey Creek will improve fish and wildlife habitats while mitigating erosion and flood risks. Terrestrial and aquatic vegetation will be planted to increase habitat for fish, bird, and local wildlife. Educational kiosks will be constructed at key entry points to highlight the area’s natural resources. This project is a proactive effort to protect the Mississippi River made by the stakeholders involved. There are no mandates, regulations, or rules that currently require this project to be completed.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1 Title: Fee Title Acquisition of Parcel, Final Design, Engineering, and Environmental Permitting**

**Description:** MHB will work with the City to execute the City’s purchase agreement for the 13.8 acres, which, in combination with land currently owned by the City, comprises the 20.6 acres. The cost of this purchase includes attorney, survey, county filing, and apportioned taxes. MHB will work with the City to contract out engineering and construction services. Local agencies have partnered with MHB and the City of Baxter to form a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) that will guide the goals for the project, review technical documents, and advise the City during design and construction phases to ensure the project is adhering to permit standards and regulations. This includes the final design plan, environmental permitting, bid specifications, and construction management. This project will remain in compliance with permitting requirements stipulated by local and federal regulatory agencies, including the MNPCA, the MNDNR, the USACE, the City of Baxter, and Crow Wing County. MHB will work with the City to contract out these environmental permitting services.

**ENRTF BUDGET: $635,000**

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Outcome** | **Completion Date** | | 1. *Fee title land purchase of 13.8 acres* | *Summer 2020* | | 1. *Engineering and construction plans, bid specifications* | *Summer 2021* | | 1. *Permit requirements: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, City of Baxter, and Crow Wing County* | *Fall 2021* | |  |

**Activity 2 Title: Conversion of Abandoned Golf Course into Restored Natural Habitat, Green Space, and Water Quality Improvements**

**Description:**20.6 acres will be used to create a stormwater pollution prevention practice and restore natural habitat area. The stormwater pollution prevention practice will reduce storm water pollutants, reduce peak flow rates and reduce flooding. Plug plants, seedlings, and native buffers will be planted in the area after construction to create a natural habitat area for wildlife including fish, birds, and pollinators. Educational kiosks will be placed at key entry points to highlight the importance of protecting natural resources. MHB will work with the City of Baxter to contract out these construction services.

**ENRTF BUDGET: $835,500**

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Construction of Green Infrastructure & Stormwater BMP* | *Spring 2023* |
| *2. Connection of City trail to Paul Bunyan regional trail and installation of*  *educational kiosks* | *Spring 2023* |
| *3. Planting native seed, pollinator species, and native plugs* | *Spring 2023* |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

MHB will be the fiscal agent receiving funds for this project. The City of Baxter and its engineering staff will assist with managing the design and construction of the project. The City will open a public comments period for the project to allow citizens to provide input into the project. Local agencies have partnered together to form a TAP composed of professionals to review technical aspects of the project and make suggestions to ensure the project’s continuing success. The TAP members are anticipated to include MHB, the City of Baxter, the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District, MNPCA, the City of Brainerd, MNDOT, and the Northland Arboretum.

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

The benefits of this project will remain effective at least twenty years before significant maintenance will be required. Minor maintenance such as planting and weeding will be completed by the City. The City will hold the fee title and be the responsible party for the ongoing operation and maintenance of the green space, trail, and stormwater BMP. The City has adequate funding to provide the necessary operations and maintenance for this.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet**

**B. Visual Component or Map**

**C. Parcel List Spreadsheet**

**D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements**

**E. Research Addendum (Not required at proposal submission stage. Required later in process, if proposal is recommended. Staff will provide further information at that time)**

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

**G. Letter or Resolution**

**H. Financial Capacity**