**PROJECT TITLE: Chippewa County Acquisition, Recreation and Education.**

**PROJECT STATEMENT**: Chippewa County will acquire 51 acres of riverine wetland/floodplain forest complex, floodplain and abandoned gravel pits along the MN River southwest of Montevideo. Following acquisition, Chippewa County and partners within the DNR, will develop an implementation plan to protect and expand the ecological benefits the land has to the areas ecosystem. Lastly, portions of the land will be developed to provide recreational access and educational opportunities along the MN River.

The 51 acres to be acquired, plus the adjacent 45 acres of tax forfeited land, provide multiple benefits to numerous native species of fish and wildlife, including nesting, spawning, and feeding, resting, and winter cover. Public ownership of these two parcels would allow for active management of the habitats through partnerships with the MN DNR and the US FWS. Habitat segmentation due to historical diking and abandoned roadways could be mitigated. Future management activities that restore more natural connectivity between the wetlands and the Minnesota River would be beneficial, especially for numerous native fish species that rely on riverine wetlands for numerous life history functions. A Minnesota’s Natural Heritage Information (NHIS) review was completed on January 25, 2019. Within a one-mile radius of the proposed project area, there are 18 documented features including threatened mussel species (mucket, elktoe, spike and fluted-shell) and special concern species (Iowa skipper, creek heelsplitter, black sandshell and round pigtoe).

Both parcels provide water quality benefits to the Minnesota River by filtering water that flows through them. As cumulative impacts of upstream drainage continue to impact water quality in the Minnesota River, any amount of riverine wetlands that can be restored or protected will have cumulative impacts that will help mitigate the impacts of drainage. The filtering value of these wetlands could be enhanced by restoring more natural water pathways through them that have been disrupted by the abandoned roadways, resulting in additional water quality benefits.

These parcels also provide numerous opportunities for environmental learning studies relating to water quality, insects, fish and wildlife, to name just a few. The flow-through nature of the riverine wetland complex provides a unique opportunity to evaluate how wetlands filter nutrients and sediment from water. Water enters the upstream end of the wetland complex from the Minnesota River during high flow events and exits downstream, resulting in improved water quality.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1 Title: Land Acquisition**

**Description:**

This property also provides an important function of water filtration of upland runoff before it flows into the river. Preservation of these filter lands are crucial to improving water quality on the MN River. A management plan will be developed considering the natural benefits of the area and to identify additional practices that could be implemented in the future.

Both of the properties to be acquired became available from willing sellers in an effort to continue the conservation practices currently on their land. Due to the proximity of these properties in relation to the tax forfeited properties adjacent to them, these pieces become part of a much bigger puzzle in the MN River valley.

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| **ENRTF BUDGET: $85,000** | |  |

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Acquire two parcels of land totaling 51 Acres | December 31, 2020 |

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 2 Title: Management Plan and Implementation**

**Description:**

Chippewa County will hire an expert or firm to study the property acquired and develop a long term management plan to protect water quality and benefit the many species native to the specific area. Working with MN DNR Fisheries specialists from Ortonville, the plan will address water quality, spawning and nesting grounds and general ecological concerns. Based on the plan recommendations, projects will be implemented to address the goal.

Contracts for Plan development as well as implementation will be carried out following a competitive bid process.

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| **ENRTF BUDGET: $ 60,000** | |  |

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Develop Plan to manage terrestrial and aquatic habitats to benefit natural heritage features in the area | August 2020 to June 2021 |
| 2. Implementation Projects | June 30, 2022 |

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 3 Title: Recreation**

**Description:**

Chippewa County will, through a competitive bid process, award a contract to construct and install a 40’ long fishing pier with a 30’ long cross dock at the end. This pier will be handicapped accessible and will be installed by the County Highway Department.

Chippewa County will construct a parking area in the most upland portion of the acquired property. The parking area will have access from the adjacent township gravel road and provide space for approximately 10 vehicles. Chippewa County will utilize existing funds in the County Park Reserve fund to pay for the parking lot along with in kind design work from the Chippewa County Highway Department.

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| **ENRTF BUDGET: $15,000** | |  |

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| 1. Fishing Pier | June 30, 2022 |
| 2. Parking Area | June 30,2022 |

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:** MN DNR Fisheries Ortonville, MN DNR Wildlife, Spicer, MN DNR Trails, Spicer, Chippewa County Commissioners, Chippewa County Park Board.

**IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING**: Chippewa County includes an allocation in its annual budget to support the county parks. Long term funding for this area and future development will come from budget allocations of the county and private donations made to the parks.

**V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:**

**A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet** Attachment A

**B. Visual Component or Map** Attachment B

**C. Parcel List Spreadsheet** Attachment C

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

**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 –** Attachment F

**G. Letter or Resolution –** Attachment G

**H. Financial Capacity -**