



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-140

Proposal Title: Redwood County RIM Easement Evaluation and Public Outreach

Project Manager Information

Name: Kristy Zajac

Organization: Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: To inventory vegetation and evaluate wetland condition on permanent conservation easements, and conduct education and outreach regarding prairie and wetland habitats and their management.

Funds Requested: \$197,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2023-06-30

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary Category: Foundational Natural Resource Data and Information (A)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): SW

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): SW

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

Redwood County has 540 RIM easements on 18,661 acres (average date of enrollment - 2004). More than \$1.26 billion in RIM/CREP payments have been paid to landowners, not including associated cost-share. These easements improve water quality, reduce flooding, provide valuable wildlife and pollinator habitat, create biodiversity, and add intrinsic recreational and aesthetic value.

The southern Wet Prairie, Crystalline Bedrock Outcrop (Prairie), and Prairie Wetland complexes are listed by the DNR as imperiled or critically imperiled. Some of these complexes are prioritized in Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan for species such as the Poweshiek skipperling, regal fritillary, and grasshopper sparrow. While the vast majority of the easements were restored, they have not always matched the correct community type and many are lacking proper management. These need to be surveyed to determine reconstruction and management needs. There are regular, scheduled inspections to evaluate compliance with boundaries, noxious weed control, and minimum vegetative requirements, along with evaluating water control structures. Local office staff are not equipped to conduct in-depth evaluations on easement condition or develop long-term management strategies on each easement, certainly not countywide. Perpetual easements need frequent evaluation, proper management, landowner contact, and up-to date maps and conservation plans.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

We are seeking funding for two activities to better develop and manage prairie and wetland easements. First, we are looking to conduct detailed on-site evaluations on select Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easements across the various habitats within Redwood County. Evaluating the plant communities, pollinators, and soil health in these easements will provide baseline information about the condition and quality of the habitat. Results from the surveys will be used to create an easement stewardship plan for each site surveyed and will serve as a template for management plans on other easements within the county.

Secondly, we plan to conduct outreach and training through workshops, site tours, and volunteer activities. We will establish three management demonstration sites within the easements to provide educational opportunities to local residents and general public on the value of restoring and maintaining prairie and wetland habitats. The events will also provide training on specific reconstruction and management techniques for easement-holders. Engaging the public through hands-on activities and published material will raise awareness of the need for restoration and management of prairies and wetlands to improve biodiversity, habitat, water storage, water quality, and recreation.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

The outcomes of easement evaluation will give us a baseline in which to direct future management efforts. Results from the surveys will be included in a Redwood County Easement Stewardship Plan. Additionally, this information will allow us to:

- obtain necessary staff and landowner training to address easement concerns
- identify key sites to enhance the native vegetation and add pollinator plots
- plan large scale tree removal and invasive species control projects across property boundaries
- identify focus areas for future protection
- develop a base of trained local land management contractors
- request additional funds to conduct further management and reconstruction activities

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Redwood County easement habitat surveys and stewardship plan development

Activity Budget: \$93,250

Activity Description:

Great River Greening will conduct a baseline evaluation of vegetative quality, pollinator habitat, and soil health. Over 1,000 acres of permanently-protected easements will be surveyed across Redwood County within the Redwood River and Cottonwood River watersheds. The majority of these easements are restored prairie and wetland plant communities have received little to no management, some within floodplains. Vegetation surveys will include timed meanders using the methods from the University of Minnesota Restoration Evaluation Project Vegetation Monitoring Tool and floral areal cover estimates. Pollinator surveys will follow the same meanders while recording butterfly species and bee morphological groups observed. The U of M Bee Lab will train Great River Greening staff in bee morphological group identification and review the survey results. Soil evaluations will include shallow borings to determine soil type and health within the wetland sites.

The results of the surveys will be used to write a Redwood County Easement Stewardship Plan. The plan will include site descriptions, survey results, and management recommendations for each site and other easements throughout the county. The results will also be used to develop outreach and educational material for the second activity in this project.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Evaluate current pollinator use of easements	2023-05-31
Evaluate soil health and restored wetland condition	2023-05-31
Complete vegetation surveys on easements	2023-05-31
Develop Redwood County Easement Stewardship Plan	2023-06-30

Activity 2: Easement management demonstrations, outreach, and volunteer engagement

Activity Budget: \$103,750

Activity Description:

Three management demonstration sites will be established to engage volunteers and educate attendees about the importance of restoring and managing prairie and wetland communities for habitat, biodiversity, water quality, and water retention. These events will include hands-on educational opportunities. Each site will be selected based on feasibility, results from the field surveys, and landowner agreements.

The first event will focus on demonstrating the surveys taking place in the county. SWCD staff, Great River Greening ecologists, and other partners will lead a site tour on the selected easement to describe the surveys performed and management needed. The second and third events will be volunteer-based demonstration opportunities for attendees to learn management and restoration techniques. The activities will depend on site needs but may include prairie seeding, wetland planting, and cedar removal. There will also be soil borings to compare soil profiles and health across multiple sites.

Finally, Great River Greening will create educational materials based on the easement stewardship plans and the benefits that these habitats provide. The outreach material and research results will also be used to create a webpage about the importance of managing conservation easements and restoring prairie and wetland habitat in southern Minnesota.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Prepare first volunteer event site (demonstration site #2) through cedar removal contract	2021-12-31
Choose three demonstration sites based on feasibility and site evaluations	2022-08-31
First site tour and demonstration	2022-10-31
MN Wildlife Society - Present preliminary findings and outreach efforts	2023-03-31
Create educational material including fact sheets and a webpage based on the easement stewardship plan	2023-06-30
Host two volunteer events at easement demonstration sites	2023-06-30

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Dr. Brad Gordon	Great River Greening	Sub-Award Project Manager - lead vegetation, bee, butterfly, and soil surveys; coordinate volunteer events; develop easement stewardship plan; set up demonstration sites and events	Yes
Dr. Dan Cariveau	University of Minnesota Bee Laboratory	Contract project manager - bee survey consulting; bee identification training; stewardship plan review; demonstration event attendance, assistance, and presentation	Yes

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?

This comprehensive evaluation of select easements will guide future direction for habitat establishment and management. It will allow Redwood County to prioritize areas for future State and Federal funding aid for enhanced development, management, easement acquisition, and fee-title land acquisitions. Outreach efforts will introduce the general public to the value of prairie-wetland habitats and support future easements. Workshops, on-site demonstrations and volunteer days will provide the public an opportunity to learn techniques to properly develop and maintain conservation land. Technical training for easement-holders will allow landowners to better evaluate their easements and conduct, or hire out, development and management activities.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Kristy Zajac

Job Title: Conservation Specialist

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Kristy Zajac is the Conservation Specialist for the Redwood SWCD. She is responsible for enrolling the most CREP III acres of any county in the state. Besides RIM & CREP, Kristy promotes CRP, conducts the MN Buffer Law compliance, and serves as the LGU representative for the MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). She has worked for over 20 years on private lands wildlife habitat development and management. She assists in enrolling all the RIM/CREP easements in Redwood County and works directly with landowners and agencies on the development, management, and monitoring of easements. Additionally, Kristy has been the project manager for several Conservation Partners Legacy grants and an Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund grant for invasive species monitoring on MN Wildlife Management Areas. She partnered with the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) on a 2020 LCCMR grant, "Pollinator and Beneficial Insect Strategic Habitat Program", which is currently recommended for funding this legislative session.

Kristy has a BS in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. Prior to working with the Redwood SWCD, she worked for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Land Department on conservation land development, served as the Assistance Area Wildlife Manager for the MN DNR managing State land in three (3) counties, covered seven (7) counties as the Private Lands Specialist for the MN DNR in Mankato, and worked for several Conservation Districts in Michigan on private lands wildlife and forest management. She has been active with many conservation organizations over the years, elevating the importance of private lands conservation.

Organization: Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District

Organization Description:

The Redwood SWCD is a local unit of government established to address soil and water conservation concerns within the county. They provide technical and financial assistance to landowners and operators to allow them to install, establish, and maintain effective conservation practices on the land they own or farm. Staff includes three technical people and two administrative employees. The Redwood SWCD has an annual operating budget of a half million dollars and manages approximately \$1,000,000 in grant funds directly spent on local conservation practices.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Deputy District Administrator		Reporting, Budget, and Financial Responsibilities			39%	0.14		\$8,500
Conservation Specialist		Coordinate with Great River Greening, easement-holder agreements, on-site assistance, and outreach			28%	0.3		\$24,500
							Sub Total	\$33,000
Contracts and Services								
Great River Greening	Sub award	Survey vegetation, pollinators, and soil on easements; develop Redwood County Easement Stewardship Plan; setup demonstration sites and volunteer events; lead outreach and material development. Funds for personnel, travel, mileage, supplies, and other: volunteer event expenses include handouts, displays, healthy food/beverages, and toilet/tent rental.		X		2.14		\$147,500
Tree Clearing sub-contract following state competitive RFP requirements	Professional or Technical Service Contract	We plan to conduct tree removal on one easement to demonstrate the benefits of woody vegetation control as a critical component of prairie management. This will be conducted in 2021. This site will be host for the woody vegetation control field day in 2022.				0.05		\$10,000
University of Minnesota Bee Lab	Professional or Technical Service Contract	The Bee Lab will provide consultation through training other members of this project on bee morpho-group identification and reviewing results for the county easement management report. They have a unique expertise in pollinator identification and have research plots adjacent to some of the easements.				0.06		\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$160,500

Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	MN Wildlife Society & Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference	Explain outcomes of project and how to incorporate these findings into new and existing conservation easement planning	X				\$500
							Sub Total	\$500
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Report of Findings	Send report and explanation of outcomes to landowners, conservation groups, other regional land management agencies, and funding partners					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$3,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-

							Grand Total	\$197,000
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Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Contracts and Services - Great River Greening	Sub award	Survey vegetation, pollinators, and soil on easements; develop Redwood County Easement Stewardship Plan; setup demonstration sites and volunteer events; lead outreach and material development. Funds for personnel, travel, mileage, supplies, and other: volunteer event expenses include handouts, displays, healthy food/beverages, and toilet/tent rental.	Volunteer events will include supplies and rentals as a standard recruitment tool and safety item: healthy food, beverages, tables, chairs, portable toilets, and tent rentals for 50-75 volunteers. We do not want volunteers hungry or thirsty while working on likely remote easement properties. Standard food items and beverages include selections of fruit, granola bars, juice, water, coffee, and sandwiches (Food and rentals: \$3,500/3 events). Supply purchases will be for volunteer gloves and butterfly nets (\$500). Other equipment will be included as in-kind match for the project.
Travel In Minnesota	Conference Registration Miles/Meals/Lodging	MN Wildlife Society & Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference	The purpose of this project is to evaluate conservation easements and disperse findings to other agencies and conservation groups for use on the land they assist in managing.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
In-Kind	BWSR - RIM Easements Grant	Fund intern to assist GRG surveys and outreach efforts.	Pending	\$1,000
In-Kind	CREP Implementation and Outreach Funds - Bonding	Conservation Specialist will utilize this information to implement conservation practices with new and existing easement-holders.	Secured	\$2,000
In-Kind	MN DNR - Interagency Technical Assistance	Aid in outreach efforts and assist in developing management recommendations.	Secured	\$1,500
			State Sub Total	\$4,500
Non-State				
In-Kind	USFWS	Seed will be purchased for one of the volunteer events. USFWS will develop USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Agreements.	Pending	\$5,500
In-Kind	General support funds (foundations, corporations, private donations)	GRG overhead costs covered by General Operating Support	Potential	\$30,000
In-Kind	Total of 750 volunteer hours at \$24/hr (MN-DNR NCLI posted rate)	Activity 2: seeding, wetland planting, cedar removal	Potential	\$18,000
In-Kind	Equipment, tools, and supplies usage and degradation	Activity 1 & 2: tablets, augers, shovels, spades, loppers, and other equipment for conducting vegetation and soil surveys and seeding, planting, and tree cutting at demonstration and volunteer events.	Secured	\$5,000
In-Kind	Redwood SWCD - General Operating Budget	SWCD overhead costs	Secured	\$5,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$63,500
			Funds Total	\$68,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [348cf062-df4.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Attached is a map of the RIM easements in Redwood County and the associated list of potential evaluation and outreach sites. The map shows all the easements and denotes which ones will be drawn upon for site evaluation and on-site outreach activities. The selected sites are larger easements from across the county with varying habitat types (e.g., grasslands, wetland restorations, floodplains, rock outcrops). The enrollment date range for these easements is 1988 - 2018.

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
GRG Board Resolution	245d972b-1d5.pdf
Redwood SWCD Board Resolution Letter	4b1e9e45-727.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
USFWS Letter of Support	a0f0a6f7-81a.pdf
Redwood Pheasants Forever Letter of Support	8a18b4dd-712.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?

No

Does your project include research?

No

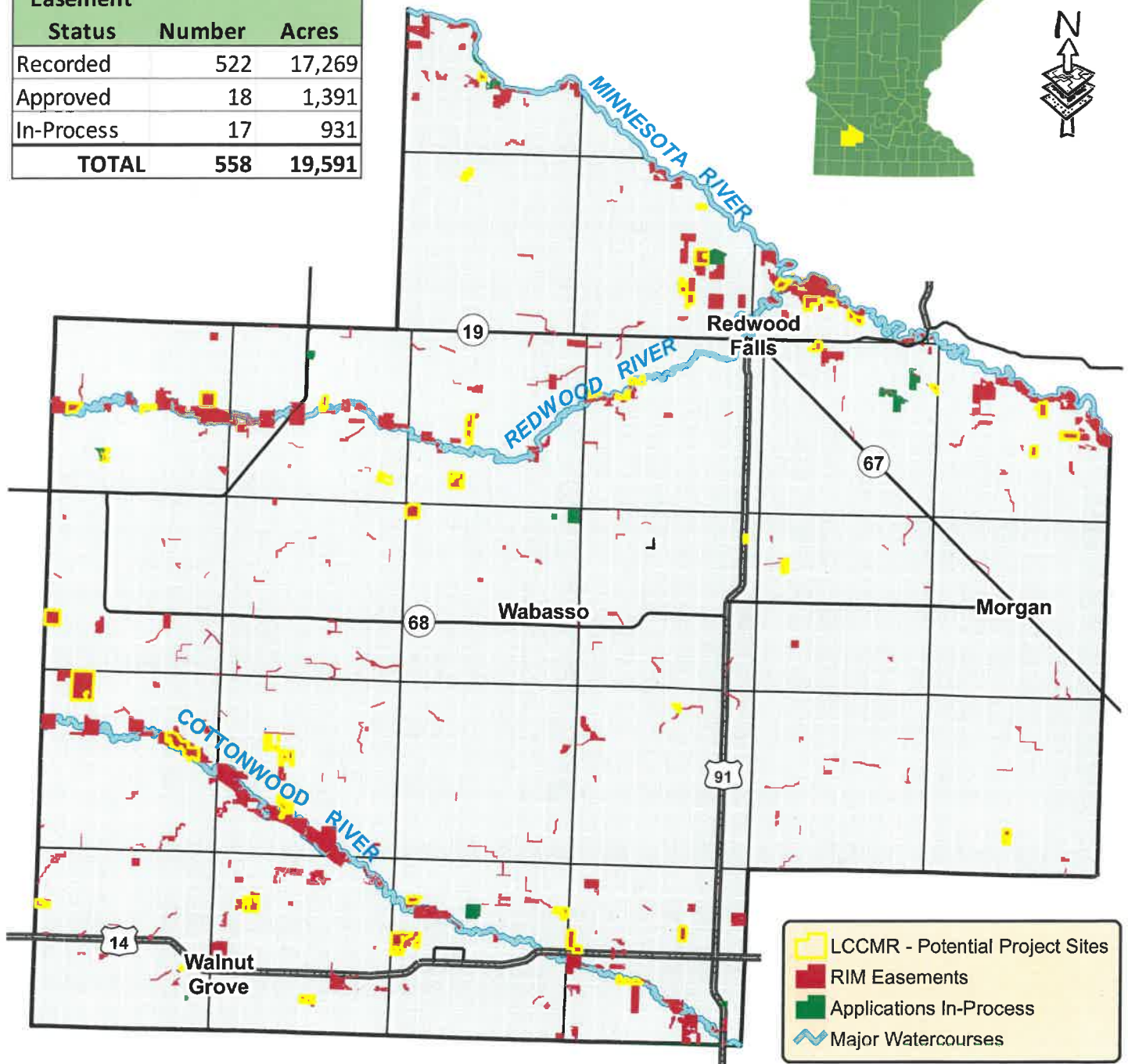
Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?





Yes, Redwood County

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Easements

REDWOOD COUNTY

Easement		
Status	Number	Acres
Recorded	522	17,269
Approved	18	1,391
In-Process	17	931
TOTAL	558	19,591



-  LCCMR - Potential Project Sites
-  RIM Easements
-  Applications In-Process
-  Major Watercourses

REDWOOD RIM EASEMENTS – POTENTIAL SITES FOR EVALUATION AND OUTREACH

RIM ID	TWP	RNG	SEC	EASEMENT TYPE	FUND	AREA (AC)
64-01-07-07	112	34	15	D - Other - Perpetual	R - LCMR/ROCKO	81.8
64-01-09-07	112	34	23	D - Other - Perpetual	R - LCMR/ROCKO	91.8
64-01-16-06	112	39	22	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	B - BONDING	43.2
64-01-93-03	113	35	29	3 - PWP	B - BONDING	110.0
64-01-97-01	110	39	14	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	B - BONDING	272.2
64-02-09-07	113	36	11	D - Other - Perpetual	R - LCMR/ROCKO	21.7
64-02-13-09	112	38	36	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	D - CLN WTR FD	35.6
64-03-00-01	109	38	8	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	127.2
64-03-09-07	113	35	28	D - Other - Perpetual	R - LCMR/ROCKO	45.5
64-03-10-07	113	35	34	D - Other - Perpetual	R - LCMR/ROCKO	34.0
64-03-15-03	113	36	27	4 - RIM Wetland Restoration	9 - LSOHC	55.8
64-04-13-09	112	35	12	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	B - BONDING	27.7
64-04-93-03	112	39	29	3 - PWP	B - BONDING	56.1
64-04-94-01	112	39	19	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	B - BONDING	81.6
64-05-02-01	113	37	4	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	55.8
64-05-18-01	111	35	7	11 - CREP III WR	9 - LSOHC	58.0
64-05-97-01	112	38	15	C - Riparian Lands - Perpetual	B - BONDING	9.0
64-05-99-01	110	39	5	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	473.0
64-06-00-01	110	36	3	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	20.5
64-06-15-03	111	39	30	4 - RIM Wetland Restoration	9 - LSOHC	162.5
64-07-00-01	112	34	22	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	51.7
64-07-15-03	111	37	6	4 - RIM Wetland Restoration	9 - LSOHC	129.4
64-07-97-01	112	39	13	4 - RIM Wetland Restoration	B - BONDING	156.2
64-08-15-03	113	36	27	4 - RIM Wetland Restoration	9 - LSOHC	2.5
64-10-88-02	112	36	18	A - Marginal Cropland - Perpetual	B - BONDING	35.0
64-11-17-01	112	35	5	11 - CREP III WR	9 - LSOHC	57.7
64-11-92-01	113	36	27	3 - PWP	B - BONDING	15.9
64-12-17-01	110	37	7	11 - CREP III WR	9 - LSOHC	55.9
64-12-99-01	114	37	21	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	34.0
64-13-18-01	112	36	8	12 - CREP III WR - Floodplain	D - CLN WTR FD	50.6
64-14-17-01	110	34	28	11 - CREP III WR	9 - LSOHC	63.3
64-15-01-01	113	36	23	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	140.2
64-16-01-01	112	36	18	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	30.7
64-20-02-01	112	37	21	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	53.5
64-22-18-01	109	38	27	11 - CREP III WR	D - CLN WTR FD	65.8
64-22-99-01	111	36	1	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	18.9
64-25-00-01	109	39	24	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	68.0
64-27-99-01	109	39	7	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	50.2
64-33-00-01	112	37	32	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	151.6
64-38-02-01	112	38	15	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	49.4
64-40-01-01-A-	112	37	21	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	65.7

REDWOOD RIM EASEMENTS – POTENTIAL SITES FOR EVALUATION AND OUTREACH

64-40-01-01-B-	112	37	21	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	5.5
64-41-99-01	113	36	27	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	64.6
64-42-02-01	109	37	18	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	239.1
64-45-01-01	113	35	34	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	40.2
64-51-01-01	109	37	12	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	78.3
64-60-01-01	109	36	15	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	77.0
64-62-01-01	109	36	18	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	134.2
64-65-01-01	113	35	30	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	62.7
64-73-01-01	109	36	20	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	66.2
64-83-01-01	110	38	28	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	102.3
64-84-01-01	110	38	17	M - CREP WR	B - BONDING	79.0
64-86-01-01-A-	110	38	16	L - CREP Riparian	B - BONDING	113.7
						4272.2

