



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2021 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2021-154

**Proposal Title:** Precision Acquisition for Restoration, Groundwater Recharge and Habitat.

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Courtney Phillips

**Organization:** Shell Rock River Watershed District

**Office Telephone:** (507) 379-8782

**Email:** courtney.phillips@co.freeborn.mn.us

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** This proposal is for acquisition and restoration of a 36-acre key parcel that will reduce flooding while providing water storage, groundwater recharge, nutrient reduction, pollinator and wildlife habitat.

**Funds Requested:** \$549,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** 2024-06-30

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation (G)

### Project Location

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

Region(s): SE

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

Region(s): SE

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project

## Narrative

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

The Shell Rock River Watershed District has been working with landowners to seek a solution to flooding and resulting loss of agricultural land due to increased rain events.

The District would like to work with a willing landowner, with expiring CRP acres, to purchase and restore 36-acres within the upstream reaches of a sub-watershed to alleviate flooding that is causing negative economic impacts to downstream landowners.

The decline of wetlands in the upper regions of the watershed led to downstream locations being more prone to flooding. The acquisition and restoration of these wetlands and their habitat will decrease the risk of downstream flooding, increase water quality in the watershed, and provide economic benefits to downstream landowners.

The District began work on identifying a solution by completing an engineering study in 2017. This study took into consideration upstream and downstream issues in this sub-watershed. The study modeled the project drainage area, included precipitation and LIDAR data to develop contours. The study addressed these issues as well as scenarios for relieving the system. The scenarios developed were used as a guide for this application.

### **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.**

The Shell Rock River Watershed District has a strong track record of working with willing landowners on flood control, water quality and habitat restoration projects. The SRRWD utilizes precision conservation modeling with monitoring to identify Property Management Zones (PMZs) on a sub-watershed basis.

Utilizing this information, the watershed district will acquire, restore and manage a 36-acre property in the upper watershed. Through the acquisition of this key parcel, the watershed can then do the necessary restoration work to increase water storage. This will reduce the risk of downstream flooding, increase water quality in the watershed, and also provide for groundwater recharge.

The restoration work will focus on wetland restoration. This will result in reconnecting 22-acres of wetlands to the flood plain as part of the strategy to hold more water on the land. Restoration work will include plantings that will provide food and nesting habitat for wildlife and pollinators.

### **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 this acquisition and restoration project would result in 36 acres of expiring CRP to be protected from agriculture use, providing water storage during rain events for nutrient reduction and groundwater recharge as well as be planted into habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

Specific outcomes to the water storage include over 22 acres of water storage that would reduce water flows by 49 cubic feet per second (cfs) during a 10-year storm event and 61 cfs during a 25 year storm event. This would help to alleviate flooding downstream.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Precision Acquisition of the Property

**Activity Budget:** \$214,500

**Activity Description:**

This LCCMR application is seeking funding to put projects on the ground that directly benefit Minnesota's resources. The first task of this proposal is purchasing the property for the restoration efforts.

For this acquisition, the District is working with a willing landowner that once funded, the project manager would work with the landowner and enter into an option agreement. This option agreement allows the District to solicit an appraisal and survey of the property with the assurance that the landowner wants to sell. The project manager would then coordinate all land acquisition procedure processes that are required of the funding source.

Upon completion, the project manager will work with the landowner to finalize an acquisition amount and execute a land closing. Specific outcomes include the acquisition of 36 acres from expiring CRP private use to permanent protection.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Enter Into Option Agreement	2021-10-31
Complete Appraisal Process	2021-12-31
Appraisal Review and Landowner Negotiations	2022-03-31
Close on the Property	2022-05-31

### Activity 2: Restoration of the Property

**Activity Budget:** \$334,500

**Activity Description:**

Upon property acquisition, the project manager will work to solicit an engineering firm to take the concept restoration plans into final project plans and bidding documents. Final plans will make sure to maximize the states funds into a project that has multiple conservation benefits including habitat, water protection value, and positive impacts on ground and surface water quality. This project will follow all applicable laws awarding the bidding and construction for the restoration project.

Once awarded, the project manager will work with the construction crew and engineer to implement the project per the plans specifications. Outcomes will include 22 acres of wetland creation, over 30 acres of native seed establishment, and overall increase in the flood storage and habitat carrying capacity of the watershed.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Finalize Engineering/Design	2023-03-31
Competitive Bidding of the Restoration Work	2023-05-31
Construction of the Project Site	2023-12-31
Final Construction Walk Through and Close Out	2024-05-31



## 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?**

The proposal includes funding activities to both purchase and restore the property. Most of the work will be completed entirely by the funding request and during the timeline of the grant.

The SRRWD is a governmental body that has a local option sales tax in place. If touch-up restoration needs to take place, the SRRWD could use sales tax, or general fund dollars to complete the work.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Implement a Pilot Credit-Trading System for Storm Water in Shell Rock River Watershed to Improve Water Quality	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 04k	\$300,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Courtney Phillips

**Job Title:** Program/Project Manager

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

Courtney Phillips is a Program/Project Manager with the SRRWD and has been working with acquisition, restoration and enhancement projects for over 6 years. She has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Sciences as well as a GIS certificate.

This project scope fits perfectly in Courtney's experience background and capability. She has completed numerous acquisition projects with the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) funding process and has completed wetland restoration projects using LSOHC funds as well as the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) funding opportunities.

She is currently the Project Manager for a 2018 LCCMR appropriated project that is creating a pilot project for Storm Water Quality Credit Trading. Among that, she currently serves as the day to day contact for her watersheds One Watershed, One Plan, water planning framework.

With 3 acquisitions being executed this year, it opens 2021 up for this acquisition and restoration project to get completed in an accurate and timely manner.

**Organization:** Shell Rock River Watershed District

**Organization Description:**

The Shell Rock River Watershed District (SRRWD) was formed on June 25, 2003 at the request of local citizens. A Board of Managers, appointed by the Freeborn County Commissioners, governs the SRRWD. The District encompasses 246-square miles located entirely in Freeborn County, MN and is home to the City of Albert Lea. Several major lakes are in the watershed including Albert Lea, Fountain, and Pickerel. These lakes are used extensively for recreation and are vital for tourism and the local economy. These lakes were the host site for the Governors Fishing Opener in May of 2019.

The purpose of the SRRWD is to conserve and restore water resources of the District for the beneficial use of current and future generations. The District accomplishes these goals through the following activities: managing lakes, streams, wetlands and groundwater, monitoring water quality, promoting best management practices to improve water quality and educating residents about the environment and what they can do to help, providing flood mitigation, restoring stream banks and updating sewer systems.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Courtney Phillips		Project Manager			20%	0.45		\$15,000
Carmen Christensen		Financial Technician			20%	0.15		\$2,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$17,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	For the acquisition of the project, professional services will be required to draft the option agreement, complete title work, complete a survey and appraisal of the property.				-		\$10,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	An engineering firm will need to be selected for the completion of the project plans.				0		\$42,200
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction company to complete the wetland restoration work				0		\$281,800
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$334,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								

	Fee Title Acquisition	Acres: 36 Parcels: 1						\$198,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$198,000</b>
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$549,000</b>



Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Local Option Sales Tax or General Fund Dollars	Used for preliminary engineering study.	Secured	\$10,483
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,483</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$10,483</b>

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
Leach Site	Freeborn		Fee Title	36	0.2	\$198,000	Private		Negotiations in Progress
<b>Totals</b>				<b>36</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>\$198,000</b>			

## Fee Acquisition

**1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.**

Currently the District only has one parcel located on this list. Being we are a small watershed, we focus on parcels that have the largest benefit to conservation needs.

Criteria that go into ranking a property include, not in the specific order:

- Landowner willingness
- Does the project have multiple benefits
- Size and proximity to water resources

**2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.**

This project is included in the Shell Rock River Second Generation Water Management Plan in numerous locations. Located first in the Streams Implementation section, this project aligns with the goal for selecting and protecting all effective sites through easement or purchase programs for natural retention basins. Located in the Flooding Implementation section this project restores and retains water upstream throughout the watershed and prioritized this wetland as a holding basin for storage and groundwater.

Secondarily it fits into the Wetland Implementation for encouraging wetland restoration and other goals for habitat improvement for wildlife and pollinators.

Hyperlink to the Waterplan:

[https://www.shellrock.org/vertical/sites/%7B9804AD9D-40CA-46B1-8F91-CC0257E7304A%7D/uploads/12-31-15\\_FINAL\\_Shell\\_River\\_Watershed\\_Water\\_Management\\_\(1-11-16\).pdf](https://www.shellrock.org/vertical/sites/%7B9804AD9D-40CA-46B1-8F91-CC0257E7304A%7D/uploads/12-31-15_FINAL_Shell_River_Watershed_Water_Management_(1-11-16).pdf)

**3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.**

For fee title acquisitions that are being protected and restored, the SRRWD develops a restoration and management plan that is consistent with current conservation science and restoration goals for the site. Restoration consideration takes into account the soils, topography, hydrology and other factors that give the site the best long-term success. Other implantation actions included in the plan include native habitat species planting, long term maintenance and funding of that maintenance. For each restoration project, a project binder is created that includes all plans and details associated with the project and is housed in the project managers office via hard and electronic copy.

The SRRWD is a local government body that has a local options sales tax in place to provide maintenance to properties after the original funding source is complete. All restoration projects are checked yearly to determine if actions are needed.

**4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.**

Not applicable. This ground will be publicly owned but not conveyed to the State of Minnesota.

**5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.**

Not Applicable.

## Restoration

**1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.**

This statement provides a confirmation that all restoration activities will be completed on land that is permanently protected by public ownership by the local government unit: Shell Rock River Watershed District, or their successor.

**2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.**

Similar for the acquisition, the SRRWD develops a restoration and management plan that is consistent with current conservation science and restoration goals for the site. Restoration consideration takes into account the soils, topography, hydrology and other factors that give the site the best long-term success. Other implantation actions included in the plan include native habitat species planting, long term maintenance and funding of that maintenance. For each restoration project, a project binder is created that includes all plans and details associated with the project and is housed in the project managers office via hard and electronic copy. Projects are visited yearly to determine that they are performing to the intended use.

**3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.**

During the planning development, the project manager will work with the engineers to include the Board of Water and Soil Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" into the project plans and bidding documents. This will ensure that engineers are aware of the principles and that the awarded contractors will incorporate the guidelines into the restoration project.

**4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.**

The SRRWD is a local government body that has a local options sales tax in place to provide maintenance to properties after the original funding source is complete. All restoration projects are checked yearly to determine if actions are needed.

**5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.**

Similar to LSOHC procedures that the District is familiar with, after receiving the funding, the District will make a timely written contact with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota for possible use of the corps' services to contract for restoration and enhancement services.

**6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.**

This statement indicates that the SRRWD will complete evaluations on parcels where activities as a result of a LCCMR funding appropriation. Evaluations both initially and in 3-year consecutive follow-ups will result and follow applicable producers stated above.

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Map*

File: [3023c3a3-968.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Map*

The attached map shows the location of the acquisition along with the wetland restoration locations within that parcel. Also included is a State reference.

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
SRRWD Board Resolution	<a href="#">89adef4-066.pdf</a>

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter or Other*

Title	File
2018 Audit	<a href="#">59e400ba-06c.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

Yes: Restoration, Fee Acquisition,

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

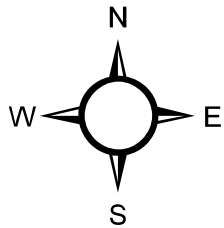
No



**Does your project include research?**

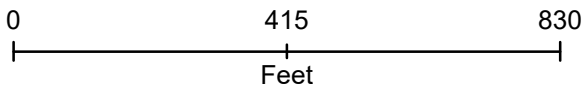
No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No



-  Wetland Restoration Location
-  Acquisition Location



## Project Location Map

Shell Rock River  
Watershed District

