



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-056

Proposal Title: Unsewered Area Pilot Program: NE MN Project Facilitator

Project Manager Information

Name: Brandon Montgomery

Organization: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Office Telephone: (651) 757-2230

Email: brandon.montgomery@state.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Currently, Minnesota has 975 unsewered areas. This pilot project focuses on the 258 unsewered areas in NE MN and tests whether in-community facilitators can generate, and accelerate, wastewater solutions.

Funds Requested: \$450,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30 2025

LCCMR Funding Category: Water Resources (B)

Project Location

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

Region(s): NE

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

Region(s): NE

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.

Adequate wastewater treatment is vital to protecting the health, safety, and environment in Minnesota. In order to ensure effective sewage treatment is occurring across the state, the MPCA regularly conducts surveys of local governmental units to identify areas in the state that may be under-sewered or unsewered - defined as five or more homes within a half mile of each other that have inadequate sewage treatment. The most recent survey results (2020) indicate 975 areas in Minnesota that may have inadequate wastewater treatment.

Building on recent collaborative work, this project addresses a key barrier to fixing unsewered areas – the lack of a singular community contact. In 2018, the MPCA put together a team of staff as well as individuals from county subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) programs, University of Minnesota Onsite Sewage Treatment Program, Minnesota Department of Health, Board of Soil and Water Resources, Public Facilities Authority, and consultants. This group's goal was to determine the best way to increase the number of areas with adequate sewage treatment. One of the main issues identified by the group is the lack of a singular community contact for accurate information, organization of the project, and assistance in selecting appropriate treatment options.

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.

This proposal will pilot test the use of local, community-based septic system/wastewater facilitators to help unsewered areas gain appropriate wastewater systems. These facilitators will build relationships with community members and help explain the public health and environmental benefits of addressing unsewered areas. The facilitator will also provide options for bringing each community into compliance.

Specifically, the facilitators will help communities understand the need for action and guide the process of planning, developing, and implementing septic/wastewater solutions. They also will help communities fill out funding applications, interview consultants/engineers, and set up community meetings and information sessions. Facilitators must understand the health and environmental issues, technical issues, and funding opportunities, as they relate to the project.

Establishing dedicated facilitators will allow communities and to get individualized attention. Resolution of unsewered challenges often requires a level of facilitator participation beyond what the agency is able to currently provide with existing staff resources.

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?

This project will result in the upgrade, repair, or construction of compliant septic systems or wastewater facilities in areas where adequate wastewater treatment is not occurring, or is a challenge. Correctly treating and disposing of wastewater is critical to protecting public health and the environment. Currently, 75% of Minnesotans get their drinking water from groundwater sources. Inadequate treatment of wastewater/sewage, which contains bacteria, viruses, parasites, nutrients, and chemicals, can result in contamination of drinking water sources. Additionally, straight-pipe wastewater "systems" can directly impact surface water quality in the state. This project would directly enhance and protect Minnesota's waters.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Initiate at least 30 projects to upgrade/repair/construct compliant SSTS or wastewater treatment facilities (WWTF) in unsewered areas

Activity Budget: \$360,000

Activity Description:

The main objective of the facilitator is to get unsewered areas on track to fix the noncompliant/unsewered issues in a community. In order to achieve this goal, the facilitator will need help communities navigate the different aspects of the process including funding, engineering/design, local planning requirements, and project selection and implementation. It is not reasonable to expect unsewered areas to be resolved in a three-year timeframe due to planning logistics and funding opportunities, but it is reasonable to expect areas to begin working towards addressing the concerns. The facilitator will be tasked with communicating with many different groups to accomplish these projects. Potential contacts include; citizens, local units of government, state regulators, local regulators, financing authorities, legislators, news media, etc.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Begin unsewered resolution projects in 10 areas	June 30 2023
Begin unsewered resolution projects in 10 additional areas; Continue work on projects 1-10	June 30 2024
Begin unsewered resolution projects in 10 additional areas; Continue work on projects 1-20	June 30 2025

Activity 2: Evaluate and verify unsewered status of all areas in the NE region from existing MPCA unsewered list

Activity Budget: \$67,500

Activity Description:

The facilitator will refine the list of 258 unsewered areas identified in the NE region. Local units of government reported these 258 unsewered areas to the agency using broad parameters, in order to capture the full scope of the potential unsewered problem. As such, there may be areas on the list that can be removed as they have already implemented solutions or otherwise don't meet the agency definition of unsewered. The facilitator will be responsible for gathering additional information on all 258 unsewered areas and reporting changes to the MPCA.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Evaluate 86 areas to verify needs and expand on potential issues/solutions	June 30 2023
Evaluate 86 areas to verify needs and expand on potential issues/solutions	June 30 2024
Evaluate 86 areas to verify needs and expand on potential issues/solutions	June 30 2025
Provide updated list of unsewered areas and area needs to the MPCA	June 30 2025

Activity 3: Develop a report on strategies, methods, and effectiveness of facilitation on resolving unsewered areas in Minnesota

Activity Budget: \$22,500

Activity Description:

The facilitator will produce a report on their work, to guide potential future facilitators and future funding for addressing unsewered areas across the state. This report should identify all steps taken in starting unsewered area projects,

methods of communication and outreach, technical steps taken, funding opportunities explored/used, and results achieved. The report should also identify barriers and issues to the process, as well as recommendations for successful future projects.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Draft report submitted to MPCA	June 30 2024
Final report to MPCA	June 30 2025

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 project is intended to provide 'proof of concept' that having a wastewater facilitator available allows unsewered areas to initiate and accelerate construction and subsequently increase compliance of wastewater systems. Facilitators in this project will be responsible for communicating progress to the MPCA on meetings held, project status, system solutions chosen, etc. Results from this pilot will be used to determine if a long-term statewide project is appropriate. Funding for expansion of the pilot program could be from LCCMR or Clean Water Land and Legacy funding.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Brandon Montgomery

Job Title: Subsurface Sewage Treatment System Program Coordinator

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

Brandon Montgomery is an Environmental Consultant in the Municipal Division of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) who works as the Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS) Program Coordinator. He will be the MPCA's lead administrator for the project with responsibility for overseeing project management, project reporting, and contracting. Brandon has spent six years with the agency in the SSTS program and is familiar with rules and regulations that apply to SSTS as well as wastewater treatment facilities and collection systems. As the SSTS program coordinator he is responsible for guaranteeing that SSTS and wastewater program coordination is occurring which is vital in ensuring appropriate wastewater treatment solutions are selected. He is also responsible for managing SSTS grants and works with other SSTS/Wastewater funding entities to ensure SSTS funding is optimized. As unsewered areas all require unique solutions, ranging from individual SSTS upgrades to collection systems/wastewater treatment facilities, having a project manager that understands both programs and available funding is critical to success.

Education:

M.S. - 2015 - North Dakota State University (Soil Science)

B.S. - 2012 - North Dakota State University (Soil Science)

B.S. - 2012 - North Dakota State University (Natural Resources Management)

Work Experience:

2015 - Present - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Organization: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Organization Description:

The MPCA's mission is to protect and improve the environment and human health. The MPCA monitors environmental quality, offers technical and financial assistance, and enforces environmental regulations. The agency finds and cleans up spills or leaks that can affect our health and environment. Staff develop statewide policy, and support environmental education.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contract to provide a NE Minnesota unsewered area facilitator (competitive bid). Cost includes 1 FTE at \$125,000/year x 3 years (\$375,000), communication (flyers, ads, media) (\$5,000), meeting support (meeting space, translation services) (\$5,000), travel/lodging (area covers >20,000 square miles; significant travel) (\$65,000).				3		\$450,000
							Sub Total	\$450,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$450,000

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
State				
In-Kind	State General and Environmental Fund/Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund	Project Manager - Brandon Montgomery. 0.05 FTE for 3 years to provide overall management and decision-making on the project	Pending	\$19,200
In-Kind	Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund	Subject Matter Expert - Lisa McCormick. 0.10 FTE for 3 years to provide collaboration and communication with the facilitator as the MPCA Unsewered Coordinator	Pending	\$38,400
			State Sub Total	\$57,600
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$57,600

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [87ef7a91-d90.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

This map shows the distribution of unsewered areas in the state, by county, as last reported to the agency in March of 2020. The map shows that the highest numbers of unsewered areas in Minnesota are currently found in the NE region of the state (St. Louis, Aitkin, Itasca, Lake, Cook, Carlton, and Pine Counties). Those counties contain 258 of the 975 unsewered areas in the state....

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

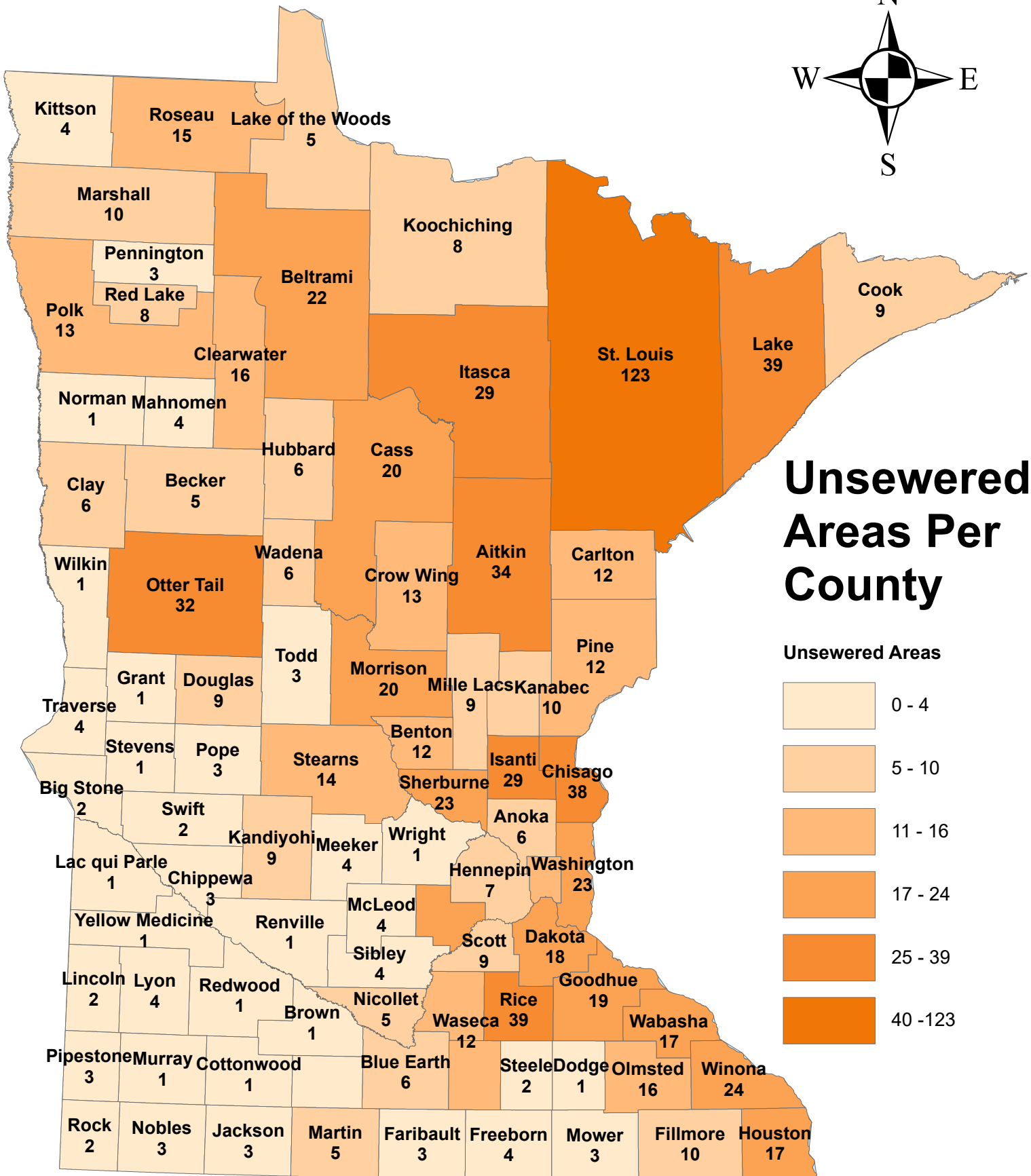
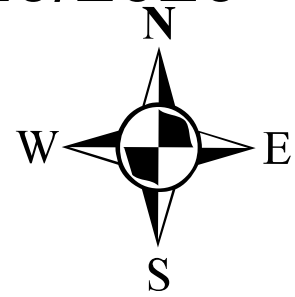
Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

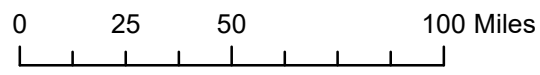
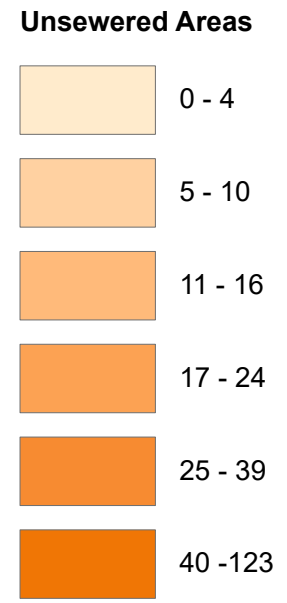
Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Statewide Unsewered Areas 3/20/2020*



Unsewered Areas Per County



*Note- Tribal areas are included in County totals

