



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-094

Proposal Title: Comprehensive Management Plan - Big Birch Lake

Project Manager Information

Name: Sarah Boser

Organization: Sauk River Watershed District

Office Telephone: (320) 352-2231

Email: sarah@srwdmn.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Development of a Comprehensive Lake Management Plan, complete with an adaptive management strategy, communications and outreach strategy and materials, and actions required to meet goals identified in Comprehensive Management Plan.

Funds Requested: \$25,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31 2024

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary Category: Water Resources (B)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central

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

Region(s): Central

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.

There is a wide array of data available on Big Birch Lake and the surrounding ecosystem, but not necessarily compiled in the same place, and interpreted for management purposes. This disconnect makes it difficult for the Lake Association and partners to make sound, scientific based decisions in the best interest of Big Birch Lake. As a proactive lake association, they strive to build partnerships with local agencies and landowners to protect and improve the lake, and having a guidance document to map the road to success is instrumental. Each year, they dedicate a portion of their budget to conservation projects (they have been paying landowners for hayed buffers for 10+ years before the buffers became mandated by the state!) and this plan will provide direction on where they should be implementing addition conservation projects. Big Birch Lake is listed in the draft Sauk River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan as a high quality lake, and was noted for being a lake of outstanding biological significance for birds, fish, and plants. It is also listed as a protection lake and is described as follows, "Big Birch Lake has some of the highest water quality of lakes in the SRW [Sauk River Watershed]."

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.

Develop a Comprehensive Management Plan for Big Birch Lake. The development of this plan will include gathering and assessing the available lake/habitat data, determining whether there are data gaps that need to be fill and, if necessary, filling them by collecting the data, developing an adaptive management strategy, compiling a communication and outreach program, and developing clear strategies for achieving conservation goals. This Comprehensive Management Plan will also consider the impacts from the surrounding area (ie - lake homes, non-residents using the lake for recreation, Birch Lakes State Forest and the potential impacts from those using the forest). By striving for a truly comprehensive management plan, the lake association and partners will have developed outreach materials and a clear path for protection and improvement of Big Birch Lake and the surrounding natural 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?

Protection and improvement of the water quality within, and habitat within and surrounding, Big Birch Lake. The study will provide quantifiable goals to measure the projects implemented. Any improvement and protection efforts to Big Birch Lake will benefit the downstream lakes and water bodies, including Little Birch Lake, Lake Sylvia, Adley Creek and the Sauk River. Habitat benefits will be enhanced through connection to the nearby state forest, as well as within the waterbodies themselves.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Comprehensive Management Plan Development

Activity Budget: \$25,000

Activity Description:

Compile and analyze existing data, resulting in a comprehensive lake assessment. Develop an adaptive management strategy based on the comprehensive lake assessment, as well as a communications and outreach strategy. The communication and outreach strategy will also result in outreach documents/materials to be used on new residents to the area, the general public, and those recreating on Big Birch Lake or within Birch Lakes State Forest. The Comprehensive Management Plan will serve as a road map for the lake association and partners to protect and improve the conservation needs of Big Birch Lake and surrounding ecosystem.

Activity Milestones:

| Description | Completion Date |
|--|------------------|
| Comprehensive Lake Assessment | November 30 2022 |
| Adaptive Management Strategy Development | March 31 2023 |
| Communications and Outreach Strategy Development | July 31 2023 |
| Comprehensive Management Plan | December 31 2023 |

Project Partners and Collaborators

| Name | Organization | Role | Receiving Funds |
|----------------|----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Craig Tweedale | Big Birch Lake Association | Primary contact for the Big Birch Lake Association, helping to relay information from the consultant back to the lake association and assist with project decisions throughout the process on behalf of the lake association. | 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?

The Big Birch Lake Association is dedicated to conservation and devotes a portion of their annual membership dues to implementing conservation projects. Additional grants may be pursued for large scale projects. The lake association also has a large network of volunteers that will assist with the communication and outreach program implementation. Partnership opportunities with other entities, such as the Sauk River Watershed District, also have the capacity to bring additional funding options to the table.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Sarah Boser

Job Title: Water Resource Manager

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

Grant and project manager for the Sauk River Watershed District - responsible for grant applications, work plans, grant management and oversight, grant budgeting, project implementation, project management, and partnership coordination. Used to managing multiple grants and projects at a time, working directly with consultants and project partners (including but not limited to: lake associations, other local and state government entities, non-profit organizations, and landowners).

Organization: Sauk River Watershed District - Watershed District, Local Unit of Government

Organization Description:

A local unit of government based on the hydrologic boundary of the Sauk River in central Minnesota with a mission to, "...apply our unique abilities and authorities in ways that protect and enhance our watershed's waters and natural resource for today and tomorrow". A large part of improving water resources is directly related to habitat restoration and we have a number of projects and programs that focus on enhancing and improving water quality and habitat simultaneously.

Budget Summary

| Category / Name | Subcategory or Type | Description | Purpose | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---------|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Personnel | | | | | | | | |
| Sarah Boser/Water Resource Manager | | Grant Manager/Project Coordinator | | | 35% | 0.2 | | \$1,500 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$1,500 |
| Contracts and Services | | | | | | | | |
| Houston Engineering | Professional or Technical Service Contract | Analyzing existing lake data and developing the comprehensive lake management plan and supporting programs. | | | | 0.02 | | \$22,500 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$22,500 |
| 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 | | | | | | | | |
| | Printing | Outreach and Communication Materials | Execute the communication and outreach portion of the plan | | | | | \$1,000 |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | \$1,000 |
| Other Expenses | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | Sub Total | - |
| | | | | | | | Grand Total | \$25,000 |

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

| Category/Name | Subcategory or Type | Description | Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--|

Non ENRTF Funds

| Category | Specific Source | Use | Status | Amount |
|------------------|---|--|----------------------------|----------------|
| State | | | | |
| | | | State Sub Total | - |
| Non-State | | | | |
| In-Kind | Volunteer Time | The Big Birch Lake Association has a total of 49 volunteers that are currently active. 19 of those volunteers assist with checking the species of aquatic vegetation at the public access points on the lake to ensure immediate action if an aquatic invasive is found. The other 30 volunteers assist with a variety of activities including, but not limited to, loon nest/habitat development and maintenance, woodduck house/habitat maintenance, trash pickup, secchi disk readings, water sampling, and more. *Amount assumes 3 hrs/volunteer at \$15 per hour. | Potential | \$2,200 |
| Cash | Buffer payments to landowners/farmers within the watershed of the lake (tributaries flowing into the lake). | For 10+ years prior to the state mandated buffers, the Big Birch Lake Association has been paying several landowners to keep buffers along with tributaries flowing into Big Birch Lake. The buffer area is approximately 16 acres total. | Potential | \$6,200 |
| | | | Non State Sub Total | \$8,400 |
| | | | Funds Total | \$8,400 |

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [3b7d9e82-5c9.docx](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Map of Big Birch Lake and surrounding area. Solid black line is the county boundary, part of the lake is located in Stearns County and part is located in Todd County....

Board Resolution or Letter

| Title | File |
|---|----------------------------------|
| LCCMR Grant Application Letter - SRWD Board | b553c515-4a7.pdf |

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?

Yes, Sauk River Watershed District

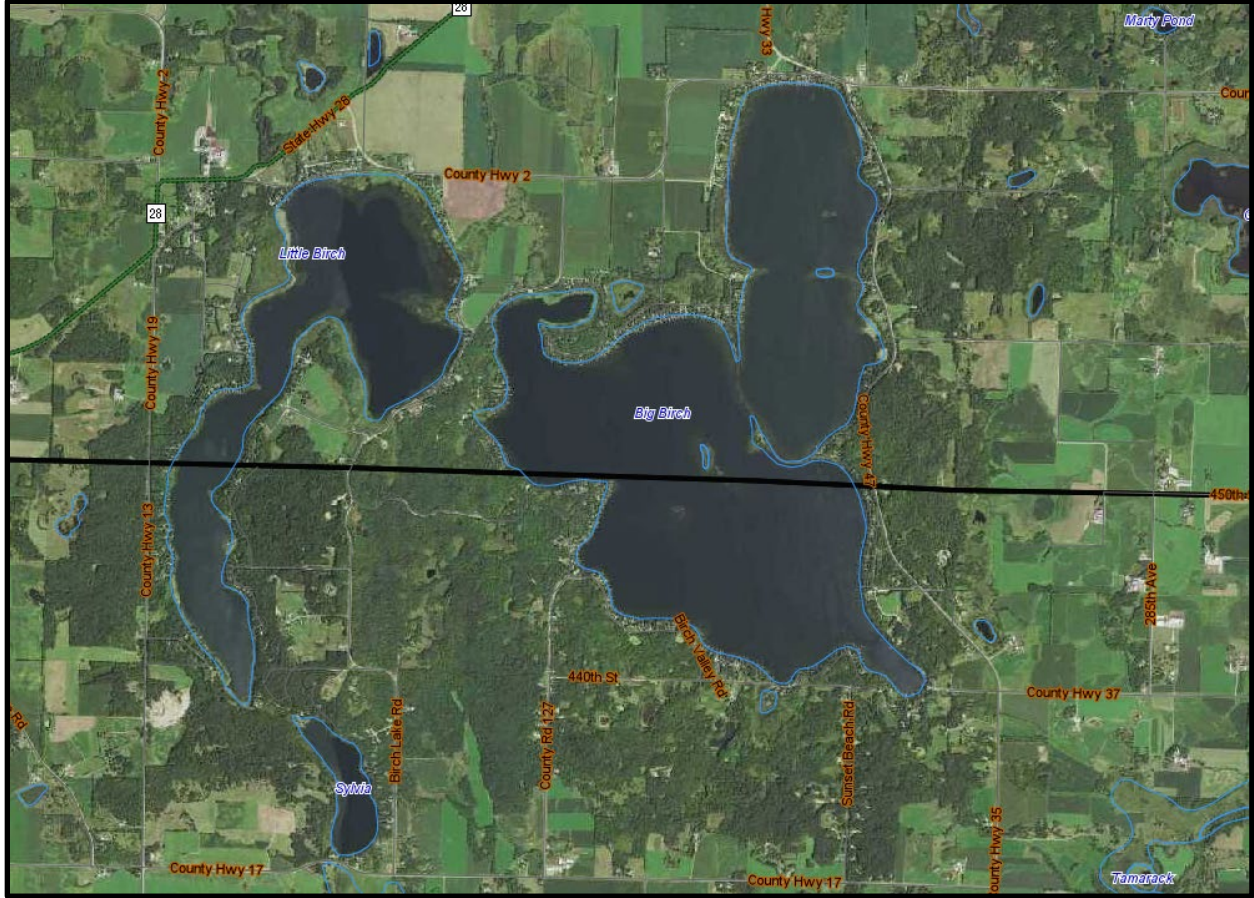


Figure 1 - Map of Big Birch Lake and Surrounding Area - SRWD Interactive Map Viewer courtesy of Houston Engineering