



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2022-267

**Proposal Title:** Educating and Supporting Farmers to Implement Regenerative Agriculture

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Dave Zentner

**Organization:** Izaak Walton League of America - Minnesota Division

**Office Telephone:** (218) 724-3926

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## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** We will form a cohort of 20-30 farmers and provide continued education on regenerative agricultural practices, including seasonal workshops led by farmer mentors and agricultural experts to troubleshoot challenges faced in this difficult transition.

**Funds Requested:** \$550,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30 2025

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

## 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?**

Statewide

**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.**

Regenerative agricultural practices such as no-till, reduced tillage, cover cropping, and perennial agriculture are well known to increase resilience, promote water infiltration, improve soil health, and improve water quality. While many farmers want to improve their soil health, they are unfamiliar with the complexities of adopting regenerative agricultural practices. This proposal aims to somewhat de-risk the transition to regenerative agriculture through information sharing and relationship development. Farmers may need to take on costs such as purchasing or renting equipment or forgoing using conventional, profitable systems to invest in long term profitability and resilience. Some regenerative agricultural crops and cropping systems, such as the oilseed winter camelina or the perennial grain Kernza® provide continuous living cover and offer alternative pathways to profitability, provided farmers receive enough guidance and support to successfully implement these new practices. Current efforts to promote regenerative agriculture deliver individual, disparate workshops without the opportunity for farmers to troubleshoot issues, strategically plan rotations, or have ongoing consultations with farmer mentors who have already implemented the practices. Continuous support and continued contact with a cohort can help farmers overcome the feeling that they are outsiders in their own community to the social pressure to maintain “clean” fields.

### **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 will recruit a cohort of 20-30 farmers to attend workshops about regenerative agricultural practices. Farmers with experience in regenerative agriculture will lead workshops and serve as mentors, providing 1-on-1 support. Participants will receive soil health education, access to new market opportunities, connections with conservation-minded peers, and support from farmer mentors and other experts. Farmers will work with facilitators to develop economically sound, environmentally beneficial regenerative agricultural plans, leveraging cost share opportunities. The cohort will have the opportunity to share experiences and equipment, overcoming challenges and developing a community of shared values. Enterprises could develop or expand as a result, and a reliable supply of regeneratively grown products could be marketed. Redwood County is an ideal site for this project, as there has been considerable promotion of regenerative practices, providing a base of potential farmer mentors and a foundation for the development of regenerative market supply chains. Near the completion of the project, the cohort of farmers will host workshops for farmers in the area, furthering the spread of regenerative agricultural knowledge. Farmers will be surveyed before and after to ascertain how their knowledge, perspectives, and implementation of regenerative agriculture practices changed throughout the project.

### **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?**

Regenerative agricultural practices will be adopted by 20-30 farmers targeting 8,000-20,000 acres in the Minnesota River watershed, reducing sediment and nutrient loading, increasing diversity and resilience, and storing carbon. A network of farmers with interest in regenerative agriculture will be established which will promote conservation of Minnesota’s soil and water during and beyond the project.

Community attitudes and understanding of regenerative agriculture will improve, increasing future adoption of environmentally beneficial practices.

Concentrating regenerative agriculture education will provide a basis for local markets for products from cover crops and perennials to develop, further incentivizing adoption of these regenerative practices.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Present introductory workshops and forums on regenerative agricultural practices to a large audience of farmers.**

**Activity Budget:** \$84,015

### Activity Description:

First, we will develop and refine curriculum for introductory courses on regenerative agriculture in consultation with our collaborators and farmer cooperators. We will recruit (Activity 2) an audience of 80-100 participants for each of three introductory workshops, attracting at least 15% of the principle producers in Redwood County to our workshops on a variety of regenerative agriculture topics, including information on cost-share programs, the economics of various practices, and promising new regenerative crops with developing markets. Participants will learn the basics of regenerative agricultural practices including no-till, reduced tillage, cover cropping, and perennial agriculture from experienced farmers, agency staff, agricultural professionals, and agronomists. Forums will be facilitated to allow participants the opportunity to share their experiences, perspectives, challenges, and resources. We will distribute surveys to gauge the interest, knowledge, and attitudes of participants towards regenerative agricultural practices along with what practices they are currently implementing. Facilitators will encourage participants to apply for the cohort of farmers who will receive continuing education on regenerative agriculture.

### Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Refine curriculum for introductory courses on regenerative agriculture	January 31 2023
Offer a series of introductory courses on regenerative practices to 80-100 farmers	February 28 2023

**Activity 2: Recruit a cohort of farmers and landowners in Redwood County interested in adopting regenerative agricultural practices.**

**Activity Budget:** \$89,634

### Activity Description:

Through our collaboration with Redwood County SWCD and Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, we will develop a database of farmers and landowners, contacting 80% of the farms in Redwood County. Early on, we will identify farmer mentors with experience in varied regenerative agricultural practices and offer them compensation for sharing their knowledge at the workshops and mentoring farmers 1-on-1 throughout the program. We will use our initial workshops (Activity 1) along with our mailing list and our media access (RSDP, SFA, Redwood SWCD, MNSHC social media accounts, along with advertisements in print and radio) to recruit farmers who may be interested in ongoing education as a part of a cohort. Peer to peer knowledge sharing provides the most successful opportunities for learning, giving the farmers in this cohort the best opportunity for success in adopting regenerative practices. We will distribute surveys before and after involvement in the cohort to gauge changes in knowledge, attitude, and practices. This cohort of farmers will form a network of resources, experiences, and shared commitment to conservation that will seed lasting change in the area. Moreover, they will be well suited to help lead the transition to regenerative agriculture across the region.

### Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Develop a database of farmers and landowners to provide outreach	July 31 2022
Disseminate written materials, social media, press releases, invitations	July 31 2022
Invite farmers with past experience in regenerative agriculture to serve as farmer mentors	August 31 2022
Recruit 20-30 farmers to join a core group implementing regenerative agriculture	February 28 2023

Activity 3: Support farmers in developing individualized regenerative agricultural plans, provide timely information regarding management, and facilitate end-of-program outreach to the greater farming community.

**Activity Budget:** \$376,351

**Activity Description:**

First, the cohort will develop economically viable plans for their farm which promote soil health and water quality with input from farmer mentors and other experts. Farmers will receive assistance in identifying and applying for cost share programs to implement regenerative practices, at workshops and throughout the program (provided in-kind by Redwood SWCD staff) and they will receive information on strategies they could use to begin immediately working towards their regenerative agriculture goals. Subsequently, participants will attend workshops when they are planning their spring, summer, and fall operations. At these seasonal workshops, farmers will have the opportunity to share their personal experiences and talk through challenges they are facing in the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices. Peers, farmer mentors, agency staff, and agronomists will help farmers troubleshoot challenges, increasing the likelihood that each farmer will have a successful transition to regenerative practices and go on to promote the practices to their network. Farmers will develop confidence in their ability to manage newly adopted regenerative practices as a cohort. The culmination of the program will be a workshop hosted by the cohort of farmers, allowing them to increase the impact of the program and share their experiences with others.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Provide 3-5 day on-farm workshop to develop individualized regenerative agriculture plans	December 31 2023
Provide seasonal 3-5 day workshops to prepare for upcoming regenerative agriculture plans	April 30 2025
Farmer cohort hosts outreach to greater farming community	May 31 2025

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Brad Redlin	Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Brad Redlin is an experienced agricultural professional who will conduct workshops and provide workshop leaders from within the MDA. He and his staff will assist farmers with the Water Quality Certification Program to protect the Minnesota River watershed.	No
Ted Suss	Minnesota Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America	Ted is a hobby farmer and dedicated environmentalist who will recruit farmers and farmer mentors and present at workshops based on his experience using regenerative practices.	No
Jennifer Hahn	Redwood SWCD/ MN Soil Health Coalition	A Certified Conservation Planner with 9 years of farming experience and a B.S. in Environmental Science, Jennifer has worked in soil conservation in Minnesota since 2005. She will use her considerable networks to recruit farmers and farmer mentors and she will lead workshops related to her soil health expertise.	No
Constance Carlson	University of Minnesota-Extension Regional Sustainable Development	Connie Carlson has considerable expertise in both farmer outreach and UMN Forever Green crops- newly domesticated winter annuals and perennials which have economic potential. She will conduct workshops and recruit UMN experts to present on best practices, markets and cutting edge technologies related to these promising new crops.	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 Minnesota Izaak Walton League has identified over thirty potential funding organizations, along with numerous potential donors, to fund future work. After project completion, the established cohort of farmers will be encouraged to carry on educating peers and implementing regenerative farming practices. The success of the development of a farmer cohort dedicated to regenerative agriculture and the results of the survey will be communicated through the MN Crop News Blog (>2,400 subscribers), via the MN Soil Health Coalition Newsletter, RSDP and SFA newsletters, podcasts and social media accounts, and in media outlets across Minnesota, especially in agricultural regions.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Dave Zentner

**Job Title:** Project Director

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

Dave Zentner is a regional and national leader on environmental conservation issues with decades of experience in environmental leadership. He has served as National President of the Izaak Walton League of America in addition to several other leadership roles. As a National President, Dave created an Upper Mississippi River office to protect the river he grew up on. In his quest to protect Minnesota's environment, he has formed collaborations with hunters, farmers, legislators, and the general public. Dave was an active player in building support for the Legacy Fund Amendment, bringing together Minnesota residents from myriad backgrounds. Dave's work on behalf of natural resource conservation has been recognized with an Honorary Dr. of Law from the University of MN, an honorary Dr. of Public Service from Northland College, the Izaak Walton League's 54 Founders Award, and Outdoor Life Magazine's 100th Anniversary Conservationist' of the Year.

In addition to his considerable environmental credentials, Dave also has several decades of experience running a business and coaching employees. Dave's leadership experience will ensure that qualified staff are recruited, trained, and maintained, and his record of getting things done will ensure milestones are met in a timely manner. Dave also has several decades of fundraising experience, including putting together grants and raising donations. This experience will help build capacity for the Minnesota Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in the coming years and will provide funds for the continuation of this project past the completion date.

**Organization:** Izaak Walton League of America - Minnesota Division

**Organization Description:**

For nearly a century, the Izaak Walton League of America has been at the forefront of efforts to protect and restore the health of our streams, lakes, and wetlands. Since the first Farm bill in the 1930's, the League has supported federal policy that supports conservation on America's farms and ranches. The League has a strong presence in Minnesota and our staff and volunteers have good relationships with conservation agencies and organizations. We have a long track record of success in undertaking and completing local initiatives like this one. Specifically, we have experience facilitating non-operating landowners of agricultural property conferences, which bring together landowners and farmers to develop mutually beneficial conservation goals that integrate regenerative agricultural practices. We have relationships with numerous conservation organizations across Minnesota, including those dedicated to promoting conservation and regenerative agriculture.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Project Manager		Assist with farmer recruiting, manage grant reporting			0%	0.3		\$23,182
Field Coordinator		Implement the project- develop curriculum, recruit farmers, recruit workshop leaders, plan and implement workshops, coordinate mentors, connect farmers to SWCD staff			0%	3		\$173,863
Project Specialist		Apply expertise on regenerative agriculture- develop curriculum, provide support to farmer mentors, recruit farmers, conduct outreach, conduct workshops			0%	1.5		\$115,773
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$312,818</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Constance Carlson	Sub award	Conduct workshops, recruit University of Minnesota researchers for workshops, disseminate findings, provide input on surveys.				0.06		\$7,861
Minnesota Soil Health Coalition	Sub award	Provide compensation for farmers providing mentoring outside of workshops.				2.17		\$135,000
Minnesota Soil Health Coalition	Sub award	Provide compensation for farmer mentors attending workshops to share experience and provide support for participants.				0.58		\$14,440
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$157,301</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Postage	Send mailers to farmers inviting them to our workshop					\$640
	Tools and Supplies	Postage	Obtain survey data from farmer participants					\$240
	Tools and Supplies	Workshop supplies	General supplies to support workshops					\$500

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,380</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	8 workshops * 3 cars * 148 miles * \$0.56/mile	Travel to workshops and field visits					\$1,989
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	8 workshops * 3 people * \$233 lodging + per diem	Provide lodging for out of town workshop speakers					\$5,592
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$7,581</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	800 mailers	recruit attendance to workshop					\$1,920
	Printing	2000 print outs	districute information and surveys					\$10,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$11,920</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Introductory workshop	Event costs including speaker fees and stipends for farm tour hosts					\$5,000
		Intensive 3-5 day workshops	Event costs including speaker fees and stipends for farm tour hosts					\$40,000
		Intensive 1 day workshop	Event costs including speaker fees and stipends for farm tour hosts					\$6,000
		Communicating about workshops	Recruit participants to workshops					\$8,000



							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$59,000</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$550,000</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>				
In-Kind	Minnesota Department of Agriculture in-kind labor.	Speak at workshops on the MDA's Water Quality Certification program, which protects Minnesota's water through voluntary farmer compliance.	Secured	\$14,400
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$14,400</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Izaak Walton League's Minnesota Chapter skilled volunteer labor.	Recruit farmers, host workshops.	Secured	\$36,000
In-Kind	Redwood SWCD labor	Provide technical support to farmers interested in securing cost-share for their regenerative practices.	Secured	\$60,221
In-Kind	Izaak Walton League funds to provide food at workshops	Food will be provided for workshop participants using non-ENRTF funds.	Secured	\$19,500
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$115,721</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$130,121</b>

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [977be9f6-31c.pdf](#)

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter or Other*

Title	File
Redwood SWCD letter of support	<a href="#">c31e71af-c82.pdf</a>
Connie Carlson Letter of Support	<a href="#">a168b337-34d.pdf</a>
National Office Letter of Support	<a href="#">05586cbf-17c.pdf</a>
MN Division letter of support	<a href="#">92a3bc95-9b0.pdf</a>
MNSHC letter of support	<a href="#">27499f85-4ae.pdf</a>
Experienced farmers lead the regenerative agriculture transformation	<a href="#">74b9e3be-d58.pdf</a>

## 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



