



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-026

**Proposal Title:** Investigating Policy Implementation: Minnesota's One Watershed One Plan

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Natalie Warren

**Organization:** U of MN - Humphrey School of Public Affairs

**Office Telephone:** (651) 272-9006

**Email:** warre597@umn.edu

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** We will investigate the implementation of Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan in the Mississippi River Basin, focusing on stakeholder experiences, challenges, and successes to improve watershed management and inform policy

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$203,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** July 31, 2028

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Small Projects (G)

**Secondary Category:** Water (B)

#### Project Location

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, NE, SE, NW,

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, NE, SE, NW,

**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.**

Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) initiative improves water resource management by shifting focus from political boundaries to natural watershed boundaries. Established in 2013 through legislation, it directs the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to create a comprehensive, watershed-based approach to water planning. This initiative enhances collaboration among local governments, reduces planning redundancy, and creates effective, science-based strategies for water quality, flood reduction, and resource protection. Local stakeholders, including counties, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), and watershed districts, voluntarily develop and implement watershed-specific management plans, with funding and technical support from the state.

The program supports Minnesota's water quality goals, such as reducing nutrient pollution from phosphorus and nitrogen, which contribute to harmful algal blooms. The Nutrient Reduction Strategy aims for a 45% nitrogen reduction in the Mississippi River by 2040. By promoting local collaboration across watershed boundaries, 1W1P helps achieve these goals. As of March 2025, 1W1P has 90% participation. However, challenges remain, including governance complexities, conflicting priorities, funding limitations, and voluntary participation, which can hinder implementation. Despite these challenges, 1W1P is a critical step toward sustainable watershed management, with ongoing efforts to refine policy and improve collaboration.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

This grant proposal seeks funding for a research project aimed at investigating the implementation of Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program in the Mississippi River Basin. The study will focus on understanding the experiences, challenges, and successes of stakeholders involved in the development and execution of 1W1P within the basin. Through interviews with local governments, watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), and other key stakeholders, the research will identify critical factors influencing the effectiveness of the program, such as coordination between diverse groups, resource allocation, and the integration of local knowledge. By gaining insights into the planning and implementation processes, the study will provide valuable feedback on how 1W1P can be improved to achieve its goals of enhancing water quality, reducing pollution, and promoting sustainable management of water resources. The findings will contribute to refining the 1W1P approach in the Mississippi River Basin and provide useful lessons for expanding the program to watersheds in Minnesota that have yet to implement a watershed plan.

**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?**

Our research on Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program in the Mississippi River Basin will produce key public products to improve water management and guide policy. A research report will summarize stakeholder interviews, highlighting challenges, successes, and effective strategies. Based on findings, policy recommendations will refine the 1W1P approach, improving coordination, resource allocation, and collaboration. A best practices guide will offer practical solutions for watersheds yet to implement the program. Findings will be shared through presentations and workshops to foster knowledge-sharing among local governments, conservation organizations, and the public, enhancing 1W1P's impact statewide.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Data Collection and Interview Preparation

**Activity Budget:** \$65,000

**Activity Description:**

Read watershed plans, Identify stakeholders, develop interview questions

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description  | Approximate Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Read all One Watershed One Plans in the Mississippi River Basin in Minnesota | September 30, 2026          |
| Identify stakeholders to interview   | October 31, 2026            |
| Develop interview questions and schedule interviews for spring               | December 31, 2026           |

### Activity 2: Interview Stakeholders

**Activity Budget:** \$70,000

**Activity Description:**

Interview up to 50 street-level bureaucrats involved with the planning and implementation of One Watershed One Plan about successes, challenges, and recommendations

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description                    | Approximate Completion Date |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Interview stakeholders         | April 30, 2027              |
| Transcribe and code interviews | August 31, 2027             |

### Activity 3: Compile Results and Share Research

**Activity Budget:** \$68,000

**Activity Description:**

From Jan 1, 2028 - July 31, 2028: finalize results from interviews, create best practices and recommendations to share as public resources available online and with partner agencies. Give presentations and publish research.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description   | Approximate Completion Date |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Analyze data and write results                              | December 31, 2027           |
| Publish papers, give presentations, create public resources | July 31, 2028               |

## 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 work be funded?**

The research findings will be implemented through the development of policy recommendations, a best practices guide, and stakeholder engagement tools to refine the 1W1P program. These products will inform the ongoing implementation of 1W1P in the Mississippi River Basin. After project completion, the results will be shared through workshops and presentations to engage local governments, conservation organizations, and the public. This will be a two-year research project, but continued efforts to support 1W1P implementation may be funded through state and federal grants, partnerships with local governments, or additional funding opportunities through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

| Name  | Appropriation                                  | Amount Awarded |
|---|--|----------------|
| Visitor Perceptions of Water Quality to Aid Lake Management | M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 04h | \$379,000      |

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Natalie Warren

**Job Title:** Researcher 5, University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs

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

Warren has paddled the length of the Mississippi River, has worked as the Director of Stewardship and Education at Friends of the Mississippi River, has worked on environmental policy initiatives on the St. Croix River, has connections with communities and organizations along the Mississippi River through previous work and research projects, and is currently writing her second book about the Mississippi River. She researches how people come to know and care for places and this project launches from her previous work to explore local water values and the relationships and disconnects between local, regional, and state river discourses and policy priorities. Warren teaches science communication and water policy in the Humphrey School's Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy program and has experience with project management, grant reporting, and managing collaborative teams to meet goals and deadlines.

**Organization:** U of MN - Humphrey School of Public Affairs

**Organization Description:**

The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota ranks among the country's top professional public policy and planning schools, widely recognized for its success in advancing the common good through a comprehensive, world-class program.

## Budget Summary

| Category / Name                       | Subcategory or Type | Description   | Purpose | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| <b>Personnel</b>                      |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
| Graduate Research Assistant           |                     | Gather documents, content analysis, literature reviews, conduct interviews, policy analysis, coding in qualitative software   |         |                 | 43%        | 1     |                   | \$111,000        |
| Researcher 5                          |                     | Project management and research lead. Manage graduate research assistant. Develop interview questions, participate in interviews. Grant reporting, write public report, outreach communication. |         |                 | 36.6%      | 1     |                   | \$83,000         |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>\$194,000</b> |
| <b>Contracts and Services</b>         |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |
| <b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b> |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |
| <b>Capital Expenditures</b>           |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |
| <b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>   |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |
| <b>Travel In Minnesota</b>            |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |
| <b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       |                   |                  |
|                                       |                     |   |         |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | -                |

|                                 |             |                           |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>Printing and Publication</b> |             |                           |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 | Publication | Two research publications | Publish two articles with results from water values research and comparative policy analysis |  |  |  |                    | \$4,000          |
|                                 |             |                           |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | <b>\$4,000</b>   |
| <b>Other Expenses</b>           |             |                           |  |  |  |  |                    |                  |
|                                 |             | Interviewee stipends      | \$100/person for 30-60 minute interview. Funding covers stipends for 50 interviewees total.  |  |  |  |                    | \$5,000          |
|                                 |             |                           |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | <b>\$5,000</b>   |
|                                 |             |                           |  |  |  |  | <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>\$203,000</b> |

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 |                 |     |                     |        |
|           |                 |     | Non State Sub Total | -      |
|           |                 |     | Funds Total         | -      |

Total Project Cost: \$203,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes



## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [e3514a5d-df7.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

One Watershed One Plan Overview and Maps...

### Supplemental Attachments

*Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

| Title           | File                             |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Approval Letter | <a href="#">c56ea084-a20.pdf</a> |

## Administrative Use

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

No

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

N/A

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

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?**

Yes

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

No

**Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?**

No

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:**

**Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements**

N/A