



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-255

**Proposal Title:** Red River Basin Soil Health Initiative

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Kim Melton

**Organization:** Red River Basin Commission

**Office Telephone:** (605) 830-0047

**Email:** kim@redriverbasincommission.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** This initiative will enable multiple conservation districts to expand their outreach efforts to educate landowners on the importance of implementing soil health practices.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$362,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

#### Project Location

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

Region(s): NW

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

Region(s): NW

**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.**

With open winters, droughts across the valley, and unpredictable rain events, we see more and more soil erosion. The soil moves across our landscape causing dust storms, poor visibility, sinus headaches, along with adding pollutants in our ditches, streams, and rivers. This initiative aims to decrease soil erosion in the Red River Basin (Basin).

While some producers implement soil health practices across their farm much of our ag land is over-tilled, remains uncovered during the off-season, and continues to erode into our waterways. As you move across the Basin you will see a change in soil, topography, and farming practices. Each region has different crop rotations and techniques and yet we see the same issues with our natural resources: wind erosion and soil degradation. This has led to 6,000 waterways in the Basin on the 2024 Impaired Waters list.

Changing agriculture practices is scary and risky. Producers lack the knowledge and confidence to adopt these changes. Conservation districts are equipped with personnel to handle resource concerns, but not all districts have staff or tools allowing them to be skilled with incorporating soil health practices.

**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.**

Our soil health initiative will support conservation districts to host localized soil health events throughout the Red River Basin. Funding is a restraint when it comes to carrying out promotional activities. Soil health tools are expensive along with speakers, lunch, facility rentals, and advertising. We will support conservation districts with funding to assist carrying out successful outreach events and we will also provide a soil health professional to help them achieve their local soil health goals. Our recently hired soil health coordinator has six years of experience implementing soil health practices by working one-on-one with producers and agencies.

Installing soil health practices has many benefits. It prevents soil erosion and leaching of valuable nutrients. It increases organic matter which increases water infiltration into the soil. It then leads to increased organic matter and water retention which can decrease overland flooding, thus keeping our soil in the field. These practices also create additional residue armoring our soils over the winter months. Implementing changes on a farming operation is risky and not a decision producers take lightly. Having valuable resources will make this transition seamless and increase adoption Basin wide as producers get more comfortable with these new practices.

**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?**

There are multiple watershed districts across the Red River Basin that have soil health as a goal in their comprehensive watershed management plans. As you look at our communities, they too have water plans that target pollution reduction in our rivers. Agriculture dominates the landscape in the Red River Basin. Each conservation district can use this funding to impact hundreds of landowners through meetings, demonstration sites, and field days. This funding will be used to assist change in agriculture and reduce the impacts of soil erosion due to wind and water.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Soil Health Outreach Events

**Activity Budget:** \$362,000

**Activity Description:**

Our objective will be to enable conservation districts with funding to carry out educational outreach events throughout the Basin. This would include workshops, producer meetings, demonstration sites, or field days that promote conservation activities. Each district will apply for the funding from the RRBC and it will be administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Once completed, the agency will follow up with a report on the number of attendees, their origin and the receipts to calculate reimbursement. The RRBC will reimburse the host at a rate of 75% total costs. The RRBC can monitor the uptake of soil health adoption through readiness evaluations, and by checking with these agencies a year later to see if there has been an increase in participation in local, state or federal programs.

Having these educational events, catered to their region, will increase adoption of soil health practices by helping landowners recognize the benefits to the soil. These events also allow the local staff to become a resource for producers by helping them through the process of changing agricultural practices.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Project Outreach and Start Up	July 31, 2027
Second Year Outreach Activities	July 31, 2028
Wrapping up Outreach Events	June 30, 2029

## 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?**

Hosting educational events in a region can build a network of innovative producers. This is significant to changing agricultural practices but can also be expensive as the costs to host events continue to rise. If you want long-term adoption of soil health practices, you must create a network of producers who can help each other through the changes. This funding will provide conservation districts with the ability to create these lines of communication for local producers.

Once equipped with the tools and knowledge, these districts become resources for the producers. They will in turn continue to support the next generation.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Kim Melton

**Job Title:** Soil Health Coordinator

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

Our soil health coordinator has been working in conservation for 12 years. For the past six years they have coordinated multiple soil health programs in MN utilizing numerous funding sources to assist producers implement soil health practices. They have cultivated relationships with multiple agencies including local agronomist, farmers, SWCD's, Watershed Districts, MDA, General Mills, Cargill, UofM, and NRCS to name a few. They have managed successful grants with different agencies including UofM, BWSR, and MN Corn Growers.

**Organization:** Red River Basin Commission

**Organization Description:**

The RRBC brings people together to move common Basin goals forward.

The RRBC is a charitable, not-for-profit organization designed to help facilitate a cooperative approach to water management within the Basin and is a well-established forum for identifying, developing, and implementing solutions to crossboundary issues.

The RRBC is led by 44 directors representing the diversity of this multi-jurisdictional Basin and is comprised of local, state, provincial, and First Nation government representation, the environmental community, and at-large members. It maintains offices in Fargo, ND and Winnipeg, MB and is dedicated to innovation in the management of the Red River Basin's water resources.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineli gible	% Bene fits	# FTE	Class ified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Red River Basin Commission Soil Health Coordinator		Provide support throughout the Basin to all conservation districts that are looking to increase soil health adoption. This person would support the events and outreach activities. She has 12 years of experience with conservation districts and six years of working with farmers implementing soil health practices.			0%	60,000		\$60,000
Red River Basin Commission Support Staff		This position will support all aspects of the project. Collecting applications, reporting, payments, website updates, and follow up evaluations.			20%	30,000		\$30,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Conservation Districts	Subaward	They will be planning, advertising, and carrying out all aspects of the outreach events.				210,000		\$210,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Soil health related tools and equipment	Tools that are allowed to be purchased would include tabletop rainfall simulator, shovels, penetrometers, EC Meters, infiltration rings, etc. This equipment will allow them to meet farmers in the field and show them what their soil structure looks like and what they can strive to make better. It also allows them to showcase these tools at their county fairs, field days, and in-person events. If the agencies would like to purchase tools to have on hand they must submit receipts for reimbursement.					\$47,000

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$47,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Multiple trips around the Red River Basin	To support conservation staff as they plan and implement outreach events across the Basin.					\$15,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$362,000</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
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Red River Basin Commission	Matching the staff time associated with this grant.	Secured	\$90,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$90,000
			Funds Total	\$90,000

Total Project Cost: \$452,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes



## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [f5d016de-e5d.docx](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Map of the Red River Basin...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Cert. of Exempt	<a href="#">37af31c2-f72.pdf</a>
Audit	<a href="#">91c046a4-81b.pdf</a>
Lett of Good Standing	<a href="#">d7e2c7d4-5a5.pdf</a>
990 Charitable Organization Form	<a href="#">abd9fc72-628.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
RRBC Letter of Support	<a href="#">844b670f-55b.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Clay SWCD	<a href="#">1af1893f-f9b.pdf</a>
West Polk SWCD	<a href="#">d700a11d-1a1.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?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**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?**

No

**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:**

Kim Melton, Red River Basin Commission

**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