

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-340

Proposal Title: Swift Coulee Channel Restoration - Phase 2

Project Manager Information

Name: Morteza Maher Organization: Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Office Telephone: (218) 745-4741

Project Basic Information

Email: morteza.maher@mstrwd.org

Project Summary: Swift Coulee Channel Restoration - Phase 2, will Create a 140ft wide permanently managed habitat on over 8 miles long of farmed stream while protecting farms from flood as well.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$3,564,000

Proposed Project Completion: September 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

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 and In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

The Swift Coulee is a tributary to the Snake River which is a tributary to the Red River of the North within the Lake Agassiz Glacial Plain. Flooding and water quality are major issues in this watershed. Relatively flat topography with flashy rains and farmers who are eager to farm every inch possible, have caused this natural waterway be filled with sediment, farmed through, and eventually impair itself and downstream waters. In its current condition, Swift Coulee neither provides natural benefits nor appropriate drainage to farmers. This phase of the project through RIM program will secure perpetual easements on over 300 acres and the LCCMR's fund will enable the construction of it which will then create sustainable upland habitat, provide water quality benefits and better drainage for agricultural production.

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.

The proposed solution involves reintroducing a meandering channel to meet the Minnesota DNR's hydraulic and hydrological requirements, replicating a natural stream with a vegetated floodplain at least 140 feet wide. The low-flow channel will accommodate up to a 2.5-year rainfall event, while the floodplain will handle a 10-year, 24-hour event, with levees ensuring water remains within the channel. Land acquisition will occur through BWSR's RIM program, as in Phase 1, while this grant will fund construction. Key activities include excavation, embankment, culvert installation, rock structures, and native grass seeding.

To address the issue, the District established a project work team in 2016, including the DNR, BWSR, MPCA, local authorities, and landowners. This collaborative effort defined the project's purpose and need, evaluated 13 alternatives, and selected the least environmentally impactful option. The chosen design enhances wetland habitat, improves soil health and water quality, and benefits local agriculture by improving drainage. Additionally, it provides a broader wildlife sanctuary, balancing environmental restoration with agricultural interests.

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?

Rehabilitation of the Swift Coulee is a unique opportunity to create and permanently provide significant water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat enhancements to a predominantly agricultural area known for its extensive altered hydrology. The overall project will create 520 acres of perpetual aquatic and native upland habitat within a new floodplain corridor, more wetlands, will turn a straightened and farmed 14 miles of channel to 18 miles of protected water body, reduce sediment load by 8000 tons and Phosphorous by 7600 lb per year. Public would benefit from game hunting, bird watching, agricultural drainage aspects of it.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Final Engineering of the Swift Coulee Channel Restoration - Phase 2

Activity Budget: \$150,000

Activity Description:

Development of detailed design including hydraulic & hydrologic modeling and E-channel design of Phase 2 of the Swift Coulee. This also includes the application and securing of all required permits, assembling of construction plans, and development and preparation of all bidding documents.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate
	Completion Date
All Construction Funds Legally Secured*	February 28, 2026
Ongoing Reporting	March 31, 2026
Title Review and Appraisal	May 31, 2026
Survey / ESA (Legal Survey)	May 31, 2026
RIM Boundaries Coordination and Finalization	July 31, 2026
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded*	September 30, 2026
Consultation with SHPO*	September 30, 2026
Final Engineering and Permit Applications	November 30, 2026
Project Bidding	January 31, 2027
Signage Installed with ENRTF Language or Logo*	September 30, 2027

Activity 2: Construction

Activity Budget: \$3,414,000

Activity Description:

Contractor will construct the project. Construction activities include but not limited to mobilization, Clear and Grub, Common Excavation, Common Embankment, Steel Culverts furnish and install, top soil, seeding.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construction	September 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving
			Funds
Houston	Houston	HEI is the appointed District Engineer responsible for project design,	No
Engineering,	Engineering,	coordination and implementation of the project.	
Inc.	Inc. (HEI)		
Board of	BWSR	BWSR's easement section works with the District to secure the Perpetual	No
Water and Soil		Easement on the project footprint.	
Resources			
(BWSR)			
Marshall	Marshall	MC SWCD is the local government unit working with the individual landowners,	No
County Soil	County SWCD	the Watershed District and the BWSR collaborate to maximize the benefits of the	
and Water	(MC SWCD)	project.	
Conservation			
District			

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?

This ENRTF will provide the necessary funds to construct the project via a public bid process. Following project construction, ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that the project meets the standards of the site-specific restoration management plan. Sustainability and maintenance of this project is required by watershed district law (M.S. 103D). Long-term maintenance and management will be the responsibility of the MSTRWD and funded through levy income that will be assessed under 103D.729 (Water Management District).

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Morteza Maher

Job Title: District Administrator

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

Morteza Maher is a Licensed Civil Engineer (PE) and Certified Project Management Professional (PMP). He joined the MSTRWD which is a Local Government Unit during covid era. With a background in project management working in the private sector. Over the past 4 years he has rapidly moved belated watershed district capital improvement projects forward where 2 of these projects are in the construction phase and another is permitted and ready for bidding in 2026 which were in the que for over 2 decades. Also, he has been able to manage all aspects of those projects including but not limited to:

- 1- stakeholders from local landowners to state and federal agencies and legislators,
- 2- Cost and Financials (including all limits and restrictions related to local, state and Federal funds),
- 3- Time and Schedule (including funding deadlines, permitting timelines, local constructability season, etc)
- 4- Communication and Quality aspects of the project throughout the life cycle of these projects.

Alongside those tasks, he has managed the day-to-day business of the watershed district including legal aspects and challenges, budgeting and levy set up, HR, etc.

The MSTRWD Board of Managers in addition to so many other local governments (Counties, SWCDs, etc) can confess on his qualification.

As for metrics on his performance, he has taken the City of Newfolden's (\$12.3 million) from midway to end (Scheduled to be completed in 2025), the Swift Coulee Channel Restoration Project (a decades belated project) phase 1 with 18 parcels and landowners, over \$5 million cost estimate is scheduled to be constructed in 2025. Our District's project levy

capacity is only ~ \$500K and managing these size projects with all the restrictions and limits on funds from State or Federal sources and yet to satisfy all their requirements is a heavy lift he managed successfully.

Organization: Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District

Organization Description:

The Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed district (MSTRWD) was originally established in 1970 under MN Stat. 103D and operates under 103D and 103E. it's original boundaries covered only Middle and Snake Rivers watershed area. Later in 2002, the Tamarac River Watershed area was also added to the watershed district. Today, the District consists of approximately 1,476 square miles in Marshall, Polk, Pennington, Kittson, and Roseau Counties.

while the mission of the MSTRWD is to manage the District's resources for the efficient movement of water across the District for purposes of reducing flooding, providing agricultural drainage and to protect and improve water quality, it works closely with State Agencies to improve the Natural Resources including water, soil and air quality. MSTRWD proudly owns or jointly owns and operates 7 large size impoundments totaling more than 6,000 acres which

are great habitat / sanctuary for wildlife. We also working with the Re-Invest In MN program to create habitat through our streams.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineli gible	% Bene fits	# FTE	Class ified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Contractor will construct the project. Construction activities include but not limited to mobilization, Clear and Grub, Common Excavation, Common Embankment, Steel Culverts furnish and install, top soil, seeding.				15		\$3,414,000
Houston Engineering Inc	Service Contract	Engineering, Design and Construction management				-		\$150,000
							Sub Total	\$3,564,000
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	\$3,564,000
				Total	

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				
Cash	MSTR 1W1P - Clean Water Fund	Construction expenses	Secured	\$300,000
Cash	State Outdoor Heritage Fund (LSOHC) through BWSR -	Land Acquisition	Secured	\$1,500,000
	Red Board RIM program			
			State Sub	\$1,800,000
			Total	
Non-State				
Cash	Red River Watershed Management Board - Clean	Construction expenses	Secured	\$200,000
	Water Base Fund			
In-Kind	MSTRWD's project fund (source is the Local Levy)	Construction Management	Secured	\$300,000
			Non State	\$500,000
			Sub Total	
			Funds	\$2,300,000
			Total	

Total Project Cost: \$5,864,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
				-	-	-			
				-	-	-			
Totals				0	0	-			

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

The MSTRWD has partnered with BWSR and already acquired a perpetual conservation easement over the entire Phase 1 project footprint using Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) and working to do the same on Phase 2. The LCCMR funds would help with engineering and construction costs to develop and construct Phase 2 of the project on the conservation easement lands.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

The project has three main components: channel and riparian corridor rehabilitation, native vegetation establishment, and wetland improvements. The expected outcomes include flood damage reduction, water quality improvements to the Swift Coulee and downstream waterbodies, aquatic habitat creation, native upland habitat, fishery benefits, and outdoor recreation land. The rehabilitated coulee channel and floodplain will provide contiguous wildlife habitat, wetlands, and native vegetation in a heavy agricultural production area. Ongoing monitoring, adaptive management, and future maintenance will ensure the project is successful for its intended purposes for future generations. The design plans, management plans, and other relevant project plans will be kept on file at the MSTRWD office in Warren, MN and also by our consultant Houston Engineering, Inc. Overall strategies for long-term plan implementation and maintenance are being planned through the establishment of a Water Management District.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources "Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines" in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement. MSTRWD worked with BWSR RIM easement personnel to identify the proper native vegetation establishment plan and seeding mixtures for the project. All restoration design components have followed the BWSR Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines to determine target plant communities, seed selection, establishment methods and overall management strategies.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

The project has been designed with long-term stability in mind which has been documented in plans that will direct construction and maintenance of the project. The MSTRWD staff and its consultants will ensure the successful establishment of the project through monitoring and adaptive management. Sustainability and maintenance of this project is the responsibility of the MSTRWD as required by watershed district law (Minnesota Statutes 103D). Long-term maintenance and management needs will be funded through the establishment of a Water Management District. The establishment of a Water Management District will allow the MSTRWD to levy taxes on the local project area for all maintenance and management needs.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

MSTRWD will annually review project needs as these will likely vary each year. The MSTRWD will contact the Minnesota Conservation Corps regional manager to determine if the needs of the project can be met by an available field crew in a given year.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

For the first three years, project site monitoring will occur monthly during the growing season to determine native

vegetation establishment. Adaptive management will be used to document and determine methods to address poor establishment, weed control, and other potential issues. Annual monitoring will continue in years 3-5 to document weed populations and any areas of poor establishment. Adaptive management will focus on practices to suppress undesirable weed growth and increase desired species diversity. Practices may include controlled burns, grazing management, mowing or haying. Monitoring results will be compiled. The monitoring results will be used to evaluate whether the project has been successful in improving the parcel and meeting desired project outcomes, identify potential problem areas and corrective measures, and summarize findings for potential future restorations.

Attachments

Required Attachments

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File: 2714ac67-4c8.pdf

Alternate Text for Map

On the Map, the footprint of the Swift Coulee Channel Restoration - Phase 2 project is demonstrated in Sections 1,2,3,4,5,8,9 of McCrea Township and Section 36 of Alma Township all in Marshall County MN....

Financial Capacity

Title	File			
Balance Sheet as of 3/7/2025	<u>b84d8b06-026.pdf</u>			
Board Resolution or Letter				
Title	File			
Authorization Letter	<u>19df352a-800.pdf</u>			

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Capital Projects Questioner	<u>96f19317-821.pdf</u>
Letter of Support	<u>6615216b-f59.pdf</u>
Letter of Support	d40f1fb5-214.pdf
Letter of Support	7f00b061-a24.pdf
BWSR's letter of Intent	<u>3623fd0f-97c.pdf</u>

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

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?

Yes, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District

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:

Tony Nordby - Houston Engineering Inc.

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

Yes, I understand