

On an annual basis the LCCMR identifies funding priority areas based on its Six Year Strategic Plan and publishes an Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Request for Proposals (RFP). A summary of the 2008 (for FY 2009) and 2009 (for FY 2010) funding priorities, project criteria, and background information is included here.

2008 RFP Funding Priorities (for FY 2009)

I. SELECTED TOPICS

Proposals were requested in following five areas:

Native Prairies, Water Quality, Shoreland and Riparian Lands, Invasive Species and Natural Resource Data.

A. Native Prairies – Defined in M.L. 2007, Chp. 57, Art. 1, Sec. 17 (84.02)

- Protect, restore and enhance native prairies
 - ✓ Create prairie seed banks of local ecotypes
 - ✓ Old growth prairie protection and restoration
 - ✓ Working prairies
 - Biofuels production
 - Seed banks
 - Impacts on wildlife and water quality
- Develop a program to certify that prairie seeds are of a local ecotype

B. Water Quality

- Address contaminants in ground water through better understanding of the contaminants and ways to reduce them.
- Address water quality at a watershed level through changes in land use practices to improve water quality, including monitoring and evaluation components. (Funding may be proposed for more than 3 years to ensure sufficient time for monitoring and evaluation of the project.

C. Shoreland and Riparian Lands

- Creative and innovative efforts to preserve, protect and restore shoreland and riparian lands.

D. Invasive Species

- Develop effective ways to reduce the threat of harmful aquatic invasive species.
- Develop effective ways to stop or prevent the spread of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS).

E. Natural Resource Data

- Continue efforts to collect baseline (foundation) natural resource information such as the county geologic atlas, soil survey, and national wetlands inventory (NWI) with an effort to increase accuracy, efficiency and cost effectiveness of data collection and the ability to coordinate data collection

and use. The data must be in the public domain and be easy to access and share.

- Develop a statewide GIS plan with strategies for the coordination of collecting and distributing natural resource data.

II. INVITED PROPOSALS

There were two categories of invited proposals: A. Specific Natural Resource Projects and B. Regional Grant Programs.

Specific public agencies, organizations and the University of Minnesota, Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment (IREE) were requested to submit proposals for specific projects. Proposals were review and considered for funding. A funding commitment was not made by the RFP.

A. Specific Natural Resource Projects:

1) Minnesota Forest Legacy Program, 2) Metro Conservation Corridors and Minnesota Habitat Corridors Partnership, 3) Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS), 4) Minnesota State Parks and Trails, and 5) Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement.

1. Forest Conservation Easements, including the MN Forest Legacy Program

Forest conservation easements that help reduce fragmentation of important forest lands in Minnesota, excluding mining with the exception of limited aggregate mining for road maintenance on the easement property.

2. Conservation Corridors

Efforts should focus on reducing habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation to benefit wildlife and protect and improve water quality.

a. Metro Conservation Corridors

b. Minnesota Habitat Corridors Partnership (Outstate)

3. Minnesota County Biological survey (MCBS) – DNR

Accelerate the Minnesota county biological survey program that identifies significant natural areas and systematically collects and interprets data on the distribution and ecology of native plant communities, rare plants, and rare animals.

4. Minnesota State Parks and Trails

- Acquire inholdings within approved state park boundaries.
- Acquire land for state trails according to approved master plans.

5. Conservation Easement Stewardship and Enforcement Program – DNR and Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

DNR and BWSR are requested to submit a proposal to address long-term stewardship, monitoring and enforcement of state held conservation easements.

The proposal must specifically address conservation easements funded by the LCMR and the LCCMR and may be applicable to other state held conservation easements. The Legislative Auditor and Attorney General must be consulted on the proposal before it is submitted.

B. Regional Grant Programs

M.S. 116P allows and encourages some form of block grants to the various regions of the state, to be administered by an existing organization for regranting to projects that meet local needs but that are also consistent with the Strategic Plan.

For the 2008 funding, LCCMR considered recommending an allocation for state and regional matching grant programs listed below targeted to local units of government and nonprofits. The programs must contain a competitive process with careful evaluation and thorough management and evaluation.

The programs identified for consideration of 2008 funding were requested to submit a proposal for review and evaluation.

For acquisition: Priority was given to acquiring lands with high quality natural resources and conservation lands that provide natural buffers to water resources. Conservation easements must be perpetual.

The LCCMR did not accept proposals that were eligible for existing state and regional matching grant programs.

1. Local Initiative Matching Grants Program – DNR

- **Regional Park Matching Grant Program**

(for cities, counties, townships located outside the seven-county metropolitan area) for acquisition costs of regional parks.

- **Natural and Scenic Area Matching Grant Program**

(for cities, counties, townships and school districts) for acquisition of natural and scenic areas

- **Conservation Partners Matching Grant Program**

(for private/nonprofit organizations and local governments, including cooperative projects involving local governments) Small grants for projects that enhance fish, wildlife and native plant habitat or for research or survey projects related to habitat enhancement.

- **Environmental Partnerships Matching Grant Program**

(for private/nonprofit organizations) Small grants to help carry out a variety of projects to help protect and enhance our natural environment.

2. Metropolitan Regional Park and Open Space Program – Metropolitan Council

Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trail Acquisition for the metropolitan seven-counties through the Metropolitan Council (40% match provided by the Council) for acquisitions identified in the adopted Metropolitan Regional Park Plan.

3. Local Water Management Matching Challenge Grants – Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) program for Local Water Management Matching Challenge Grants for implementation of priority activities identified in approved local water management plans.

Eligible applicants were counties, watershed management organizations, watershed districts and soil and water conservation districts that have been delegated under the M.s.103B.301 local water management program.

Potentially fundable implementation categories and some example activities include:

- **Land and Water Treatment** includes activities applied to the land or a water resource such as erosion control structures, shoreline protection measures, in-lake restoration projects.
- **Planning and Environmental Controls** includes the development of lake and watershed management plans, official controls relating to water, linking comprehensive plans to land use plans.
- **Monitoring and Modeling** includes activities such as citizen monitoring networks, modeling ground water flow or surface water runoff.
- **Inventory and Mapping** includes conducting detailed inventories of drainage systems, wetlands or feedlots.
- **Education and Information** includes workshops and seminars.

4. **Global Climate Change: Carbon Emission Reduction and Renewable Alternative Energy Grant Projects**

University of Minnesota, Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment (IREE)

- Set up a competitive grant program to provide funds to universities, colleges and high schools to take actions to move toward being carbon neutral through carbon reductions and carbon sequestering, include curriculum development on global climate change and carbon reduction.
- Set up a competitive grant program to provide funds to communities and local community groups to take actions to move toward being carbon neutral and to develop locally based alternative renewable energy.

II. **CREATIVE IDEAS – Disruptive Technology and Disruptive Innovation**

Proposals were requested for creative ideas on improving Minnesota's environment and natural resources. The intent was to receive proposals that could be described as "disruptive technology or disruptive innovation". The proposal were to provide a dramatically different approach to improving natural resource conservation and protection.

- Must be creative! Must be specific!
- Must describe the idea and potential ways to implement it.

There must be a proposed method to evaluate the potential benefits to Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

2009 RFP Funding Priorities (for FY 2010)

As part of the transition to an annual funding cycle, proposals were solicited in two phases: Phase 1 selected ongoing projects and Phase 2 targeted issue areas.

Phase 1: Selected Ongoing Projects

For Phase 1 funding priorities, all existing Trust Fund funded projects were reviewed, ongoing projects that might benefit from additional funding were identified, and a selection of those projects identified were chosen as priorities for the LCCMR to consider for additional funding based on the guidelines listed below. Specific individual projects within this selection were asked to submit a proposal requesting additional funds that outlines how the funds could extend, accelerate and/or enhance their existing efforts.

Projects submitting a proposal under Phase 1 were not guaranteed additional funding. Phase 1 proposals were evaluated and considered for funding at the same time as Phase 2 proposals.

GUIDELINES: Projects selected as priorities to submit a proposal for Phase 1 were chosen based on the following guidelines. Projects or programs that:

1. Continue efforts to maintain significant progress to complete a previously defined multi-phase project/program.
2. Continue a multi-phase project that will provide timely and relevant research or baseline data.
3. Are part of a continuum of researching, demonstrating, piloting, or refining natural resources practices that can be scaled up for broader implementation.
4. Are part of a coherent plan that is well developed and generally accepted by natural resource professionals.
5. Update or expand important statewide natural resource data or information.
6. Enhances the outdoor recreation system (M.S. Chapter 86A), the metropolitan regional park system and the Local Grants Program administered by the DNR for non-metro regional and local parks.

The existing projects listed below were specifically selected by the LCCMR as priorities to consider for additional funding for Phase 1 of the 2009 RFP. The goal of this selection was to extend, accelerate, enhance, and/or advance these existing efforts to their next logical stage or scope of work directly in accordance with the intent of the existing project. Each of these individual projects was asked to submit a proposal requesting additional funds that outlines how additional funds could be used.

A. Natural Resource Data and Information

Project Title	Organization	Project Overview	Appropriations since 2005
Minnesota County Biological Survey	MN Department of Natural Resources	County-by-county survey, interpretation, and mapping of the state's natural habitats and the species they contain.	ML 2005-06 (08a) ML 2007 (6a) ML 2008 (3m)

County Geological Atlas and Groundwater Monitoring*	MN Department of Natural Resources & MN Geological Survey	County-by-county survey, interpretation, mapping, and monitoring of the state's groundwater resources.	ML 2007 (5j) ML 2008 (4h)
Soil Survey	MN Board of Water and Soil Resources	County-by-county survey, interpretation, and mapping of the state's soil resources.	ML 2005-06 (08b) ML 2007 (6b) ML 2008 (5b)
Innovative Springshed Mapping for Trout Stream Management	University of MN	Identification, assessment, and mapping of springs and recharge areas supplying trout streams in SE Minnesota.	ML 2007 (5g)
Updating the National Wetlands Inventory for Minnesota	MN Department of Natural Resources	Update of information on the characteristics, extent, and status of wetlands and deepwater habitats in MN.	ML 2008 (5a)
Restorable Wetlands Inventory	Ducks Unlimited	Identification and mapping of drained wetlands in MN to help prioritize wetland restoration.	ML 2008 (5e)

* Actual project titles for individual appropriations to this ongoing effort were "County Geologic Atlas Acceleration" (ML 2007) & "South-Central MN Groundwater Monitoring & County Geological Atlas" (ML 2008).

B. State Parks, Trails, and Natural Areas Acquisition & Restoration

Project Title	Organization	Project Overview	Appropriations since 2005
State Park Acquisition**	MN Department of Natural Resources	Acquisition of privately held land within existing state park boundaries.	ML 2005-06 (6a) ML 2007 (4e) ML 2008 (3h)
State Trail Acquisition**	MN Department of Natural Resources	Acquisition of parcels of land along state trail corridors.	ML 2005-06 (06f,g,h) ML 2007 (4e) ML 2008 (3h)
Metropolitan Regional Park System Land Acquisition	Metropolitan Council	Subgrants for acquisition of land for metropolitan regional park system.	ML 2005-06 (6e) ML 2007 (4f) ML 2008 (3i)

Non-Metropolitan Regional Parks and Natural and Scenic Area Acquisition	MN Department of Natural Resources	Subgrants for acquisition of parkland outside the metropolitan area and natural and scenic areas statewide.	ML 2005 (6j) ML 2007 (4g)
Scientific and Natural Area Acquisition	MN Department of Natural Resources	Acquisition of MN lands containing rare natural features and resources of exceptional scientific and educational value.	ML 2005 (5c) ML 2008 (3f)
Forest Legacy Conservation Easements	MN Department of Natural Resources	Acquisition of permanent easements on private forest land that allow existing uses but prevent habitat degradation.	ML 2005-06 (9c) ML 2006 (11) ML 2007 (4a)
MN Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP)	MN Department of Natural Resources, NGOs, Fed. agencies	Acquisition and restoration of lands to connect quality habitat in 11 major landscape corridors in outstate MN.	ML 2005-06 (05a) ML 2007 (4b) ML 2008 (3c)
Metro Conservation Corridors (MeCC)	MN Department of Natural Resources, NGOs	Acquisition and restoration of lands to connect quality habitat in 7 county metro area and surrounding counties.	ML 2005-06 (05b) ML 2007 (4c) ML 2008 (3a)

** Past state park and trail acquisitions were sometimes included under the same appropriation and actual project titles differed from those indicated here to reflect this; specifically, this includes "State Parks and Trails Land Acquisition" (ML 2007) and "State Park and Trail Land Acquisition" (ML 2008). For the purposes of this document and Phase 1 request, "State Park Acquisition" and "State Trail Acquisition" are being indicated as separate projects.

C. Water-Related Research

Project Title	Organization	Project Overview	Appropriations since 2005
Unwanted Hormone Therapy: Protecting Water and Public Health	University of MN	Research to determine where behavior-altering estrogenic compounds come from and how they are distributed through wastewater treatment plant systems.	ML 2005-06 (07e)
Climate Change Impacts on Minnesota's Aquatic Resources	University of MN	Research measuring long-term trends in the MN's climate, ecology, and water resources; making projections about impacts of change; and	ML 2006 (07) ML 2007 (5k)

		identifying indicators to monitor changes.	
Improved River Quality Monitoring Using Airborne Remote Sensing	Minnesota State University - Mankato	Research improving methods for monitoring and studying river water quality and riparian habitat in MN.	ML 2007 (5e)
Water Resource Sustainability	University of MN	Research improving surface water and groundwater resources planning in MN.	ML 2007 (5i)
Cedar Creek Groundwater Project using Prairie Biofuel Buffers	University of MN	Research on ability of native prairie plants to provide cellulosic biofuel feedstock while creating wildlife habitat, protecting groundwater, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.	ML 2007 (5n)
Future of Energy and Minnesota's Water Resources	University of MN	Research assessing water demand in MN under various energy production scenarios.	ML 2008 (4a)

Additional guidance for these specific projects:

1. **Minnesota Habitat Conservation Partnership (HCP) &**
2. **Metro Conservation Corridors (MeCC)**

The LCCMR requested that HCP and MeCC projects address the following in their Phase 1 proposals:

- a. Prioritization of Acquisition and Restoration – Utilize the *Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan* mapping efforts to help further identify the highest priority lands for protection, conservation, and restoration. Acquisitions must be based on protecting the highest ecological value in addition to willing sellers.
- b. Shoreland – Shoreland areas should be given a very high priority of protection and restoration because of their ecological importance as the interface between land and water.
- c. Shallow lakes – Shallow lake restoration proposed for funding should include innovative restoration pilots, evaluation and monitoring components for the restorations, and address the upland impacts on the shallow lakes.

3. **The Minnesota County Geologic Atlas**

The LCCMR requested that the proposal submitted address updating geothermal heat flow maps for Minnesota to assist in assessing the potential for shallow and deep geothermal energy options.

Phase 2: Targeted Issue Areas

Projects were sought that provide multiple ecological and other public benefits. Proposals were requested in the following four areas:

- Land and Habitat
- Water Quality
- Invasive Species
- Energy

A. Land and Habitat

1. Critical Lands Analysis

Use applicable data to identify the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands and other ecologically sensitive lands, at local and regional levels, that have the highest ecological value and provide multiple other benefits. The data must be provided in a prioritized listing and ranked in order of conservation values.

2. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Lands

Develop and implement a program to permanently protect and retain the conservation status of lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with contracts due to expire in the near future and that have the highest ecological value and provide multiple other benefits, focusing on lands with lower crop productivity potential, as indicated by applicable data.

3. Technical Assistance for Conserving Land

Provide landowners, land managers, planners, and conservationists with information and evaluation tools pertaining to various land conservation options in order to permanently protect lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with contracts due to expire in the near future and/or other ecologically sensitive lands. Efforts should focus on lands that have the highest ecological value and provide multiple other benefits, as indicated by applicable data.

B. Water Quality

1. Reduce Soil Erosion

Reduce nutrient, solids, and toxics loading in surface waters by addressing streambank, shoreland, and other erosion on a watershed basis through analysis of the loading and its causes. Develop and implement a demonstration of effective best management practices (BMPs) to mitigate the nutrient, solids, and toxics loading. Proposals must include an evaluation and monitoring component for the implementation of the BMPs.

2. Reduce Peak Water Flows

On a watershed basis, help control peak flows to improve surface water quality, reduce flooding, and facilitate infiltration of water to groundwater systems by developing and implementing methods to keep water on the land longer for both working lands and habitat.

3. Minnesota Drainage Law Analysis and Evaluation

Conduct a legal analysis of Minnesota drainage laws (M.S. Chapter 103E and other applicable drainage law) to determine the economic costs and benefits and

environmental impacts of the laws and consider alternative strategies that would best serve the collective needs of public waters and property owners alike.

4. Deep Water Lakes

Protect and enhance the lakesheds and aquatic communities of high quality deep water lakes in Minnesota through inventory and evaluation of cold water aquatic communities in the lakes; development and implementation of effective best management practices (BMPs); and/or implementation of other protection efforts for uplands, shoreland, and groundwater. All proposals implementing shoreland protection must include monitoring and evaluation components.

C. Invasive Species

1. Aquatic and Terrestrial Invasive Species

Address the threat of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species by developing new, innovative, and more effective control methods. Potential efforts could include:

- a. Preventing introductions of new invasive species.
- b. Providing early detection of new invasive species.
- c. Reducing the spread of invasive species along transportation routes and other vectors.
- d. Containing or suppressing invasive species already present in Minnesota, including Curly-leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Watermilfoil. **This does not include funding typical maintenance activities such as harvesting and annual chemical treatments.*
- e. Restoring or reestablishing terrestrial or aquatic habitats impacted by invasive species. Priority will be given to habitats located on public lands or private lands covered by permanent conservation easements.

D. Energy

1. Renewable Energy Life Cycle Costs and Impacts

Using new and existing data, research and evaluate over-arching climate change and life cycle costs and impacts of renewable energy options in Minnesota. Relevant factors include effects on the economy, greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, water quality, carbon sequestration, gene flow risks, wildlife populations, native pollinators, transport and delivery, and utilization by the transportation sector.

2. Residential Energy Conservation

Develop innovative pilot or demonstration programs to increase the implementation and effectiveness of residential energy conservation efforts, including delivery of creative financing options for residential energy customers.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

Project managers and partners must be accountable and able to complete project objectives.

All proposals should, as appropriate:

- **demonstrate innovative approaches** to solving natural resource issues
- have approaches that are **measurable and reflect current scientific standards** so that they can be evaluated to determine the most effective approaches
- have approaches that are **replicable** on future projects to more effectively and efficiently solve specific natural resource issues
- have **broad applicability** on a regional and/or statewide basis
- **add to the knowledge base** of addressing natural resource issues
- State **clear objectives** for what the proposal will accomplish

For acquisition and conservation easements, priority is to be given to acquiring lands with high quality natural resources and conservation lands that provide natural buffers to water resources. Conservation easements must be perpetual and include stewardship provisions to perpetually monitor and enforce the conditions of the conservation easements.

The use and protection of native species is required for all projects.

Restorations must utilize seeds and plants of the local ecotypes unless not available. The second preference is to have seeds and plants of the same eco-region, and the third preference is to have seeds and plants of an adjacent eco-region.

Criteria for scoring proposals:

The following seven criteria will be considered in evaluating Trust Fund proposals (in alphabetical order):

- Add to the knowledge base and disseminate information
- Broad applicability with long term impacts having statewide or regional significance
- Innovation
- Leverage
- Measurable and demonstrated outcomes
- Partnerships
- Urgency

Each of the criteria will be eligible for zero to ten points. Some of the criteria may not be relevant to all proposals and may be determined to be non-applicable (N/A). A minimum of five of the seven criteria will be used to evaluate each proposal.

Proposals that do not receive scores for all seven criteria will be equalized with those that do by determining what percentage of the total possible points each proposal receives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION REQUESTED

SUBMIT PROPOSAL:

WEB-BASED SUBMISSION

Go to: www.lccmr.leg.mn

If unable to use the web-based form you can:

EMAIL SUBMISSION

Email proposal in MS Word format to: trustfundrfp@lccmr.leg.mn

ELIGIBILITY

The spirit and intent of the LCCMR is to provide access to EVERYONE who has innovative ideas for environment and natural resource projects with a distinct public benefit that reflect the Commission's adopted Request for Proposal and Six-Year Strategic Plan.

No grant-making or lobbying assistance is necessary for success. LCCMR staff are available to assist in proposal development.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

For a complete list of eligible and non-eligible expenses see <http://www.lccmr.leg.mn/manager/promanager.htm>.

PROPOSAL ASSISTANCE:

LCCMR staff are available to assist proposers, answer questions, or review draft proposals.

Applicants are encouraged to use this service. If you would like assistance with proposal development, staff can assist you by phone, e-mail, fax, or by appointment.

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