

The LCCMR identifies funding priorities based on its Six Year Strategic Plan and publishes an Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Request for Proposals (RFP). A summary of the 2011-2012 (for FY 2012-2013) and 2010 (for FY 2011) funding priorities, project criteria, and background information is included here. Beginning with the 2011-2012 RFP, the LCCMR returned to a biennial funding recommendation cycle.

2011-2012 RFP Funding Priorities (for FY 2012-2013)

Proposals were requested in the following eight areas:

Natural Resource Data and Information, Water Resources, Methods to Protect, Restore and Enhance Land and Habitat, Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation, Aquatic and Terrestrial Invasive Species, Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Air Quality, Environmental Education, and Creative Ideas.

A. Natural Resource Data and Information

Proposals needed to address one or more of the following:

1. Collect baseline, foundational wildlife or natural resource data and information, including:
 - a. Ongoing efforts of the Minnesota County Biological Survey, Soil Survey, County Geological Atlas, and the National Wetlands Inventory update.
 - b. Climate data at a scale appropriate to assess natural resource changes attributable to accelerated climate change.
2. Coordination, facilitation, or training pertaining to statewide sharing, distribution, or innovative application of natural resource data and information tools, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), and other remote sensing techniques.

B. Water Resources

Proposals needed to address one or more of the following:

1. Protect or restore water quality by reducing soil erosion, reducing peak water flows, or improving water and land use practices. Projects must include monitoring and evaluation.
2. Research or engineering design to protect the health of humans and aquatic and terrestrial species by 1) advancing development or implementation of standards for nitrates or other contaminants; or 2) broadly reducing levels of nitrates, estrogenic, pharmaceutical, or other contaminants in ground and surface waters.
3. Research, monitoring, or evaluation of ground and surface water interaction and sustainability.
4. Research, monitoring, or evaluation of deep water lake ecosystems, including Lake Superior.
5. Investigate and increase the understanding of the distribution and hydraulic properties of aquitards (impermeable geological layers between aquifers) and the water quality and water quantity effects aquitards have on confined, leaky, and un-confined aquifers.

C. Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land and Habitat

Proposals needed to address one or more of the following:

1. Innovative protection, restoration, or enhancement of lands with high-quality natural resources, habitat, and ecological value.
2. Long term preservation of native forest, wetland, or prairie plant genetics and viability through long term storage in seed banks or other related efforts.
3. Technical assistance for prairie stewardship, forest stewardship, stewardship of Conservation Reserve Program lands and other agricultural lands, or aquatic buffer management to improve water quality.
4. Planning and implementation of community-based efforts to permanently conserve natural resources and reduce habitat fragmentation impacts on natural resources, including the impacts of transportation and other infrastructure.

D. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Proposals needed to address fee title or permanent conservation easement acquisition of strategic lands with high quality natural resources, habitat, and/or ecological value, and the greatest capability to contribute multiple conservation benefits to wildlife, humans, and water quality. All lands to be acquired needed to provide a restoration/enhancement or management plan for the site and an explanation as to how it will be developed, implemented, and funded.

Priority was given to projects that addressed one or more of the following:

1. Efforts based on precision conservation* methods and analysis that quantifiably identify the lands most critical to acquire.
2. Efforts involving Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) or that aim to protect unique ecosystems or rare, endangered, or threatened species.

3. Efforts in areas of the state with limited protected public lands providing habitat or public access.
4. Efforts that improve habitat connectivity.
5. Efforts that improve public access for natural resource management or outdoor recreation.

E. Aquatic and Terrestrial Invasive Species

Proposals needed to address one or more of the following:

1. Prevent introduction or provide early detection of new invasive species.
2. Reduce the spread of invasive species along streams, rivers, land transportation routes, and other vectors.
3. Alternative control techniques for containing or suppressing invasive species already present in Minnesota. Standard control and maintenance activities of invasive species will not be considered.

F. Climate Change, Renewable Energy, and Air Quality

Proposals needed address one or more of the following:

1. Research to help understand how to mitigate, adapt, or make Minnesota's ecosystems more resilient to climate change.
2. Implementation of innovative efforts aimed at mitigating, adapting, or making Minnesota's ecosystems more resilient to climate change.
3. Evaluation of applicability and/or effective implementation of clean energy technologies (e.g., biofuels, solar, geothermal, wind) or energy conservation in Minnesota. Focus examples include carbon emissions reduction; community-based, locally-produced renewable energy technologies; renewable energy life cycle costs and impacts; or smart energy technologies.
4. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through new and innovative approaches to increasing recycling and composting. Standard, required, and ongoing efforts will not be considered.
5. Innovative approaches to air quality improvement that reduce impacts on human health, the environment, or natural resources.

G. Environmental Education

Proposals needed to address education and training efforts that would increase the knowledge and skills of students and all citizens to improve and maintain water quality, reduce and monitor energy consumption, and restore and maintain a healthy and biodiverse natural environment. Funding for capital projects (e.g. buildings) was not considered.

Priority was given to projects that addressed one or more of the following:

1. Efforts that are locally-led, involve broad-based partnerships, provide outdoor experiences, and are committed to building a long-lasting and action-based conservation ethic in a community.
2. Environmental education programs using community plantings or gardens to teach biological or ecological concepts; use of native plants and/or organic practices are encouraged.
3. Efforts that deliver and implement existing curriculum, especially integration of environmental education into school curriculum.

H. Creative Ideas

Proposals were considered for efforts that were innovative or "out-of-the-box" and could produce transformative changes for the benefit of Minnesota's environment and natural resources, but did not fit under one of the other categories; or, that focused on new and emerging environment or natural resource issues and were time-sensitive, but did not fit under one of the other categories.

** Precision conservation is an emerging practice that considers lands in terms of the interconnected systems of which they are a part. As a practice, precision conservation compiles and integrates multiple types of available data layers and analysis (e.g., terrain analysis, soil productivity, habitat potential, economic analysis, erosion potential, proximity to surface water) to identify and guide efforts that will maximize conservation benefits.*

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA for 2011-2012 RFP

Project Requirements

- Expenditures must strictly adhere to the constitutional purpose of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (pg. 14) and conform to M.S. 116P.08, the laws governing the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (pg. 14)
- Funds requested are expected to be expended and activities completed within 36 months. If additional time is needed, please explain in the “Timeline Requirements” section (section III-B) of the main proposal.
- Fee-title and conservation easement acquisition projects have the following additional requirements:
 1. First priority must be given to lands with high quality natural resources that provide multiple benefits and that provide natural buffers to water resources;
 2. Targeted lands must be identified in an adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plan;
 3. Conservation easements must be perpetual and include stewardship provisions to perpetually monitor and enforce the conditions of the conservation easements;
 4. Explanation must be provided for how a restoration/enhancement or management plan for the site will be developed, implemented, and funded (through this funding request or other funds);
 5. A list must be provided that identifies proposed acquisitions by parcel name, acquisition type (fee title or conservation easement), county, estimated # of acres, and geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude or UTM-X and UTM-Y).
- Restorations must plant vegetation only of ecotypes native to Minnesota and preferably of the local ecotype using a high diversity of species originating as close to the restoration site as possible and, when restoring prairies, protect existing prairies from genetic contamination. Use of seeds and plant material beyond these requirements must be expressly requested and approved. For additional guidance, see “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” from the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources: http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/practices/seedling_guidelines.pdf
- All projects are subject to additional requirements including accessibility, data availability, land acquisition requirements, energy conservation and sustainability guidelines, and recyclable material requirements. Information located at www.lccmr.leg.mn titled “Additional Proposal Requirements”.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be considered in evaluating Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund proposals (Additional explanation of evaluation criteria is available at www.lccmr.leg.mn):

1. **FUNDING PRIORITIES:** Responds to RFP funding priorities and LCCMR Six-Year Strategic Plan for the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund articulated and adopted by the LCCMR.
2. **MULTIPLE BENEFITS:** Delivers multiple benefits to Minnesota’s environment and natural resources.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Identifies clear objectives likely to result in measurable, demonstrated, and meaningful outcomes.
4. **KNOWLEDGE BASE:** Contributes to the knowledge base or disseminates information that will benefit other related efforts.
5. **EXTENT OF IMPACTS:** Results in broad, long-term impacts of statewide or regional significance.
6. **INNOVATION:** Employs or demonstrates innovative approaches to more effectively and efficiently solve specific environment and natural resources issues.
7. **SCIENTIFIC/TECHNICAL BASIS:** Reflects current scientific and technical knowledge, standards, and best practices.
8. **URGENCY:** Addresses an issue for which immediate future action is necessary and urgent to avoid undesirable consequences.
9. **CAPACITY AND READINESS:** Demonstrates capacity and readiness for efforts to be managed and completed in a timely, accountable, and effective manner.
10. **LEVERAGE:** Leverages collaborative partnerships and additional efforts, resources, and non-state dollars.
11. **RESULTING ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT:** Employs a significant number of additional or new employees or students in natural resources jobs that are direct to the funding request.

2010 RFP Funding Priorities (for FY 2011)

Proposals were requested in the following seven areas:

Water Resources, Renewable Energy Related to Climate Change, Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Acquisition, Invasive Species, Natural Resource Conservation Planning and Implementation, Environmental Education, and Creative Ideas.

A. Water Resources

Projects were sought that addressed water issues on a surface watershed or groundwater watershed basis as follows:

1. Groundwater Sustainability
 - a. Develop new or improved methods to identify and protect aquifer and groundwater recharge areas from loss or contamination.
 - b. Undertake scientific assessment of groundwater quality, quantity, and sustainability that can be utilized in regional and statewide ways to lead to improved groundwater recharge protection.
2. Estrogenic and Pharmaceutical Contaminants in Surface and Ground Waters
 - a. Document and evaluate the extent and level of estrogenic and pharmaceutical contaminants of wastewater treatment and industrial facility effluent in water bodies around the state.
 - b. Evaluate and quantify the threat to humans and animals from estrogenic compounds and pharmaceuticals in waters around the state.
 - c. Develop, test, and evaluate protocols and public education efforts for the proper disposal of estrogenic compounds and pharmaceuticals in order to protect water resources.
3. Aquatic Habitat Protection
 - a. Demonstrate and evaluate innovative practices to protect, improve, and prevent degradation of native aquatic habitat, including shoreland and near-shore, in-water habitat.
 - b. Continue to update the National Wetlands Inventory in Minnesota.

B. Renewable Energy Related to Climate Change

Projects were sought that reduced carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions as follows:

1. Evaluate applicability and effective implementation of different clean energy technologies in Minnesota, such as solar and geothermal technologies.
2. Encourage adoption of community-based, locally-produced, renewable and innovative clean energy technologies (this could include microgrids or smaller community networks).
3. Develop innovative pilot or demonstration projects to reduce carbon emissions from residential and other small energy consumers.

C. Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Acquisition

Projects were sought that protected, restored, and enhanced lands with high quality natural resources and habitat for wildlife and human benefit. This included but was not limited to Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs), state and regional parks and trails, and sensitive shorelands or riparian habitat.

1. Restoration and Enhancement
 - a. Develop and disseminate guidelines for and/or provide training in state-of-the-art, science-based restoration for each of Minnesota's major ecotypes. Training should include field experience.
 - b. Conduct innovative restoration projects, including evaluation of the methods used.
 - c. Evaluate the effectiveness of restoration methods and projects in order to improve the effectiveness of future efforts.
2. Acquisition

Protect and enhance through fee title or permanent easement acquisition strategic lands that make the largest contribution to multiple benefits for conservation. The following parameters apply:

 - Lands to be acquired should be identified in an adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plan.

- All acquisition proposals must include an explanation as to how a restoration/enhancement and/or management plan for the site will be developed, implemented, and funded (either under this proposal or through other funding sources).
- Management should enhance the quality and diversity of natural resources.

D. Invasive Species

Projects were sought that addressed the threat of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species by developing new, innovative, and more effective control methods and by decreasing invisibility (making habitats less susceptible to invasion). Potential efforts could include:

1. Preventing introductions of new invasive species.
2. Providing early detection of new invasive species.
3. Reducing the spread of invasive species along transportation routes and other vectors.
4. Alternative control techniques for containing or suppressing invasive species already present in Minnesota, including but not limited to Curly-leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Watermilfoil. **This does not include funding typical maintenance activities such as harvesting and annual chemical treatments.*
5. Restoring or re-establishing terrestrial or aquatic habitats impacted by invasive species. Priority was given to habitats located on public land or private lands protected by permanent conservation easements.

E. Natural Resource Conservation Planning and Implementation

Projects were sought that developed and/or implemented integrated community-based natural resource, open space, and conservation plans to identify key opportunities to conserve local, regional, and state ecological, cultural, and outdoor recreational resources. Funds were intended to focus on natural resources including water and habitat, parks and open space, and other conservation planning and implementation efforts and not intended to subsidize other required local planning efforts.

F. Environmental Education

Projects were sought that provided innovative delivery of environmental education, including professional development, to both K-12 and adult audiences and resulted in increased community involvement and leadership on environmental issues. Preference was given toward efforts that developed understanding of climate change or that involved outdoor classroom settings.

G. Creative Ideas

Projects are sought that could produce transformative changes for the benefit of Minnesota's environment and natural resources, but which do not fit under categories A through F. The intention here is for "out of the box" thinking, ideas, and innovation that could result in significant, measureable benefits for Minnesota's air, land, water, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA for 2010 RFP

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

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.

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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