

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 059-B

St. Croix Priorities and Conservation Action Plans

Category: B. Water Resources

Total Project Budget: \$ 230,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 Years, July 2014 - June 2017

Summary:

Identify and target critical areas within the St. Croix River Basin to achieve maximum results for water quality, habitat and recreational benefits through thoughtful planning and action.

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Sponsoring Organization: St. Croix River Associaion

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Location

Region: Northeast

County Name: Aitkin, Carlton, Chisago, Kanabec, Pine, Washington

City / Township:

<input type="checkbox"/> Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Base
<input type="checkbox"/> Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/> Urgency
<input type="checkbox"/> Capacity Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/> Leverage	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL <input type="checkbox"/> %



PROJECT TITLE: St. Croix Priorities and Conservation Action Plans

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The St. Croix River, one of the cleanest tributaries to the Mississippi River, has high quality natural ecosystems, beautiful scenery, striking geologic feature, unique cultural resources, and abundant recreation opportunities. Annually, over one million people use this wild and scenic river for recreation. Nutrient enrichment has occurred in Lake St. Croix due to excess phosphorus loading, leading to its designation as “impaired”. In 2012 the EPA approved the Lake St. Croix Nutrient TMDL, identifying a phosphorus reduction goal of over 100 metric tons/year. The St. Croix’s wild and scenic designation applies to only a thin ribbon of land along the river, making it vulnerable to actions that compromise its health. The sheer size of the St. Croix River Basin (3,500 square miles in Minnesota and 4,260 square miles in Wisconsin) leads to complexities beyond any one organization’s capacity to address non-point source pollution issues in a comprehensive and effective manner.

In 2011 the St. Croix River Association received a grant funded by the LCCMR to work with key stakeholders in the watershed to develop a prioritization model that refines where to make investments of staff time and resources to reach the maximum results for water quality, habitat and recreational benefits. Using water quality and habitat models, and recreational features, a multi-parameter prioritization protocol was developed to identify priority locations in parts of three counties within the Minnesota side of the basin. Within these counties, priority subwatersheds have been analyzed at the field level for best management practices. This produced a list of priority actions and associated costs to deliver the most phosphorus reduction, habitat protection and recreational benefit for the dollars spent on each practice.

This new project application is designed to expand the prioritization protocol further into the watershed, mainly Pine, Aitkin and Carlton counties, and expand upon identified priority areas in Washington, Chisago and Kanabec Counties. If funded, the four main subwatersheds on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River Basin will be equipped with a clearly defined implementation and action plan detailing tactically identified subwatersheds, locations and plans for specific BMPs, as well as projected costs of each practice to best allocate resources for measureable water quality, habitat and recreational benefits. Training for resource professionals, as well as on-the-ground demonstration projects will more actively engage local governments and landowners to generate quantifiable land and water improvements.

We will achieve these goals by:

- 1) Using the multi-parameter prioritization protocol to further identify priority areas in the remaining three counties in the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River Basin
- 2) Providing guidance and technical assistance to conduct field level analysis in priority areas to identify best management practices to improve water quality, habitat and recreational opportunities
- 3) Developing Action Plans for each of the four main subwatersheds, detailing resource priorities, specific actions and locations that result in multi-ecosystem benefits

The identified priorities and detailed implementation and action plans developed through the project will be used by basin stakeholders over the long term to help direct and leverage investments from private, local, state, federal and other sources.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Subwatershed Prioritization and Field Scale Analysis

Budget: \$150,000

Using a strategic multi-parameter prioritization model and protocol developed using a variety of water quality models, habitat models and recreational inputs to identify the most benefit for dollars spent, expand the scope of the St. Croix River Association’s 2011 LCCMR grant into further extents of the watershed. Additional field



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2014 Main Proposal

Project Title: St Croix Priorities and Conservation Action Plans

scale BMP identification will occur in Washington, Chisago and Kanabec counties. New priority subwatersheds will be identified and analyzed at the field level in Pine, Aitkin and Carlton counties. Up to 20 priority subwatersheds will be identified within each major subwatershed on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River Basin. Extensive field level BMP analysis and identification will occur within 12 of the identified priority subwatersheds at approximately \$10,000 per subwatershed analysis.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Identification of top 20 priority subwatershed areas within each major subwatershed	December 2014
2. Field level analysis and BMP identification in 12 priority subwatershed areas	June 2016

Activity 2: Action Plan Development, Implementation and Dissemination

Budget: \$ 80,000

Based on results from Activity 1, construct specific action plans, at the major subwatershed level that detail a strategy of work that needs to be done, including a cost benefit analysis, to protect and/or restore water quality, habitat and recreational features in the St. Croix River Basin. This project will implement on-the-ground demonstration sites identified from the Action Plans and conduct a series of workshops for resource professionals to aid in better prioritizing resources.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Conduct a cost benefit analysis for identified BMPs within each major subwatershed	December 2016
2. Construct four Action Plans, one for each major subwatershed area, detailing specific BMP locations and strategies including a cost benefit analysis to receive the most benefit for dollars spent for water quality, habitat and recreational projects	December 2016
3. Implement 8 on-the-ground practices identified in the Actions Plans	June 2017
4. Conduct three workshops for resource professionals	June 2017

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

- The St. Croix River Association will be the project lead for organization, grant administration and project dissemination, including workshop development and outreach.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Board of Soil and Water Resources will provide project oversight and guidance.
- Minnesota Soil and Water Districts from Chisago, Pine, Kanabec, Carlton, and Aitkin will conduct field level analysis, Action Plan development and implementation.
- Washington Conservation District will perform additional prioritization modeling and priority area identification, as well as field analysis, training and technical support, Action Plan development and implementation.

B. Timeline Requirements

Three years from the start of funding is requested to complete all priority subwatershed identification and field level analysis activities, development of four Action Plans by major subwatershed, installation of eight demonstration projects and to conduct three workshops for resource professionals to aid in better targeting resources for water quality, habitat and recreational benefits.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

Once this project is completed, the strategically targeted approach will become the new “business as usual” for stakeholders, shape how they make their investments in the basin and establish priorities for funding requests from federal sources and others. Successful completion of the project will stimulate and inform similar efforts in the watershed. SCRA will continue to facilitate coordinated work across the basin and leverage additional funding.

2014 Detailed Project Budget

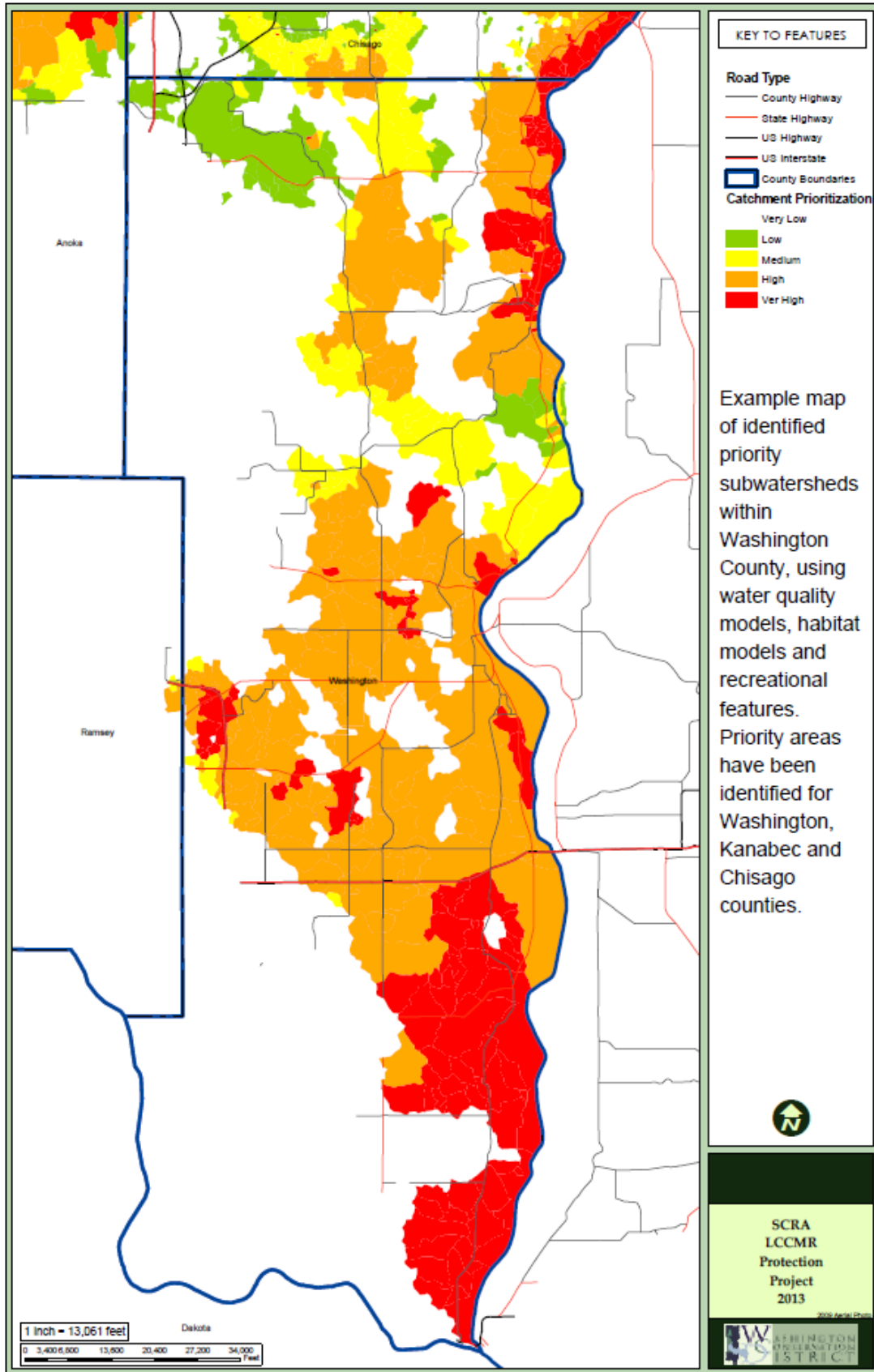
Project Title: St. Croix Priorities and Conservation Action Plans

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: <u>St. Croix River Association (SCRA):</u> A 0.2 FTE Conservation Coordinator for 3 years to provide direct facilitation of collaborative activities, workshops and project dissemination \$30,000; (Position 80% salary/20% benefits) <u>Conservation St. Croix (CSC):</u> Personnel distributed among the MN counties in the basin to identify local priorities and implement projects on the ground (Jay Riggs, Washington; Craig Mell, Chisago; Kelly Osterdyk, Kanabec; and others to be determined) \$158,000 (All positions 70% salary and 30% benefits)	\$ 188,000
Contracts: Contractor for field level analysis and BMP identification as needed, BMP installation, not yet identified	\$ 40,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Drafting supplies, photographic material, printing services for public outreach and meeting materials	\$ 1,000
Travel: Mileage reimbursement for staff to travel to communities, meetings and events associated with this project	\$ 1,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 230,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:	\$ -	
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:	\$ -	
In-kind Services During Project Period:	\$ -	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): The SCRA received ENRTF funds in 2011-2012 for the St. Croix Prioritization project, from which this project request is extending. All 2011 funds received have been allocated to project activities and will be spent by the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal year.	\$101, 408.25 of \$120,000 allocated in 2011/12	Remaining funds have been encumbered and will be spent by the end of the 2013/2014 fiscal year
Funding History: The SCRA received ENRTF funds in 2011-2012 for the St. Croix Prioritization project, from which this project request is extending	\$120,000	





Project Manager Qualifications

Deb Ryun, Executive Director of the St. Croix River Association (SCRA), will act as project manager. In this role she will provide oversight of the project as a whole and manage the River Protection Steward, who will assist in staffing the effort.

Deb Ryun, Executive Director: Deb Ryun became SCRA's Executive Director on October 1, 2009. Prior to joining SCRA, Deb spent ten years as Executive Director for Conservation Districts of Iowa (CDI), a non-profit organization working to conserve and enhance soil and water resources on private working lands. While at CDI she worked with soil and water conservation agencies and organizations in Iowa at all levels, local, state and federal. Additional job experience includes work as a naturalist for the Linn County Conservation Department, and as communication and education coordinator for Trees Forever in Marion, Iowa. Ms. Ryun graduated from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, with a self-designed degree in environmental studies.

Monica Zachay, River Protection Steward: Monica Zachay joined SCRA's staff in April 2012, bringing extensive experience in GIS computer-based mapping, ecological restoration, multi-stakeholder project implementation and environmental education. Prior to SCRA she worked at the Pelican River Watershed District in Detroit Lakes. She also served as a Water Quality Monitoring Technician for the Three Rivers Park District. Ms. Zachay graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies with an emphasis on Forestry and Environmental Education.

This project also will benefit from the expertise of partnering staff:

- Jay Riggs, Manager of the Washington Conservation District (WCD), has extensive experience coordinating District activities with watersheds and local units of government and providing technical support for natural resource inventories, innovative stormwater management and implementation of conservation projects improvements. He is a Certified Professional in Storm Water Quality, member of the Minnesota State Stormwater Steering Committee and chair of the Minimal Impact Design Standards (MIDS) Workgroup.

Organization Description

The mission of the SCRA is to protect, restore and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed. Founded in 1911, SCRA began a significant transformation in 2008, moving from a volunteer organization to a more active leader with the appropriate vision, governance and resources. This transformation was stimulated by a widely-acknowledged need for an organization focused specifically on protecting and improving the St. Croix River and its basin.

SCRA works closely with the National Park Service, nonprofits and state and local governments. We also support and collaborate with existing partnerships, including the St. Croix Conservation Collaborative, a working group initiated by SCRA in 2005 to increase collaboration among groups working on land protection in the basin; and the St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning team (Basin Team), which was formed in 1993 by the agencies overseeing the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and has led water quality research and established a basin-wide goal of reducing phosphorous pollution to the river by 20 percent. (SCRA is currently partnering with the Basin Team to administer \$500,000 in Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funds for water quality testing and implementation work on the St. Croix.) These existing partners will be closely engaged in work on this project through SCRA's coordination.

SCRA is committed to applying the systems developed through this project over the long-term — and across the entire basin, including Wisconsin — and leading work to leverage funds from private, federal and other sources.