

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

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 083-C**

Reducing Lake Quality Impairments through Citizen Action

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**Category:** C. Environmental Education

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 59,375

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

**Summary:**

Train lake associations and other key stakeholder groups to develop lake management plans and to implement science-based, citizen-led water quality improvement projects on eight impaired lakes in west central Minnesota.

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**Name:** Alex Gehrig

**Sponsoring Organization:** Freshwater Society

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**Location**

**Region:** Central

**County Name:** Becker, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail

**City / Township:**

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<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"/> %



**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

Millions of dollars are being spent to assess the water quality of thousands of lakes in Minnesota. EPA’s 2012 Assessed Watersheds list is sobering—over 16 watersheds are listed as being impaired predominately for aquatic recreation and aquatic life which is the result of nonpoint source pollution. These impairments can be addressed head--on by citizens who have vested interests in the water quality of the lakes they live by and have organized lake associations around those lakes—if they know how. These concerned citizens recognize the negative impacts of declining water quality and use of their lakes due to nonpoint source pollution, but often lack the knowledge and resources to act. Our program engages members of lake associations and directs their actions towards lake quality improvements. Lakeshore owners receive leadership training, comprehensive and understandable information about the state of the lakes, technical assistance and ongoing support to complete and implement a Lake Management Plan. We know the program works—it is modeled after the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership which has a successful 14 –year track record of training nearly 2000 citizens in 25 counties throughout the state who wrote lake management plans and took action to protect their lakes. Projects ran the gamut from septic system inspections and shoreland restoration to installing sediment detention ponds and implementing Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) management plans. The Freshwater Society proposes to reduce lake water quality impairments in up to eight lakes in OtterTail, Douglas, Becker and Grant in EPA’s 2012 Assessed Watersheds: Pomme de Terre, St. Louis, Becker and Grant Counties. We selected these watersheds due to the severity of the impairments, numbers of active lake associations in those watersheds and the commitment of local partners. Priority activities and/or geographies identified in the county water plans will be used to guide the investment of citizen talent, volunteer time and other resources.

The Freshwater Society proposes an Environmental Education funding priority program to enhance the successful citizen-based planning Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program model in a number of important ways: ◊Targeting impaired lakes. Our major partner, West Central Initiative (WCI), will work with us to identify lakes to target. We will initially focus upon lakes where Lake Assessments have been performed by another partner, RMB Laboratories, and identify aquatic life and aquatic recreation impairments. Those Assessments not only describe the state of the lakes, they also include land uses within the watersheds and recommendations on best management practices (BMPs) to treat the identified causes of pollution.

◊Involving multiple watersheds. Priority will be given to lakes that encompass multiple watersheds and already have active lake associations.

◊Performing Lake Assessments. With Assessments already in-hand, we will be able to immediately engage selected lake associations. For those lakes identified as impaired and with active lake associations but without Lake Assessments, we will hire RMB Laboratories to develop scientifically-based and user-friendly assessments. RMB’s assessments are widely used by BWSR and SWCDs as a common baseline assessment for many county water plans.

◊Engaging Agricultural Communities. We will work with area Soil and Water Conservation Districts as well as others to invite agricultural producers and their associations’ representatives to participate in the program. The Freshwater Society will utilize information gained from its ongoing program, MN FarmWise, to respectfully and meaningfully engage these important partners.

◊Inspiring Successful Projects. We will guide the selected lake associations in implementing their on-the-ground projects and identify funding and other resources to help ensure their Lake Management Plans are implemented.

**II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1:** Identify up to 8 targeted lakes and secure lake associations as participants and working with RMB Laboratories, secure a Lake Assessment or hire them to complete one for each of the targeted lakes

**Budget: \$10,000**



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**

**2014 Main Proposal**

**Project Title:** *Reducing lake quality impairments through citizen actions*

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. <i>Work with WCI and RMB Laboratories to select targeted lakes that are included in the EPA's 2012 Assessed Watersheds list</i>	9/1/14
2. <i>Determine where there are active lake associations that have the highest potential of completing the program and implementing projects</i>	9/1/14
3. <i>Secure the participation of up to 8 lake associations that have the highest potential of completing the program and implementing projects</i>	9/1/14
4. <i>Identify farmers and agriculture producers in the watersheds and invite them to participate in the HLRP</i>	12/1/14
5. <i>Working with RMB Laboratories, secure a completed Lake Assessment or hire them to complete one for each of the targeted lakes</i>	12/31/14-12/31/15

**Activity 2:** Conduct a Program for each of the participating lake associations

**Budget: \$49,375**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. <i>Using the Lake Assessments as the focus, conduct two days of leadership training for all lake associations, including citizen engagement, translating science into action and creating and implementing a Lake Management Plan</i>	12/31/15-6/30/16
2. <i>Facilitate a visioning community meeting for each association to identify concerns, opportunities, assets, priorities and project timelines</i>	12/31/15-6/30/16
3. <i>Consult with each association as they prepare their Lake Management Plans</i>	12/31/15-4/30/17
4. <i>Provide BMP implementation planning assistance to the lake associations</i>	12/31/15-4/30/17

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

ENRTF Lead and Fund Recipient. The Freshwater Society will lead the project and receive funding. Alex Gehrig will be the Project Manager and supported by Don Hickman, a paid consultant for the Initiative Foundation. We would like to hire RMB Laboratories to conduct Lake Assessments. Partners Not Receiving ENRTF Support. West Central Initiative will provide in-kind assistance by identifying targeted lakes and lake associations provide cash match. RMB Laboratories will provide match to identify existing Lake Assessments and Lake Associations will provide in-kind match on their projects.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

During the first year of the program, we will identify targeted lakes, secure or complete Lake Assessments, hold two days of training with the lake associations and facilitate the community input process. In the next year, draft management plans will be reviewed and completed and technical assistance will be provided to help the groups implement at least one identified priority project.

**C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs**

As indicated earlier, the model our program is based upon is very successful. The MPCA and EPA will continue to assess lakes and rivers throughout the state on a 10-year cycle. We believe there will be a continued need and interest in using this model by the state, counties, local governments and lake associations. We will secure ongoing funding through other governmental and private foundation grants.

## 2014 Detailed Project Budget

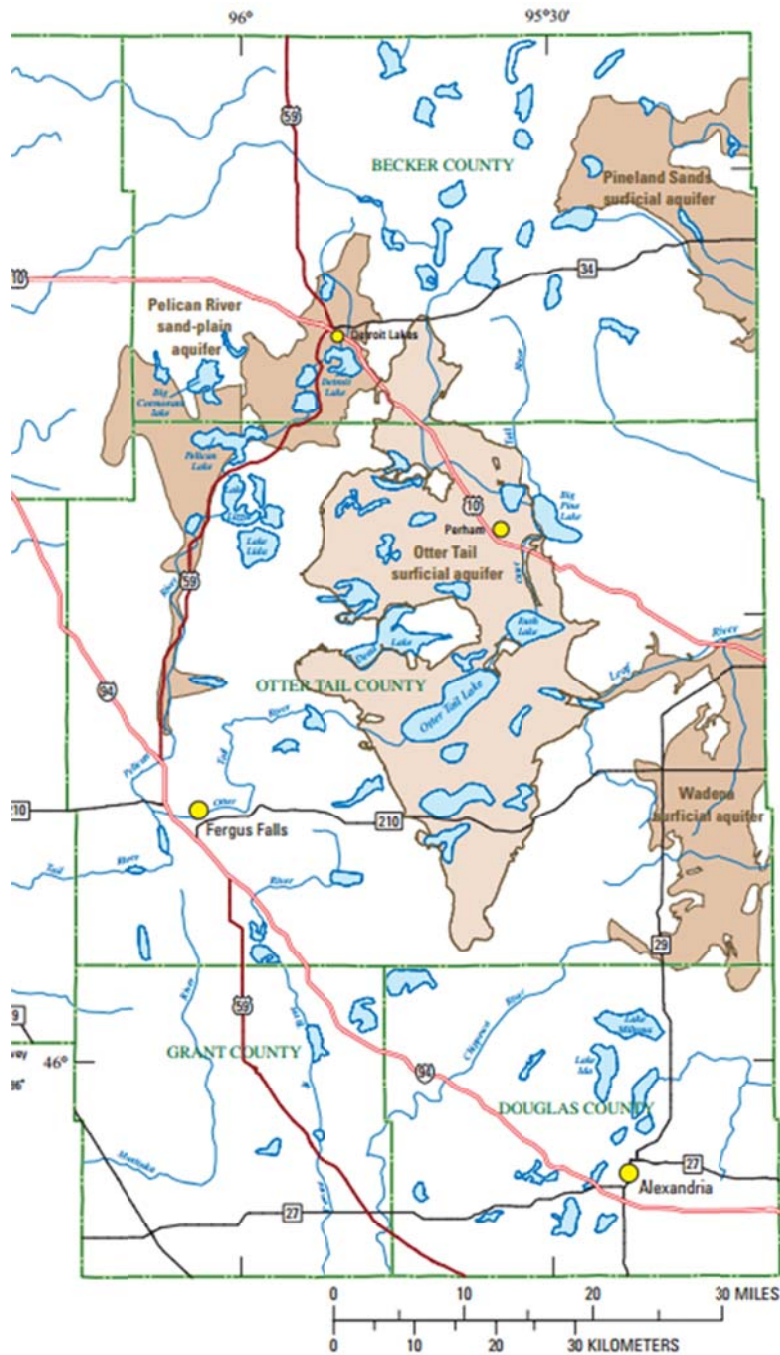
Expanding the Healthy Lakes Healthy Rivers Partnership Program

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Personnel.</b> Freshwater Society. Project Manager, Alex Gehrig. Management, training, facilitation, plan review & BMP implementation asst. .31 FTE. 14% benefits 86% salary=\$34/hour. 7/1/2014-4/30/17.	\$ 35,640
<b>Contracts.</b> Initiative Foundation. Consultant, Don Hickman. Training, management support and Management Plan review. \$125/hour x 76 = \$9500. 7/1/2014-4/30/17. RMB Laboratories. \$1000/lake assessment=\$8000. 7/1/2014-6/30/2016. RMB is highly regarded by DNR & BWSR & <b>has completed dozens of Lake Assessments</b>	\$17,500
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> CD ROMs, training workbooks, lake management plan drafts and final copies, name tags, pens, flip chart paper and markers \$200 x 8 lake associations=\$1600	\$ 1,600
<b>Freshwater Society Personnel:</b> Alex Gehrig. 6400 miles @.555=\$3552. <b>Lodging &amp; Meals \$150 x 3=\$450</b> <b>Consultant:</b> Initiative Foundation, Don Hickman. 600 miles @.555=\$333. <b>Lodging &amp; Meals \$150 x 2=\$300</b>	\$ 4,635
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 59,375</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> \$40,000 West Central Initiative for 8 projects on-the-ground @\$5000 each. Up to \$40,000 lake associations' match for projects-on-the-ground.	\$80,000	<i>Pending</i>
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> NONE	N/A	<i>Indicate: Secured or Pending</i>
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> <b>Freshwater Society Personnel:</b> Alex Gehrig 160 hours @\$34=\$5440. Additional BMP implementation planning assistance. <b>West Central Initiative.</b> \$40/hr. 5 hrs/month= 60/year x 2=120 hours. 120 x\$40=\$4800. General lake association assistance. Meeting rooms \$800. <b>RMB Laboratories.</b> \$60/hr. 2 hours/lake association=16 hours. 16 x \$60=\$960. Research to locate lake assessments.	\$12,000	<i>Secured</i>
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):</b> NONE	N/A	
<b>Funding History.</b> This is support for the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnership Program since 1999: \$50,000 seed grant 1999 EPA and 2005. ENRTF through MNWaters 2003-04. Others: BWSR, NW MN Foundation, West Central Initiative, Southwest Minnesota Initiative, Musser Family Foundation, McKnight Foundation, Clean Water Fund (Martin County) and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.	1.1 million	<i>Secured</i>



## Program Outline

1. Work with both West Central Initiative to identify eight lake groups to participate in program and with RMB laboratories to establish Lake Assessments for all targeted water bodies. Each participating lake association is expected to send 5-8 persons to each of the two training sessions in Step #2 (below).

2. Participants representing each lake group attend two days of leadership training on:

- Communication and effective small group process skills;
- Historic/existing conditions of their water body;
- Developing a strategic Lake Management Plan.
- Meet technical resource experts and learn of other sources of assistance and funding

3. Each group hosts an inclusive community-wide facilitated planning session to identify the concerns, opportunities, assets, priorities, and projects that citizens will work on.

4. Results of the visioning session are combined with a summary of historic and existing conditions, as well as realistic goals and action plans to form a Lake Management Plan.

5. As the associations complete implementation of high priority action items they become official "graduates" of the program.

6. Non-state partner match provides up to \$5,000 to each group for implementation of highest priority activities.

## Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

### Alex Gehrig, Project Manager

Alex Gehrig is Project Manager at the Freshwater Society, where he coordinates civic engagement initiatives. Prior to his work with Freshwater, Alex was a program coordinator for the statewide non-profit organization, Minnesota Waters, where he partnered with several watershed districts to organize new lake associations, deliver water-related workshops, and provide lake management plan training to lake groups in the metro area. In his earlier work, Gehrig worked internationally as a Peace Corps volunteer, providing communities with assessment tools and technical assistance in implementing natural resource conservation projects.

### Organization Description

The Freshwater Society is a 501C3 organization formed 45 years ago that works with communities throughout the Upper Midwest. It began as the nation's first freshwater research facility to study water pollution and its causes and has transitioned into a premier citizen education, research and public outreach organization with a mission to educate and inspire people to value, conserve and protect all freshwater resources. Our goals are to increase the education, awareness and stewardship of citizens to reduce non-point pollution of our lakes, rivers and streams and to increase conservation behavior to ensure sustainable water resources for generations to come.

In 2011, we launched our Work for Water Campaign that is a multi-year plan to research, educate and influence Minnesota citizens' knowledge, attitude and behaviors around storm water and non-point source pollution. The Work for Water Campaign includes the following programs: Citizen Action. The Freshwater Society partners with local governments and lake associations to engage citizens in water planning and protection. Community Clean-ups for Water Quality (CCWQ). We assist communities in organizing spring and fall clean-ups to remove leaves, grass clippings and soil that can be carried into storm sewers, dumped into lakes and rivers and result in algae growth that causes pollution. Minnesota FarmWise. This pilot project is designing and implementing a farmer-to-farmer mentoring program to encourage farmers to engage in more sustainable farming practices in the Cannon River Watershed. Master Water Stewards. We train and certify citizens to assess watersheds, educate communities, reduce pollutants and coordinate action in their neighborhoods to reduce urban runoff volume and nutrient loads. Our partner and location of our first cohort of training is the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. Speaker Series. Internationally-known speakers are invited to share their cutting-edge ideas with Minnesotans about pressing environmental issues at free conferences at the University of Minnesota. One of the issues we've researched and received widespread support for is on groundwater. We published a report in April 2013 called, "Minnesota's Groundwater: Is our use sustainable?" It is designed to inform Minnesotans about the demands on our groundwater and the limitations those resources face.