

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 183-G

3,500-Foot Shoreland Acquisition on St. Croix River

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Total Project Budget: \$ 2,500,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 Years, July 2014 - June 2016

Summary:

Purchase 15 acres and 3,500 feet of St. Croix shoreland paralleling Brown's Creek State Trail providing passive recreation to trail and river users and tourists from a wide area.

Name: Jane Harper

Sponsoring Organization: Washington County

Address: 14949 62nd Street N
Stillwater MN 55082-0006

Telephone Number: (651) 430-6011

Email Jane.Harper@co.washington.mn.us

Web Address www.co.washington.mn.us

Location

Region: Metro

County Name: Washington

City / Township: Stillwater

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ Employment	_____ TOTAL _____%

LCCMR 2014 MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: 3500-foot Shoreland Acquisition on St. Croix River

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Washington County is partnering with the City of Stillwater to acquire 15 acres with 3,500 feet of frontage on the St. Croix River to preserve the ecological integrity of and increase the public access to the St. Croix River. This property is just north of downtown Stillwater and parallels the Brown's Creek State Trail. The property is within the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway District and is one of the longest stretches of St. Croix River frontage remaining in single ownership in Washington County. The city will own and manage the land as a nature park serving trail users, river users, tourists and area residents. The city will restore the property to a natural condition and offer passive recreational uses such as shore fishing, transient dockage, walk-in boat launching, walking paths, nature observation, picnicking and trail access. The requested funds will provide a match to local funds. Both local and state funding is needed and is appropriate for this acquisition because of its high cost as St. Croix River property; its importance in protecting the scenic and ecological values of the St. Croix River, a state-designated resource; its use as a state trail amenity that will enhance the user experience; and its ability to serve the recreational needs of a national, state and local clientele.

Although this new park will provide additional public access and recreational opportunities to the St. Croix River and a much needed rest area at the terminus of the Brown's Creek State Trail neither the National Park Service (NPS) nor the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is interested in owning the property. The NPS cannot own the property because it is located outside the National Scenic Riverway District boundary and within the state-managed portion of the riverway district. The DNR currently owns enough land to build the state trail. Both agencies are supportive of this acquisition and will be involved in preparing the master plan.

This acquisition is consistent with the Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan goals to protect critical shore lands such as the St. Croix River and to improve connectivity and access to outdoor recreation. The property's location adjacent to the Brown's Creek State Trail, its proximity to downtown Stillwater, and its shoreland length make it a unique acquisition and a highly desirable destination for recreational pursuits. In particular, its low elevation makes it suitable for shore fishing, a recreational activity that is limited along the lower St. Croix River due to the prevalence of high banks and shoreland bluffs. Public acquisition and the planned subsequent removal of the home and restoration of the turf and invasive species to a more natural condition will have positive impacts on the river environment such as improved ecological diversity and ecosystem connectivity; increased breeding and migratory habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and neo-tropical migrants; and better filtering and storage of storm and flood waters.

The landowner is elderly and is seeking to sell her property. For a limited time she is willing to negotiate for public ownership before she markets it for development. The county will negotiate for a purchase agreement that is contingent on receiving matching funds. The landowner seems willing to wait to close until after July 2014. An appraisal is underway; the project cost will be updated when the appraisal is completed. The county may reduce the amount of funds requested if a lower purchase price can be negotiated; the requested funds will not include the value of the home.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Protect Significant Shoreland through Land Acquisition

Budget: \$ 2,500,000

The county will acquire a 15-acre parcel including 3,500 feet of frontage on the St. Croix River. An appraisal is underway. The county hopes to attain a signed purchase agreement by December 31, 2013 and close on the acquisition by the end of 2014. Washington County has adopted a Conservation Priorities Plan and site evaluation criteria that aid the county in being strategic in choosing land protection that is most critical and maximizes the ecological benefits of public funds. The county's priorities are to acquire interests in land for recreation; adjacent to waterways, and recreational facilities; serving multiple public purposes; and providing public access. A citizen advisory committee rated this acquisition as very high for meeting program goals and priorities and recommended its purchase.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. <i>Acquire 15 acres and 3,500 feet of frontage on the St. Croix River and the Brown's Creek State Trail.</i>	<i>December 31, 2014</i>

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

- Washington County will receive the grant funds and will carry out the acquisition work. The county and city will contribute up to 50% of the cost of the acquisition. Because the county is contributing a large amount of the funds, the county will retain an interest in the property in the form of a permanent conservation easement before conveying the property to the city.
- The City of Stillwater has agreed to accept the ownership and the future operations and management responsibilities and costs. The city will contribute a portion of the funds.
- City and county staff will work with other key stakeholders including the DNR and the NPS to prepare a park master plan after the property is acquired.
- The Washington Conservation District staff will assist in preparing a restoration and natural resource management plan.

B. Timeline Requirements

The city and county seek to acquire this land while the landowner is a willing seller and before it is being actively marketed for sale. The County Board and City Council have approved the acquisition and have directed staff to order an appraisal and to seek matching funds. Upon receipt of the appraisal the county and city will negotiate for a purchase agreement. After receiving a signed purchase agreement the city and county will prepare a park master plan and restoration plan. The county will be ready to close on the purchase shortly after receiving the matching funds.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future

After the purchase and before conveying the property to the city Washington County will record a conservation easement in the county's favor over the property. This easement will assure permanent protection by prohibiting land uses that negatively affect the river and its shoreland habitat. Washington County will monitor the property on an annual basis and will take necessary enforcement action to ensure that the development and use of the property is consistent with the terms of the conservation easement and the management and restoration plans. Subsequent to its purchase, the county and city will work with partners to restore the property to a more natural condition using native species in accordance with the restoration plan. Additional grants will be sought from appropriate sources to fund the restoration activities in a timely manner.

2014 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET (2 years)

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): 15 acre, City of Stillwater will own title	\$ 2,500,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 2,500,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period		
Washington County - recommended contribution	\$2,000,000 Washington County	<i>pending</i>
City of Stillwater - recommended contribution	\$500,000 City of Stillwater	<i>pending</i>
In-kind Services During Project Period	\$ -	
Phase 1	\$2,500	<i>secured</i>
Title Review/Insurance	\$1,500	<i>secured</i>
Deed Tax/Conservation Fee	\$2,000	<i>secured</i>
Recording Fees	\$100	<i>secured</i>
Other Miscellaneous Closing Costs	\$2,000	<i>secured</i>
Management Plan	\$20,000	<i>pending</i>
Baseline Report	\$2,000	<i>secured</i>
County and City Staff time	?	<i>secured</i>

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Proposed Acquisition/Restoration List**

Project Title: Washington County St. Croix Land Protection
 Project Manager Name: Jane Harper
 ENRTF \$ Request: \$2,000,000

#	Acquisition or Restoration Parcel Name	Geographic Coordinates Format: [Deg.]° [Min.]' [Sec.]" [Hemis.]		County	Estimated Cost	Ecological Significance	Activity Description	# of Acres	# of Shoreline Miles	Type of Landowner	Proposed Fee Title or Easement Holder (if applicable)
		Latitude	Longitude								
1	Aiple	045° 04' 07.38598021"N	092° 48' 20.25428291"W	Washington	\$4,000,000	riverine, shoreland, groundwater seeps	fee acquisition	15	0.75	private	Stillwater
NOTES:											

Washington County
St. Croix River Shoreland Acquisition
Aiple Property



Scale: 1 inch = 600 feet

Date of Aerial Photography:
Spring 2011

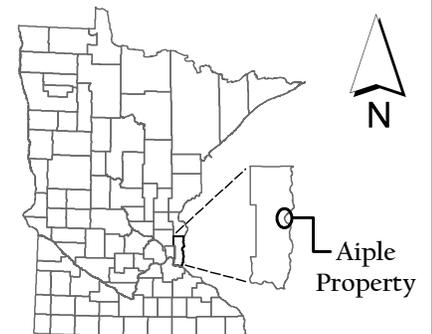
prepared by:
Washington County Parks Department
Survey and Land Management Division

07/30/2013



Lower St. Croix
National Scenic
Riverway

Aiple Property
3500 Feet of Shoreline
15 Acres



Project Location Map
Page 6 of 8
No Scale

Washington County St. Croix River Land Protection

Organizational Description

Washington County is a local governmental unit located to the east of St. Paul. It is bordered by the St. Croix River to the east and the Mississippi River to the southwest. Nearly 250,000 people live in the county. Washington County's physical environment is very diverse. Important natural features are the Mississippi River, a popular recreational and important commercial waterway; the bluffs and ravines along the St. Croix River; abundant streams, wetlands, lakes, and woodlands in the northern half of the county; and the shallow bedrock and prime farmland soils in the southern half of the county. Through its Land and Water Legacy Program (LWLP), the county is preserving portions of its precious natural resources. Priority land protection areas were identified through a criteria-driven process and are described in the county's Land and Water Legacy Program Conservation Plan. The highest priority lands for protection are those that are adjacent to waterways, buffer recreational facilities, connect existing protected lands; serve multiple public purposes; and provide public access. In 2006, the voters of Washington County approved the 2006 Preservation of Water Quality, Woodlands and Other Natural Areas bond referendum to provide long-term stable funding for the LWLP. In 2007, the Washington County Board of Commissioners received the Conservation Minnesota Leadership Award for sponsoring this ballot referendum. The county strives to leverage additional dollars from other sources for all projects. To date, the county has completed 16 projects protecting nearly 500 acres.

Project Manager Qualifications

Jane Harper is the Project Manager of the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program. In that role, she is responsible for all aspects of the county's program including landowner outreach, project development and evaluation, landowner negotiations, real estate transactions, drafting conservation easements, preparing baseline reports, easement monitoring and stewardship, and grant management. Jane has worked on land conservation activities for Washington County for the past 14 years. In 2000-2001, with funding provided by an LCMR grant, Jane developed the LWLP protocols and completed 4 conservation easement projects. To date, Jane has worked on over 30 projects. Jane was the county's liaison working with the Washington County Citizens for Land and Water, a local citizen group that advocated for the successful passage of the 2006 bond referendum. Jane directed the work on the county's LWLP Conservation Plan.

Jane has worked in the conservation area for most of her career. In 1991, she was a founding board member of the Washington County Land Trust (later reincorporated as the Minnesota Land Trust). She served on the Metro Greenways Planning Task Force that created the 'greenprint' for the DNR's Metro Greenways Program later referred to as the Metro Conservation Corridors. Jane has extensive experience in grant management and large project management and has a proven track record in completing projects on time and within budget. Jane has degrees from Macalester College and the University of Minnesota. She has worked for Washington County for 24 years, hired as the county's first water planner and later promoted to her current position as the county's principal planner. Prior to working for the county she held various planning positions with the Minnesota departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture.

