Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative

Project Director

Mike Hanson, Cottonwood County Environmental Officer
c.michael.hanson@co.cottonwood.mn.us
Cottonwood County Environmental Office
41385 Hwy 71
Windom, MN 56101
(507) 831-2060

Lead Partner

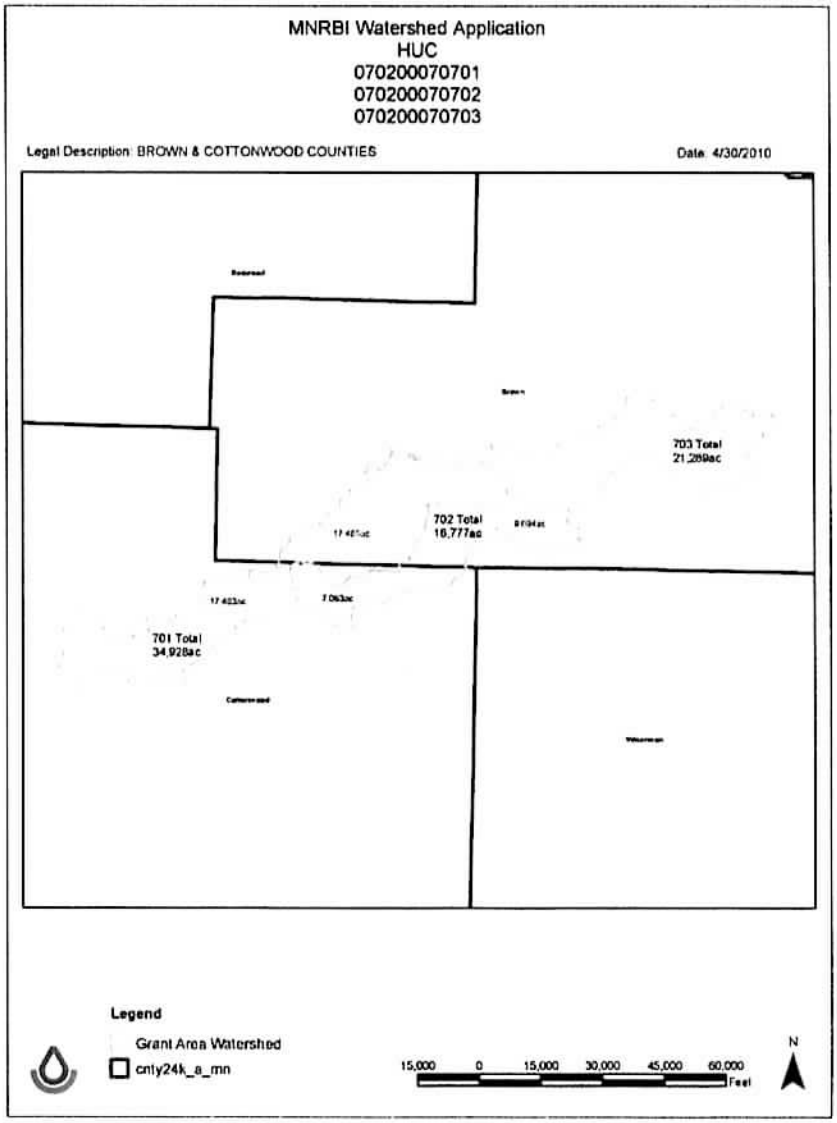
Kay Clark, District Administrator
Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District
339 9th Street
Windom, MN 56101
(507) 831-1153 Extension 3
kay.clark@windomnet.com

Collaborating Parties

Brown Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
Brown County Commissioners - Brown County Environmental Services
Cottonwood County Commissioners - Cottonwood County Environmental Services
Brown-Nicollet-Cottonwood Water Quality Board
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Windom, Sleepy Eye
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
USDA Farm Service Agency
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League
Cottonwood County Pheasants Forever Chapter
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association – Des Moines Valley Chapter

Designated 8-digit focus area and 12-digit HUC subwatershed(s), wherein the project lies, including: State, Counties, and Congressional District(s).

State:	Minnesota
Congressional District:	1st
Counties:	Brown and Cottonwood
Middle MN River Watershed	07020007
Headwaters Little Cottonwood River	070200070701
County Ditch No 28-1	070200070702
Gilman Lake-Little Cottonwood River	070200070703



Brief description/summary of the project and description of resource issues to be addressed as they relate to MRBI priorities and objectives. Identify the specific natural resource concerns to be addressed.

Originating near the town of Jeffers, Minnesota in Cottonwood County, the Little Cottonwood River, is the largest tributary of the Middle Minnesota Major Watershed, flowing over 50 miles in a northeasterly direction before confluence with the Minnesota River seven miles south of New Ulm.

This grant encompasses the three 12-digit HUC subwatersheds of Headwaters Little Cottonwood River (34,928 acres); County Ditch No. 28-1 (16,777 acres) and Gilman Lake – Little Cottonwood River (21,289 acres) totaling 72,994 acres.

Most of the watershed is level to gently rolling agricultural lands. Row cropping is the predominate agricultural use. Soils consist mostly of poorly drained to moderately well drained silty clays and slity clay loams with three major soil series, Webster, Canisteo, and Nicollet Clay. The watershed is nearly all privately owned except for state owned Wildlife Management Areas. The upper reaches are generally more rolling and transitional, while the middle section of the watershed has little slope and is dominated by floodplain and wetlands. The main channel is channelized in much of the area and used for pasturing cattle.

Cultivated crops are the predominant land use with some pasture and occasional feedlots, small municipalities, and small forested areas. Land use is primarily agricultural, with two-year corn/soybean rotations comprising 90% of cropped lands within the watershed. The remaining balance consists of small grains and grasslands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program.

Unique watershed features include the Jeffers Petroglyphs, one of three well preserved petroglyphs in Minnesota containing over 2,000 carvings. These ancient rock carvings are of archeological and historic importance and are owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. At least three native stands of grasses are preserved in the area included in this watershed. Two are managed by the State Historical Society and one has been donated to the Nature Conservancy. The original vegetation includes several rare plants.

There are two endangered species, one threatened species and ten special concern species within the watershed based on information provided by the Minnesota DNR Natural Heritage Program.

Plants include prairie bush clover (Federally threatened); buffalo grass, red treeawn, mousetail, and tumblegrass which all have "special concern" status.

Birds, animals, and amphibians include the burrowing owl (endangered); the eastern spotted skunk, the upland sandpiper, the marbled godwit, Wilson's Phalarope, and the colonial Waterbird which also have "special concern" status. Insects include the Dakota Skipper (Federally threatened); the Powesheik Skipper (special concern) status. Grasses such as Carolina Foxtail and Longlobed Arrowhead have no assigned status, but their natural rate of occurrence is low. Maple/Basswood Forests and Mesic Black soil remnant prairies are also sensitive natural communities located in the watershed.

Many of the known locations of above-mentioned threatened species can be found in areas such as Nature Conservancy Preserves, MN DNR Wildlife Management Areas and Scientific and Natural Areas and the Jeffers Petroglyphs, State Historical Site which are

protected or managed by federal or state agencies. A section of native prairie with wagon wheel ruts and a buffalo rub are still observable immediately northwest of the petroglyphs.

There are 13.2 miles of open ditches and 47miles of public drain tile, in Cottonwood County alone, with many more miles of private tile lines are located within the watershed. The network of drainage has converted much of the watershed into some of the most productive soils in the state and country. However, the concerns over large-scale drainage projects within the watershed in terms of quantity and quality have steadily increased along with the amount of drainage in the past 10 years.

As referenced from the '*Little Cottonwood River Restoration Project*' the primary scope of the Little Cottonwood River (LCR) diagnostic study was to measure the movement of sediments and associated pollutants between river reaches and document factors affecting their transport to the river. Examination of the relationship between land use and water quality was the primary method for documenting such factors. The second main goal of the LCR diagnostic study was to determine realistic goals to meet both the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River TMDLs and ultimately how and where to implement cost effective practices which would help ascertain those goals.

Note: Monitoring Sites 1-3 are located in the project initiative area.

Conclusions as referenced from the 'Little Cottonwood River Restoration Project'

Hydrology:

Under certain conditions, the recent changes in drainage in the upper portion of the watershed, mainly ditching and tiling, have resulted in more water leaving the upper portion of the watershed at a faster rate.

Wetland restoration, retention basins and/or culvert downsizing may be an important BMP for controlling peak water flows downstream.

Sediment:

Sediment concentrations and loads were elevated at all four monitoring sites during runoff conditions.

Most of the sediment load is delivered between sites 3 and 4. In 1999 sediment yields increased from 58 lbs/acre at site 3 to 710 lbs/acre at site 4.

Phosphorus:

Phosphorus concentrations and loads were moderate for the entire watershed.

Sediments and phosphorus are directly correlated. The majority of the total phosphorus and soluble phosphorus is derived during storm events.

Nitrates:

Nitrates are elevated in much of the watershed up until the end of July. After July leaching is minimized due to crop uptake and little or no leaching because of high evapotranspiration rates during this part of the season. Highest loads and concentrations occur near the headwaters.

Nitrate levels decrease near the middle of the watershed due to wetland processes. Levels increase again after site 3. Based on samples taken from storm events, much of the nitrate is reaching the river through a shallow subsurface pathway. This pathway is mainly through underground public and private tile systems.

Pathogens:

Most of the elevated Fecal Coliform bacteria counts occur during runoff events, suggesting sources of bacteria from sources such as feedlots. High counts during low flow conditions did occur at times during the study suggesting point sources. Failing septic systems are considered the main point source.

Highest Geometric means were found at site 3. Possible reasons include the high number of livestock facilities, some of which allow access to the river.

Description of planning already completed at the field and watershed scales that identifies conservation practices and systems needed to address nutrient concerns.

Lower Minnesota River TMDL: Low Dissolved Oxygen
Little Cottonwood River Restoration Project Report
Little Cottonwood River Watershed Project:
Final Report Phase II Clean Water Partnership 2008
Cottonwood County Local Water Management Plan
Brown County Local Water Management Plan
Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District Comprehensive Plan
Brown Soil and Water Conservation District Comprehensive Plan
Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Plan of Work 2010

A list of the approved NRCS FOTG conservation practices, conservation enhancements, and conservation activity plans which will be used to address those resource concerns.

Core Practice	Wetland Restoration	657
Supporting Practice	Critical Area Planting	342

Proposed project start and end dates (not to exceed a period of 5 years).

Start Date: 10-01-2010
End Date: 09-30-2015

Total budget for the project including the amount of MRBI-CCPI financial assistance being requested for the project by program by fiscal year.

Table 1.

Fiscal Year 2010-2015 Practice	Number	Brown County (No.)	Brown County	Cottonwood County (No.)	Cottonwood County
WREP					
Wetland Restoration	657	30 acres	$30,000	10 acres	$10,000
Critical Area Planting	342	30 acres	$4,690	40 acres	$6,250
2010 – 2015 TOTAL REQUEST			**$34,690**		**$16,250**

Project Natural Resource Objectives and Actions –

Identify and provide detail about the natural resource concern(s) to be addressed and how the proposal objectives will address those concerns. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and include a time for completion.

Table 2.

Resource Concern	Wetland Restoration	Critical Area Planting
WREP		
Hydrology Phosphorus Nitrates	Acres/Yr	Acres/Year
2011		
2012	20	
2013	20	
2014		
2015		
Sediment		
2011		
2012		30
2013		30
2014		
2015		
Phosphorus		
TOTAL	40	60

For each objective, identify the actions to be completed to achieve the objective and to address the identified natural resource concerns. Specify which actions are to be addressed through the project using MRBI-CCPI assistance and those being addressed through alternate non-Federal funding sources or other resources provided.

If this grant is successful in receiving funds the Little Cottonwood River Watershed Work Group will apply for Clean Water Funds through the Board of Water and Soil Resources to implement Agricultural Best Management Practices. These funds will be used for additional cost-share and incentive payments.

Collaborating Partners will be approached with specific funded projects to help with additional incentives and cost-share for participating landowners.

A description of the projects partners history of working with agricultural producers to address resource issues and the conservation objectives to be achieved.

Through this process local owners and operators will be contacted by local conservation professionals to educate and inform them of the cost-share assistance available through this program initiative.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has been in existence in Brown and Cottonwood Counties for 75 years and the Brown Soil and Water Conservation District (52 years) and Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation Districts (65 years). The existence of these agencies over the years has built long standing working relationship with local producers in implementing agricultural best management practices.

A detailed description of the watershed area including emphasis on treatment and metrics at the 12-digit HUC subwatershed(s) within the designated 8-digit HUC focus area covered by the proposal, conservation priorities in the area, conservation objectives to be achieved, and the expected level of participation by producers. Proposals should state whether a MRBI–CCPI proposal is integrated with a MRBI–WREP or Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous Sign-Up, CRP (CCRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), or Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) proposed or existing project, and include the name of any MRBI–WREP, CRP, CCRP, CREP, or FWP proposed project. Higher ranking may be given to integrated proposals.

Extensive work over the past 10-years has introduced several long term conservation programs into the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. The Minnesota River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was highly successful in securing long-term easements in the watershed ranging from native grass plantings to wetland restorations.

Also ongoing work with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) have secured contracts throughout the watershed.

As reported in the *"Little Cottonwood River Watershed Project: Final Report Phase II Clean Water Partnership 2008"* by the end of the project in 2007, a total of 2,835 acres of permanent conservation easements were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). A total of 1,275 acres (45%) of the easements were located within the 100-year floodplain. The remaining acres were associated with riparian buffers and restored wetlands. In addition the promotion of the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrolled 700 acres in the filter strip and wetland restoration practices. (Please note these acres were for the whole Little Cottonwood River Watershed (5 HUCs) of which three are in our grant proposal).

If funded this grant initiative will work with the Board of Water and Soil Resources and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service to utilize the RIM-WRP initiative that has been funded through the MN State Legislature for funding. Also grant opportunities will be sought through the MN Clean Water Fund and Lessard-Sams Fund (these funds are obligated to these programs through the designated sales tax through a State Constitutional Amendment).

A description of the partner(s) and the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of the partner(s). Proposals that include resources from partners other than the lead partner must include a letter or other documentation confirming the commitment of resources.

Table 3.

PARTNER	TECHNICAL SUPPORT	IN-KIND	FUNDING
Brown SWCD	Technical Support – Design and Checkout of AgBMPS		
Cottonwood SWCD	Technical Support – Design and Checkout of AgBMPS	Administrative	
Cottonwood County		Administrative	
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Technical Support	Administrative	Cost-Share for Participants: WREP, WRP-RIM, FWP
MN Board of Water and Soil Resources	$150,000 Maximum		Clean Water Fund Grant Opportunity and WRP-RIM Funds
MN Department of Agriculture	Technical, Monitoring, Education and Outreach		
MN Department of Natural Resources	Technical Support		Cost-Share for participants: Specific Projects
USDA, Farm Service Agency	Technical Support		Cost-Share for participants: Continuous Sign-up CRP (CCRP)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service			Cost-Share for participants: Specific Projects
Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League		In-Kind Support	Nominal Financial Support for Specific Projects
Cottonwood County Pheasants Forever Chapter		In-Kind Support	Nominal Financial Support for Specific Projects
MN Deer Hunters Association – Des Moines Valley Chapter		In-Kind Support	Nominal Financial Support for Specific Projects

A description of the project duration, plan of action, and project implementation schedule that details when the potential partner anticipates finishing the project and submitting a final report. Project proposals cannot exceed 5 years from start to completion.

Table 4.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Final Report 9-30-2015
WREP						
Wetland Restoration Critical Area Planting	0 acres 0 acres	20 acres 30 acres	20 acres 30 acres	0 acres 0 acres	0 acres 0 acres	

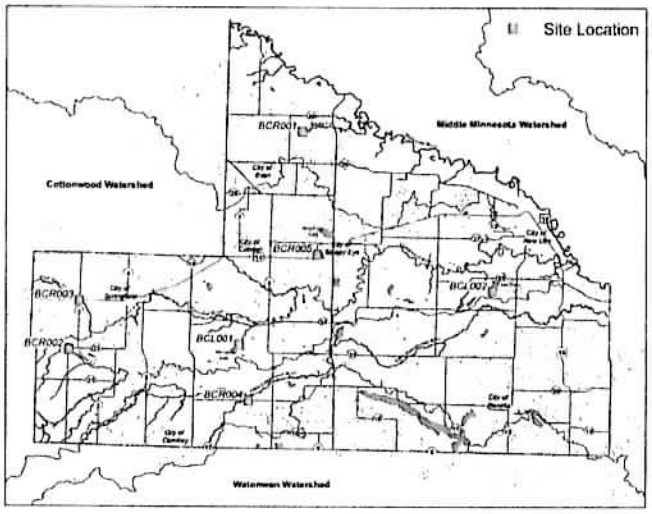
A description of the resources (financial and technical assistance) requested from each of the available NRCS programs (EQIP, WHIP, CSP) and the non-Federal resources provided by the partner(s) that will be leveraged by the Federal contribution

The Little Cottonwood River Watershed Initiative will leverage Federal funds by working with our collaborating partners to secure other funds. Agencies that will be targeted are the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources for Technical Services and Clean Water Funds; MN Department of Natural Resources and other local partners will be contacted directly for site specific projects. Please refer to Table 3.

A description of the plan for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on progress made toward achieving the objectives of the agreement.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has committed to offering our watershed initiative guidance as needed as time and resources allow in the Edge of Field Monitoring through setup, QA/QC, data analysis, interpretation and reporting, and/or developing sampling protocols.

Also our initiative will be working with the Brown County SWAG monitoring sites of which one in 2009/2010 (BCR004) was located in the watershed. This site was tested for Total Phosphorus, Chlorophyll-a, Nitrate and Nitrite, Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN) and e. Coli. (See Map)



Potential criteria to be used by NRCS to prioritize and rank MRBI–CCPI producer applications in the project area.

If the Little Cottonwood River Watershed Initiative is funded the Cottonwood and Brown EQIP Local Work Groups will be brought together to set a ranking policies and procedures for the duration of the grant funding. In this way local input will be at the forefront in prioritizing projects for the watershed.

An estimate of the percentage of producers, including nonindustrial private forest landowners, in the project area that are expected to participate in the project along with an estimate of the total number of producers located in the project area. Producer participation is a requirement for delivery of MRBI–CCPI program benefits. A statement on how the partner will encourage participation to increase the likelihood of project success.

With the approval of the Little Cottonwood Initiative, the collaborating conservation organizations will talk with 100% of the watershed landowners and operators to update them on the initiative, conservation programs and practices being offered. Of those being contacted we will strive for a 50% success rate in implementing practices in the watershed.

A statement describing participation by beginning farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, limited resource farmers or ranchers, and Indian tribes.

Farmers and ranchers that are just beginning, socially disadvantaged, or with limited resources will be targeted for practice implementation. We do not have any Indian tribes in this area.

A listing and description of the conservation practices, conservation activity plans, conservation enhancements, and partner activities to be implemented during the project timeframe and the general sequence of project implementation.

Please refer to Table 3 and Table 4.
List of Projects includes:

Core Practice	Wetland Restoration	657
Supporting Practice	Critical Area Planting	342

All projects that are implemented will be completed according to NRCS standards and specifications.

At this time, as referenced in Table 4, efforts will be to implement all projects that are proposed for the initiative in the time specified. With the initiative focus on 3 HUCs, local efforts will focus on watershed landowners of which 90% have worked with the conservation agencies in recent years.

A description of the amount of funds needed annually for producer contracts or agreements by eligible program (EQIP, WHIP, and CSP). This section of the proposal should include the total amount of financial assistance funds requested for each fiscal year of the project (for MRBI–CCPI multi-State projects provide the funds/acres by State) to be made available for producer contracts.

Table 5.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total Funding
EQIP						
Wetland Restoration	$0	$20,000	$20,000	$0	$0	$40,000
Critical Area Planting	$0	$5,470	$5,470	$0	$0	$10,940
TOTAL	**$0**	**$25,470**	**$25,470**	**$0**	**$0**	**$50,940**

A description of any requested policy, procedure, and technical adjustments, by program, with explanation of why the adjustment is needed in order to achieve the objectives of the project.

No expected changes at this time.

339 9th Street
Windom, MN 56101

Phone: 507-831-1153 Ext. #3
Fax: 507-831-2928

COTTONWOOD
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DATE: April 22, 2010

TO: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FROM: Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District
Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative – CCPI and WREP

The Cottonwood Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors supports the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997-2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River.

The Cottonwood SWCD will provide in-kind support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction.

The Little Cottonwood River has been designated as a Special Project in the Cottonwood SWCD 2010 Annual Plan of Work.

Clark Lingbeek
Board Chairman
Cottonwood SWCD

300 2nd Ave. S.W.
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota 56085
Telephone 507-794-2553
Fax 507-794-5553
E-mail: brownswcd@sleepyeyetel.net

BROWN
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

DATE: April 27, 2010

TO: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FROM: Brown Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River—Minnesota Initiative—CCPI and WREP

The Brown Soil and Water Conservation District supports the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River—Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997—2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River.

The Brown Soil and Water Conservation District will provide in-kind support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction and benefit wildlife habitat throughout the watershed.

Jack Vogel

Jack Vogel
Chairman
Brown Soil and Water Conservation District

Board of County Commissioners
Cottonwood County

900 Third Avenue
Windom, Minnesota 56101
Phone: 507.831.5669 FAX: 507.831.3675
e-mail: cottonwood.commissioners@co.cottonwood.mn.us

Chairperson:

Tom White
Third District
1615 First Avenue
Windom, MN 56101
507-831-1639

Vice -Chairperson

Ron Kuecker
Second District
650 21st Street
Windom, MN 56101
507-831-4363

Members:

Norman Holmen
Fourth District
28606 County Road 1
Comfrey, MN 56019
507-877-3243

John Oeltjenbruns
Fifth District
Box 584
Lake, MN 56159
507-427-2191

Gary Sorenson
First District
4016 United States Ave.
Storden, MN 56174
507-445-3224

Administrative Assistant
Kelly Thongvivong
900 Third Ave.
Windom, MN 56101
507-831-5669

April 26, 2010

To: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

From: Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners

Subject: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota initiative – CCPI and WREP

The Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners supports the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997 – 2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients, and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota Rivers.

Cottonwood County through the Cottonwood County Environmental Office will provide in-kind support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction.

Tom White, Chairman, Cottonwood County Board of Commissioners

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources

April 21, 2010

Jennifer Heglund, Acting MN State Conservationist
Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Dear Ms. Heglund:

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Minnesota's state conservation agency, in regard to the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI).

Minnesota is pleased to have four 8-digit HUC areas under consideration for this program: Middle Minnesota River, Root River, Sauk River, and the Upper Cedar River (multi-state with Iowa). SWCDs, watershed districts, other local units of government, partnering agencies, supporting civic groups and residents in all four of the focus areas have proven track records of success in implementing conservation through targeted efforts that result in real conservation outcomes.

In order to help ensure the success of the Minnesota projects selected for the MRBI, BWSR is committed to providing up to $300,000 of technical assistance funds in state fiscal year 2011 beginning July 1, 2010 for a two-year grant period to eligible organizations. The funding will be distributed equally among selected proposals, with a maximum contribution of $150,000 in technical assistance funding per proposal. These state funds will supplement or match federal technical assistance available for the selected project areas. Future funding cannot be guaranteed, because these funds are legislatively appropriated on a biennial basis. However, BWSR is committed to continue to help successful MRBI partnership projects as funding and priorities permit.

BWSR looks forward to providing assistance to all successful proposals. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information or have questions regarding this letter of support and commitment.

Sincerely,

John Jaschke
Executive Director

cc: Don Baloun, incoming MN State Conservationist

Bemidji	Brainerd	Duluth	Fergus Falls	Marshall	Mankato	New Ulm	Rochester
Minnesota Ave., Suite 234	1601 Minnesota Drive	394 South Lake Ave., Room 403	1004 Frontier Drive	1400 East Lyon St., Box 267	1160 Victory Drive S., Suite 5	261 Highway 15 South	2300 Silver Creek Rd N.E.
Bemidji, MN 56601	Brainerd, MN 56401	Duluth, MN 55802	Fergus Falls, MN 56537-2505	Marshall, MN 56258	Mankato, MN 56001-5358	New Ulm, MN 56073	Rochester, MN 55906
(218) 333-8024	(218) 828-2383	(218) 723-4752	(218) 736-5445	(507) 537-6060	(507) 389-1967	(507) 359-6074	(507) 206-2889

Central Office / Metro Office 520 Lafayette Road North Saint Paul, MN 55155 Phone: (651) 296-3767 Fax: (651) 297-5615

www.bwsr.state.mn.us TTY (800) 627-3529 An equal opportunity employer

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Office of the Regional Director
261 Hwy 15 South
New Ulm, MN 56073
507-359-6000

April 29, 2010

Kay Clark
District Administrator
Cottonwood Soil & Water Conservation District
339 9th St
Windom MN 56101

RE: Letter in Support of Little Cottonwood MRBI Application

Dear Ms Clark:

Please consider this as the Department of Natural Resources' letter of support for the Little Cottonwood River initiative that you are proposing to the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service as part of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

As part of the Middle Minnesota River Watershed, the strategies you are proposing for improving land management and water quality at the headwaters of the Little Cottonwood River, County Ditch No. 28-1, and Gilman Lake-Little Cottonwood River are proven strategies that DNR has long endorsed.
DNR stands ready to provide support for the partners in this initiative to the extent possible. We look forward to having further discussions with you on this very worthwhile initiative.

Thank you for your efforts on the part of Minnesota's resources and the people of our great state. We wish you success in your application.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Matuska
Regional Director

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

April 26, 2010

Don Baloun, State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

Dear Mr. Baloun:

I am writing to express the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)'s support for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) in all four of Minnesota's MRBI 8-digit HUC focus areas – the Middle Minnesota River, Root River, Sauk River, and Upper Cedar River watersheds.

To help locally led MRBI projects succeed, MDA is committed to offering guidance as needed, and as time and resources allow, in one or more of the following areas of expertise:

- **Edge Of Field Monitoring** setup, QA/QC, data analysis, interpretation and reporting , and/or developing sampling protocols
- **Nutrient Management Initiative** demonstrations/evaluations
- **Rainfall Simulator** setup, QA/QC, data analysis, interpretation and reporting
- **Drainage Water Management** systems and monitoring/evaluation
- **Cover Crop** systems and monitoring/evaluation
- **Prescribed Grazing** planning and monitoring/evaluation
- **Digital Terrain Analysis** to identify, map and prioritize critical areas for practice implementation
- **Farm Nutrient Management Assessment Program (FANMAP)** surveys to determine existing practices
- **General Technical Support** in designing and evaluating field-scale projects
- **Education and Outreach**

MDA looks forward to collaborating with other partners to support all Minnesota MRBI projects, as needed, to the extent practicable.

Attached for reference is the list of federal and state agency contacts developed following a January 2010 interagency meeting that MDA convened to discuss coordinated assistance for locally led MRBI projects. The list has been distributed to MRBI stakeholders in each of the four watershed focus areas. MDA will continue to assist with statewide MRBI stakeholder communications as needed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information regarding MDA's support for the MRBI.

Sincerely,

Joe Martin
Assistant Commissioner

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Windom Wetland Management District
49663 County Road 17
Windom, MN 56101
507-831-2220

April 23, 2010

Kay Clark, District Administrator
Cottonwood County SWCD
339 9th St.
Windom, MN 56101

Dear Ms. Clark:

Your District's efforts to improve water quality in the Little Cottonwood River watershed are to be commended. Our combined efforts to reduce/eliminate sediment and nutrient loading into the Little Cottonwood and the Minnesota Rivers must be far reaching and on-going. The Cottonwood County SWCD application for EQUIP dollars to further this goal is much needed and well founded. For each acre from which we can reduce inputs, our society will gain needed tangible benefits to clean water, wildlife and public health.

Although the Fish and Wildlife Service does not have funds to directly support your effort, we do administer an active Partners for Wildlife Program here at the Windom Wetland Management District that may be able to assist landowners in the Little Cottonwood River watershed. If any landowners wish to restore wetlands or native grasslands as part of your program, we may be able to cost share in that effort. We are funded each year for this program, so we can make this commitment during the entire term of your EQUIP grant.

If you have any questions regarding our support for your EQUIP grant, please contact me at the number above. If you have landowners interested in talking with our Private Lands biologist, please have them call Scott Ralston at the same number.

If I can be of any further assistance, please so not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Barry Christenson

Barry Christenson
Wetland District Manager

Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League

DATE: April 21, 2010

TO: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FROM: Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League
Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative – CCPI and WREP

The Cottonwood Game and Fish Protective League support the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997-2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River.

The Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League will provide in-kind and nominal financial support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction and benefit wildlife habitat throughout the watershed.

Chairman
Cottonwood County Game and Fish Protective League

Des Moines Valley Chapter

DATE: April 25, 2010

TO: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FROM: Des Moines Valley Chapter – MN Deer Hunters Association

SUBJECT: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative – CCPI and WREP

The MDHA Des Moines Valley Chapter support the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997-2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River.

The MDHA Des Moines Valley Chapter will provide in-kind and nominal financial support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction and benefit wildlife habitat throughout the watershed.

Chairman
Des Moines Valley Chapter
MN Deer Hunters Association

Cottonwood County Pheasants Forever Chapter

DATE: April 30, 2010

TO: Gregory K. Johnson, Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division
Andree DuVarney, Acting Director, Easement Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service

FROM: Cottonwood County Pheasants Forever Chapter

SUBJECT: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative
Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative – CCPI and WREP

The MDHA Des Moines Valley Chapter support the CCPI and WREP grant proposals for the Little Cottonwood River – Minnesota Initiative applications.

Results from a Phase I diagnostic study (1997-2000) indicated reductions in sediment, nutrients and pathogens throughout the watershed would contribute to improvements in the main stem of the Little Cottonwood and Minnesota River.

The Cottonwood County Pheasants Forever Chapter will provide in-kind and nominal financial support to promote the voluntary implementation of agricultural best management practices in the Little Cottonwood River Watershed. These practices will help to improve water quality through nutrient and sediment reduction and benefit wildlife habitat throughout the watershed.

S M Hansen

Chairman
Cottonwood County
Pheasants Forever Chapter