

**Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative**

**WREP**

**For the**

**Upper Cedar River Watershed Initiative**

**Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI)**

**b. Bev Nordby, District Manager, [bev.nordby@mowerswcd.org](mailto:bev.nordby@mowerswcd.org) 507-434-2603**

**c. Mower Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)**

**d. 1408 21<sup>st</sup> Ave NW Suite 2**

**Austin, MN 55912**

Collaborating Partners:

Cedar River Watershed District

Freeborn Soil & Water Conservation District

Dodge Soil & Water Conservation District

Steele Soil & Water Conservation District

MN Pollution Control Agency

MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

MN Department of Agriculture

Nature Conservancy

**e. Designated 8 digit focus area and 12 Digit HUC**

The Upper Cedar River in Minnesota 07080201 is the Designated 8 digit Focus Area for this CCPI application. It includes a drainage area that lies in southeastern MN with the very Upper region in Minnesota and continues through Iowa. This application for the 12 digit HUCs is in the headwaters in Minnesota. It includes Counties of Mower, Freeborn, Dodge and Steele.

There are two 12 Digit HUC (s) that this application is concentrating on in the Watershed. Green Valley Ditch 070802010204 which is part of the headwaters and the City of Austin, Cedar River 070802010206. The Green Valley is 31,028 acres with the Austin/Cedar River is 35,030 acres See Map

This area is in the 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District in Minnesota.

- f. Description of the Project and Resource Issues:** The natural resource issues in the Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative that relates to the MRBI priorities and objectives are soil erosion, nutrient loading and water quality. Nitrates, fecal coliform bacteria, and sediment are the contaminant challenges, especially in our agricultural areas, we face in this the Blooming Prairie/Austin watersheds This area also faces nitrates in our ground water, with our karst topography. The karst topography creates many interconnections to our surface water and groundwater which bypasses the natural filtering capacity of the soil.

These two areas are listed in the Impaired Waters list for Fecal Coliform and Turbidity. A TMDL is complete for fecal and we are in the process of developing the TMDL for turbidity.

The Upper Cedar Watershed has had severe flooding in over the last 30 years. The watershed has gone through land use changes that include intensive agricultural practices that lead to accelerated stormwater runoff and increased demands on drainage systems. These changes have resulted in degradation to water quality and major hydrologic changes subjecting the Cedar River to dangerous flash flooding during or following heavy rainfall events. The September 2004 flood caused the loss of 2 lives and damages at 17 million dollars in private and public properties. With the flooding challenges and the degradation of the surface waters, the Cedar River Watershed District was formed that is a local government unit governed by a local board of managers who are appointed by the boards of the counties with land in the watershed district. Their mission is to reduce flooding and improve water quality in the Watershed. With the coordinated efforts of the CRWD Watershed District and the 4 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, state agencies and other organizations, we have the ability to draw strong technical and financial resources to address the issues and implement best management practices through a systems approach, monitor the effectiveness at the field, subwatershed and watershed scales. This MRBI application will avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff through cover crops, nutrient management, residue management, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins that will not only control runoff, but maintain the agricultural productivity. A WREP proposal for restoring drained wetlands in the Blooming Prairie/Austin HUCS will trap sediments and nutrients in the Upper Cedar before it connects with Iowa.

In 2007, the Mower Soil and Water Conservation District solicited services to study wetland restoration sites in the Cedar River Watershed. The study focused on to identifying priority areas that would provide optimum wetland and native prairie restoration, while also reviewing flood reduction potential. The study yielded 51 sites that were located within the focus area of this application. The study showed that there was ample opportunity to use federal farm programs to control and trap sediment and nutrients that have led to impairment listings for this watershed. 51 sites were identified for restoration and provided incentive to begin promoting programs in this area. The promotion activity evolved into a close working relationship, between the SWCD and the cooperators in the watershed. These relationships provide a strong sense of confidence in assuring our MRBI project will be a success.

**g. Potential acres to be enrolled in the project area**

Early discussions with cooperators have led to great interest in WREP for the targeted area. With matching funds available through this initiative, we are confident that 150 acres of the most critical land will be enrolled into easement. Although it is safe to say that the domino

effect of these practices will spill into future sign-ups as neighbors and other landowners become aware and confident in the conservation easement option. There is already great momentum in this area for these projects. When additional cooperators enroll land, it provides a confidence in others to enroll their land as well. The effects of this initiative will likely influence projects and add enrollment for many years to come.

**h. Proposed project start and end dates:**

The timing for initiating contract will start in early 2011. Restoration and protection projects have already been targeted. Landowners have been contacted and have approved preliminary plans for offering up those priority acres for easement. Easements secured in 2011 will likely take one calendar year to close, with implementation to follow in the next growing season. It is anticipated that all practices will be on the ground and serving their purpose by 2013.

**i. Total budget for the project including the amount of WREP financial assistance being requested for the project.**

| Year  | Requested Funds | Partner            | Contribution Leveraged | Technical Assistance |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2010  | 270,000         | Nature Conservancy | \$20,000               | \$15,250             |
| 2011  | \$192,800       | State of MN RIM    | \$77,145               | \$15,250             |
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| Total | \$1,041,200     |                    | \$328,580              | \$76,250             |

**2. Project Natural Resource Objectives and Actions**

- a. Identify and provide detail about natural resource concerns to be addressed:
- b. For each objective, provide actions to be completed.
- c. Identify the total acres that require wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement.

The 10 year watershed plan developed by the Cedar River Watershed District has identified priorities in the Upper Cedar River . The plan is one of the most important tools for identifying challenges in the watershed. This MRBI application will utilize the plan's goals and objectives.

**Natural Resource Concerns**

Nitrogen and Fecal Coliform

**Goal:** To reverse the trend of increasing nitrogen and reducing fecal coliform concentrations in the streams.

**Nitrogen** concentrations in the Lower Mississippi River Basin tributaries which the Upper Cedar River is a part of, have been increasing for several decades. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency milestone monitoring program's trend analysis shows that nitrate concentrations are increasing the Cedar River. Nitrate concentration data have been collected in this river system since the 1970's. Detections of high concentrations >10 ppm in wells and rivers/streams are common. The karst topography in this part of Minnesota creates many interconnections between surface and ground water so that applications of nutrients on the landscape can easily enter groundwater. According to statewide estimates, soil organic matter and nitrogen fertilizer are the leading sources of inorganic nitrogen which is the biggest concern of our groundwater.

The Cedar River TMDL workplan states that in the Cedar River Basin in Minnesota has ten separate impaired waters. Of these ten impaired waters, five stream reaches are impaired for turbidity.

Farm nutrient management evaluations conducted by the MN department of Agriculture show that farmers often apply more nitrogen fertilizer than necessary in the Lower Mississippi River Basin. The result is increased potential for nitrate leaching and runoff.

#### Fecal Coliform

Reduce fecal levels over the next 5 years.

According to the 2007 Implementation Plan for the Lower Mississippi River Basin Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL "the widespread problem of fecal coliform impairment is caused by thousands of ubiquitous pollutant sources spread across the Basin - feedlots, manured fields, wildlife and failing septic systems to name the main ones - rather than by a few large discrete sources. There are 857 feedlots in the Cedar River Watershed District with 137 feedlots being in the Blooming Prairie/Austin Watersheds runoff. Of the 137 feedlots, 28 facilities have a NPDES permit which are all swine, but 3. All are over a 1000 animal units. Typically the swine facilities dominate the area. They confine livestock under a roof with a pit for liquid manure. Feedlot runoff tends not to be a problem from these facilities; however land application of manure can be a major source of non-point pollution

Objective 1: Implement the core practices of nutrient management to avoid, control, and trap nutrients and bacteria.

Action 1: Restore 200 acres drained wetlands

#### Turbidity/Erosion

**Goal:** Minimize erosion and its effects on water quality by reducing erosion and turbidity by --% in five years. Agriculture is the dominant land use in the Upper Cedar River Basin. It is flat and intensively drained with many small tributary streams and drainage ditches. The area of Blooming Prairie/Austin Watersheds is an area that is heavily tilled and the majority

is planted to vegetable crops. It has several stream reaches (segments) listed as impaired waters by the MPCA. Water quality in the Cedar River Basin in Minnesota is also a concern for Iowa, where the Cedar River is used for as a supply for drinking water and for recreation. Iowa is conducting its own TMDL study of the river and watershed for nitrate impairment. The Cedar River TMDL workplan states that in the Cedar River Basin in Minnesota have ten separate impaired waters. Of these ten impaired waters, five stream reaches are impaired for turbidity.

Phosphorus major source to surface water is from nonpoint pollution. Nonpoint sources include surface runoff from agricultural land and urban areas. Most phosphorus is exported from cropland as sediment-attached runoff. High erosion rates generally are associated with high phosphorus runoff. For example, University of MN data show that conventionally tilled corn experiences approximately four times as much phosphorus runoff as no-till corn.

Objective 1: Use Core BMP practices associated with WREP to control , (restoration of habitat) and trap (wetland restorations) sediment with a goal of implementing practices on 250 acres in the watershed in five years.

**Action 1:** Use Wetland Restoration study, which was developed in 2007, to prioritize the 51 sites eligible for restoration and retention.

**Action 2:** Develop an erosion problem inventory for prioritized applications by using Lidar data.

**Action 3:** Work with the landowners one on one to identify the most critical acres for treatment and work towards enrolling those acres.

**Action 4:** Work with landowners in Mower, Steele and Dodge Counties to implement a systems approach of building habitat corridors and surgically identifying the most critical areas for enrollment.

#### Water Quantity/Flow

**Goal:** Decrease the risk of flooding throughout the watershed.

Severe flooding in the Upper Cedar Watershed over the last 30 years . The watershed has gone through land use changes that include intensive agricultural practices that lead to accelerated stormwater runoff and increased demands on drainage systems. These changes have resulted in degradation to water quality and major hydrologic changes subjecting the Cedar River to dangerous flash flooding during or following heavy rainfall events in Minnesota and Iowa. Significant damaging floods have occurred in 1978, 1993, 2000, 2004 and 2008. Flood levels have generally increased over time. The September 2004 flood caused the loss of 2 lives and damages at 17 million in private and public properties. Wetland restorations have been the natural and prudent way of addressing flow reduction. This method is the preferred method of flow treatment by members of the urban and rural communities. Targeted projects provide multiple environmental, hydrologic and economic benefits to this focus area. A recent study in this target area, shows that flows were reduced by 90% as a result of a constructed wetland

restoration. Results vary depending on a number of variables. However, wetland restorations work to reduce flows and hold water back on the landscape.

Specific Issues regarding the water quantity issues include:

- Significant flooding across the entire watershed.
- Significant flooding occurs during events smaller than the 100 year event.
- Flood damage to buildings and infrastructure has experienced in Austin, Lansing and Udolpho Townships
- Frequent significant streambank and stream bed erosion occurs in all reaches of the Cedar River because of high bankfull flows occurring more frequently and for longer duration.
- The draining of wetlands has reduced the flood storage capacity.

**Objective 1:** Focus on implementing flood control features and measures by decreasing water quantity and flows in priority watersheds.

**Action 1:** Restore 200 acres of drained wetlands.

**Action 2:** Work with landowners in Mower, Steele and Dodge Counties to implement a systems approach of cover crops to avoid, conservation tillage to control and buffer the ditches to trap in the Blooming Praire/Austin Watersheds.

**Action 3:** Convert 50 acres of sensitive flood plain and cropped buffer, into vegetated upland buffer and through the restoration and management of declining habitat.

## **A Description of the Plan for Monitoring, Evaluating, and Reporting**

### Tier 1 Edge of Fields:

The monitoring of these two subwatersheds will continue as they have in the past. Extensive monitoring in the Upper Cedar in MN has been a big part of the CRWD. It provides baseline data that will help in evaluating conservation practices. The Root River (just adjacent to the Upper Cedar) small watershed project which MN Dept of Ag has taken the lead has field to Watershed that is studying quantifying the effects of BMPS on water quality within the Root River. Although this edge of field monitoring is not in the project area there are similarities that should allow for extrapolation. This project design is comparable to the small watershed project for this MRBI application.

During periods of concentrated flow, field runoff will be sampled with grab samples. Analysis will be for TP, NO3-N, along with field measurements such as water transparency (transparency tube).

### Tier 2 - Stream monitoring:

Upper watershed stream monitoring sites include the Cedar River Middle Fork (Site # S000-805), and the following SWAG sites (Blooming Prairie Creek, Hayfield Creek,

Roberts Creek, Lansing Creek, and one site on the Cedar River north of Lansing). These sites have 2 years of water chemistry data (2008-2009) – we will investigate funding options to maintain these stream monitoring sites, so that better evaluation and modeling can be accomplished.

The main Tier 2 site will be the Cedar River at Lansing. This includes the Upper Green Valley ditch 12-digit HUC, and several other subwatersheds to the north and east. This is a State (MDNR) flood warning gauge, with an established stream discharge rating, and 2 years of water quality monitoring. Nutrient loads will be estimated at this site, using the flow and water chemistry data sets.

The existing network of volunteer stream monitors will be maintained, and new volunteers will be recruited. The citizen stream monitoring program (CSMP) is a program administered by the State of MN – Pollution Control Agency, which assists citizens to monitor a stream or river in their neighborhood. The main measurement is of water transparency, using a transparency tube calibrated in centimeters. Water transparency is related to suspended sediment concentration, which is often directly related to total phosphorus concentrations. This is a simple and sustainable field measurement that engages local landowners and citizens, and provides data at a variety of small to intermediate stream scales.

During the 2009 field season, State of Minnesota biological survey crews assessed the fish and benthic macroinvertebrates at 4 sites in the selected subwatersheds. These data allow for the assessment of the streams using an index of biotic integrity. While these biotic indices may not be directly correlated with N and P concentrations/loads, they are an important overall measure of stream water quality.

A comprehensive water assessment includes chemical, biological and physical components. Stream physical measurement were collected at 8 sites on the mainstem Cedar river in 2009 by the MDNR. In 2010, there will be two additional stream channel assessment methods that will be used. The first is an assessment of several stream reaches for bank erosion. The second method is for basic stream cross sections, longitudinal surveys, and stream classifications to be done on the tributary streams to the Cedar River. This will include the Green Valley Ditch, Hayfield Creek, Blooming Prairie Creek, Lansing Creek, Wolf Creek, and Roberts Creek. This effort will provide quantitative data on the condition of the stream channel. Collected data can be used to improve watershed modeling efforts, and help site riparian corridor practices.

#### Tier 3 – Major Watershed Stream Monitoring:

Located just downstream from the city of Austin is a USGS Gage. This is a long-term flow monitoring sites, with data going back into the early part of the 1900s. Having access to long-term flow data is critical in assessing trends, and improving estimates of N and P loading using various routines and modeling tools. This site is part of Minnesota's stream outlet monitoring program, and will be monitored for flow and

water chemistry for the next several decades. Water sample collection began by the State in 2008. This site is also monitored by the city of Austin (Minnesota), as part of its municipal wastewater management program.

The Cedar River also has USGS gages in Iowa, at Waverly, Janesville, Charles City, and Cedar Rapids. These could be considered part of the Tier 3 network of sites, which could allow for segmenting the stream system into more assessable and understandable components.

#### Modeling Evaluations:

Data collected from the above activities will be used for watershed modeling purposes. Several watershed models have been developed for the Dobbins Creek watershed. An SWAT model was developed in 2009 for Dobbins Creek, and the GSSSHA model will be finalized later in 2010. The entire upper Cedar River watershed in Minnesota will be the focus of a SWAT model, that is being employed for the current sediment/turbidity TMDL project. Various modeling scenarios will be used in the next several years, to ascertain how land use/land management practices affect stream hydrology and pollutant loading.

### **3. Detailed Proposal Criteria:**

#### **a. A Description of the Partner History**

The Mower Soil & Water Conservation District as well as Dodge, Freeborn and Steele SWCDs has spent the last 55+ years working with agricultural producers in applying conservation to their land. Part of our success working with rural landowners is to bring them a conservation program that works for their management style of their farming operation. It is important to us that farmers have the ability to stay productive and at the same time be good stewards to their land. We have been very successful promoting and installing wetland restorations, buffers, waterways, sediment control basins and innovative practices that include two stage ditches, control drainage and surge ponds and edge of field monitoring.

The Nature Conservancy offer leveraging funds, technical knowledge and support of Best manage practices. They coordinated several innovative practices with landowners that include two stage ditch, surge ponds and other practices. They have also partnered with several agricultural cooperate businesses to put practices on the ground.

MPCA and MDA work with producers and local government on monitoring and evaluation of many conservation practices. MPCA assists the Cedar River Watershed District in setting up a comprehensive monitoring program and MDA is assisting us with an edge of field monitoring site.

## **b. A Detailed Description of 12 digit hucs**

### **Detailed Description of the Watershed:**

The Upper Cedar in Minnesota is 278,463 acres located in Southeast Minnesota and continues to flow into central Iowa through Cedar Rapids where it joins the Iowa River and onto the Mississippi. There is 21 12-digit HUCs in the Upper Cedar in Minnesota and we are concentrating on close to the headwaters in the GreenValley and Austin 12 digit HUC. Those two HUC make up about 66,058 acres. This WREP application partners with a CCPI application of the same area.

This area was burr oak savanna with areas of tallgrass prairie and maple-basswood forest pre-settlement. It is now 83% cropland. In the Mower County Water Plan, the area is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in Minnesota for corn and soybean production.

Many ditches were constructed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to aid in the land development for agriculture. The goal of these ditches is to remove water from agricultural lands. Besides the ditches assisting farmers to drain their farms the majority of the cropland is patterned tiled.

In this small watershed area, the Ramsey Mill Pond Wildlife Management Area is a 335 acre mixture of wetlands, upland woods and established native prairie managed for deer, small game, pheasant and water fowl and other non-game species. Just down the Cedar there is a boat access to enjoy this wildlife area. We also have the Lost lake Fish and Wildlife refuge that is 90 acres.

The Cedar River is also habitat to the Wood Turtle and the Blanding Turtle and represents the western limit of this species in Minnesota. This species occupies forested rivers and stream and adjacent upland habitats. It will forage in the upland forest habitat, but also uses grassy openings to feed and nest. Threats to this population include loss of forest habitat, reduced water quality, and flooding of nesting and feeding areas. Also a part of this watershed is the federal endangered species Prairie Bush Clover.

The SWCD and its partners in conservation have dedicated many years to building relationships with the people located in the targeted areas. The culmination of all these years and dedicated efforts has resulted in corridor projects that trap nutrients on a large and effective scale. These areas also promote and control every form of wildlife available to our area. These landowner led initiatives have brought numerous agencies and program opportunities to the landscape to work toward a common goal of building on protection and enhancement of our most critical corridors. See Map

## **c. A Description of Partners and Roles and Responsibilities**

*Mower SWCD:* administer this MRBI application, provide assistance to cooperators with implementation of practices in the watershed.

*Freeborn SWCD*: provide assistance to cooperators with implementation of practices in the watershed.

*Steele SWCD* : provide assistance to cooperators with implementation of practices in the watershed.

*Dodge SWCD*: provide assistance to cooperators with implementation of practices in the watershed.

*Cedar River Watershed District*: financial assistance for Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling

*Nature Conservancy* : financial assistance for the 5% WREP match

*MN Pollution Control Agency* : technical assistance for water quality monitoring

*Department of Agriculture* : research and evaluate the effectiveness of BMPs

*State of Minnesota*: 150,000.00 for technical assistance for 2 years

**d. A Description of Project Duration.**

The duration of this project is five years. A final report will be completed in 2015 after practices have been implemented and monitoring data can be compiled and analyzed. Potential producers have already been identified for potential enrollment of WREP. The SWCDs in this project area will be working "one on one" with producers in the watershed to identify future needs, which may be funded through this proposal.

Plan of Action

| Action  | Timeline     | Responsible Party                |
|---|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Enroll first WREP sites   | Fall of 2010 | Mower SWCD                       |
| Close first easements<br>Enroll 2011 Easements  | 2011         | Mower/Dodge/Steele/Freeborn SWCD |
| Close on 2011 Easements.<br>Enroll 2012 projects<br>Complete Implementing 2010 projects | 2012         | Mower/Dodge/Steele/Freeborn SWCD |
| Close on 2012 Easements.<br>Enroll 2013 projects<br>Complete Implementing 2011 projects | 2013         | Mower/Dodge/Steele/Freeborn SWCD |
| Close on 2013 Easements.<br>Enroll 2014 projects<br>Complete Implementing 2012 projects | 2014         | Mower/Dodge/Steele/Freeborn SWCD |
| Close on 2014 Easements.<br>Complete Implementing 2013-2014 projects                    | 2015 – 2016  | Mower/Dodge/Steele/Freeborn SWCD |

**e. A Description of Resources (financial and technical assistance)**

The State of Minnesota has a long standing tradition of partnering with NRCS to extend state and federal dollars to the greatest extent possible. This past year, the State of Minnesota

partnered with Federal funding to enroll almost 10,000 acres of Wetlands Reserve Program and Reinvest In Minnesota projects. The state recognizes that every \$1 spent on restoration projects results in 1.28 of Industry sales. The partnership provides ideal environmental and economic benefits on a local level. It is anticipated that state officials will continue to support this project, with priority given to targeted areas which have identified projects that are ready to enroll. MRBI cooperation will present that scenario and put this focus area in a great position for accomplishing its goals.

| Year  | Requested Funds | Partner            | Contribution Leveraged | Technical Assistance |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2010  | 270,000         | Nature Conservancy | \$20,000               | \$15,250             |
| 2011  | \$192,800       | State of MN RIM    | \$77,145               | \$15,250             |
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| Total | \$1,041,200     |                    | \$328,580              | \$76,250             |

**f. Landowner Participation**

The SWCD has been fortunate enough to work with excellent landowners and operators in the Green Valley/Austin watershed. There is a very strong conservation ethic and a sense of pride in the stewardship projects they have already put on the land. During preliminary discussions, there has been great discussion about the possibility of adding conservation projects to the Green Valley/Austin watershed. It's anticipated that 15% of landowners in the area will participate in a conservation easement program. It is also likely that the WREP cooperators will participate in the CCPI portion of the initiative.

**g. Beginning Farmers**

In this MRBI area, to the best of our knowledge we do not have any socially disadvantaged farmers. We do have beginning and limited resource farmers that we work with and will put 10% of the funding aside for them.

**h. A description of wetland protection, restoration and enhancement activities**

The Cedar River Watershed District has lost over 90% of its historical wetlands to surface and sub surface drainage. According to the State of Minnesota data, there is only one other County in the state of Minnesota which has less wildlife habitat than Mower County (where much of the priority area is located). Therefore, this project will strive to seek projects that will restore wetlands and trap sediment to the greatest extent possible. Projects selected for easement will demonstrate wildlife benefits for long term control of ideal prairie habitat. Due to surrounding land use and degradation of pre-existing prairie conditions, the sites will be enhanced whenever possible. This may take place with the placement of water control structures, earthen dams. This enhancement activity will also address the challenge of managing flows in this area. Shallow scrapes in the soil will expose the water table and provide habitat for more diverse

wildlife groups. Securing sensitive flood plain areas with native prairie plants will control the banks and landscape of these floodplains to keep them as natural as possible.

**i. The amount of funds needed annually for easement acquisition and wetland restoration and enhancement activities.**

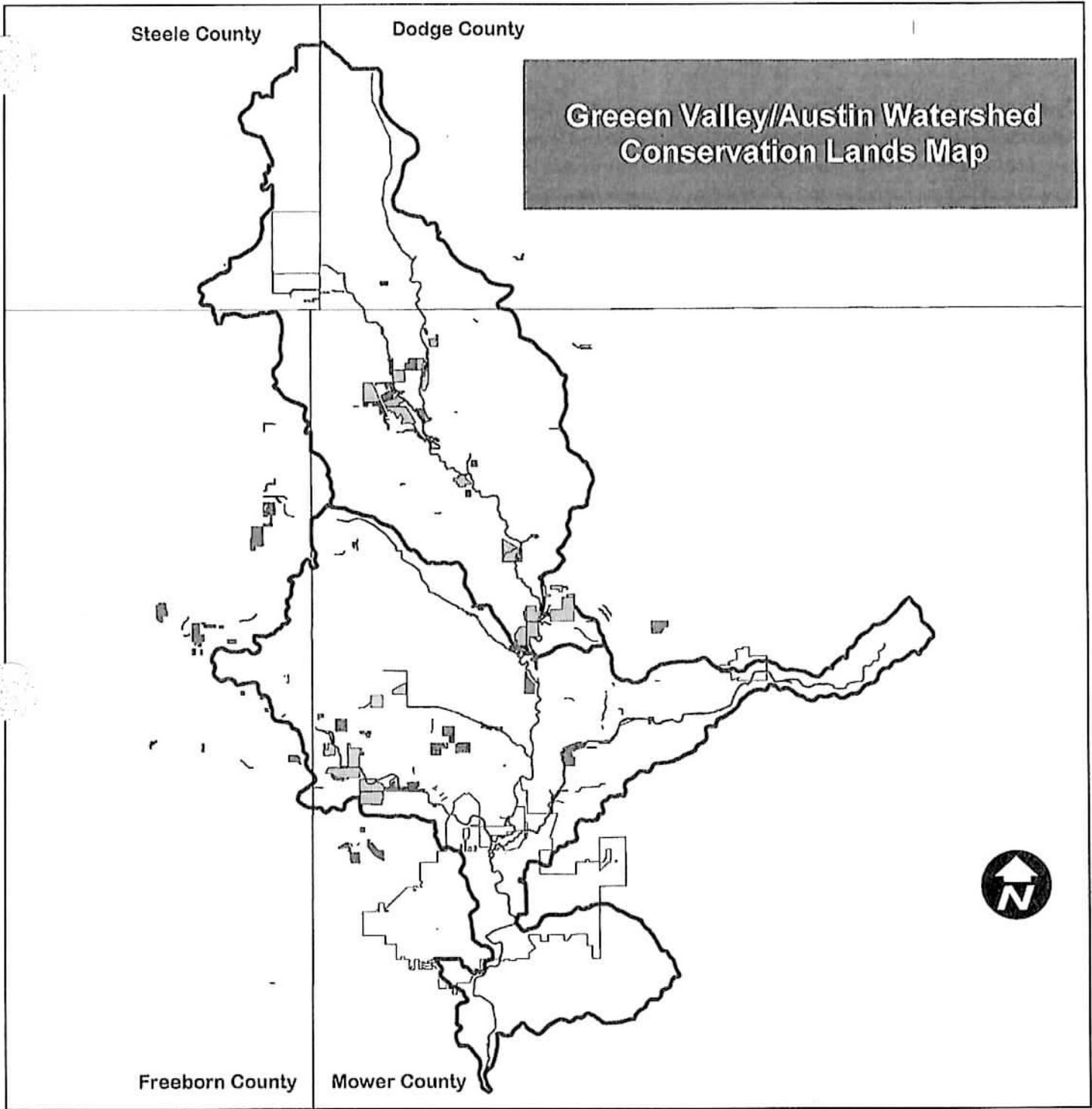
The State of Minnesota and Federal government have developed a payment structure for funding easements, which has been well received by cooperators has proven to be financially responsible for the State and Federal partners. It is anticipated that this payment structure will remain in place. Easement payment rates will use the latest approved values, approved by the Minnesota State Agency Board of Water and Soil Resources, in cooperation with the Federal Wetlands Reserve Program funds. These rates are based on the average assessed tillable value rates for each township within the respective county.

Establishment and implementation of the project will also be provided by partnership funding. Cost-share funds will not exceed 20% of the cost to secure an easement. The partnership contributions are as follows.

| Year  | Requested Funds | Partner            | Contribution Leveraged | Technical Assistance |
|-------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2010  | 270,000         | Nature Conservancy | \$20,000               | \$15,250             |
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**j. A Description of How the Partner will Provide Outreach.**

The SWCD has one full time employee dedicated to promotion and outreach of Farm Bill conservation program throughout the county. In the case that MRBI funding were to become available, that position would be targeted towards the MRBI work area and projects within that watershed. Half of the time devoted to conservation program development will be dedicated to the promotion, enrollment, technical support , planning and implementation of projects in the MRBI area. This position works with cooperators personally in a one on one setting. This provides good discussion of the practices and ultimately results in cooperator confidence in the program. It has been our experience that confident cooperators serve the practice and the land in a more prudent manner for conserving the resource and making the most out of the practice. In addition, the partners will be using marketing techniques such as press release, newsletter, web site announcements to educate and promote the conservation needs and availability within the watershed.



Legend

-  County Boundary
-  Green Valley/Austin Watershed
-  Cities
-  Streams
-  Conservation Reserve Program Land
-  Perpetual Conservation Easements

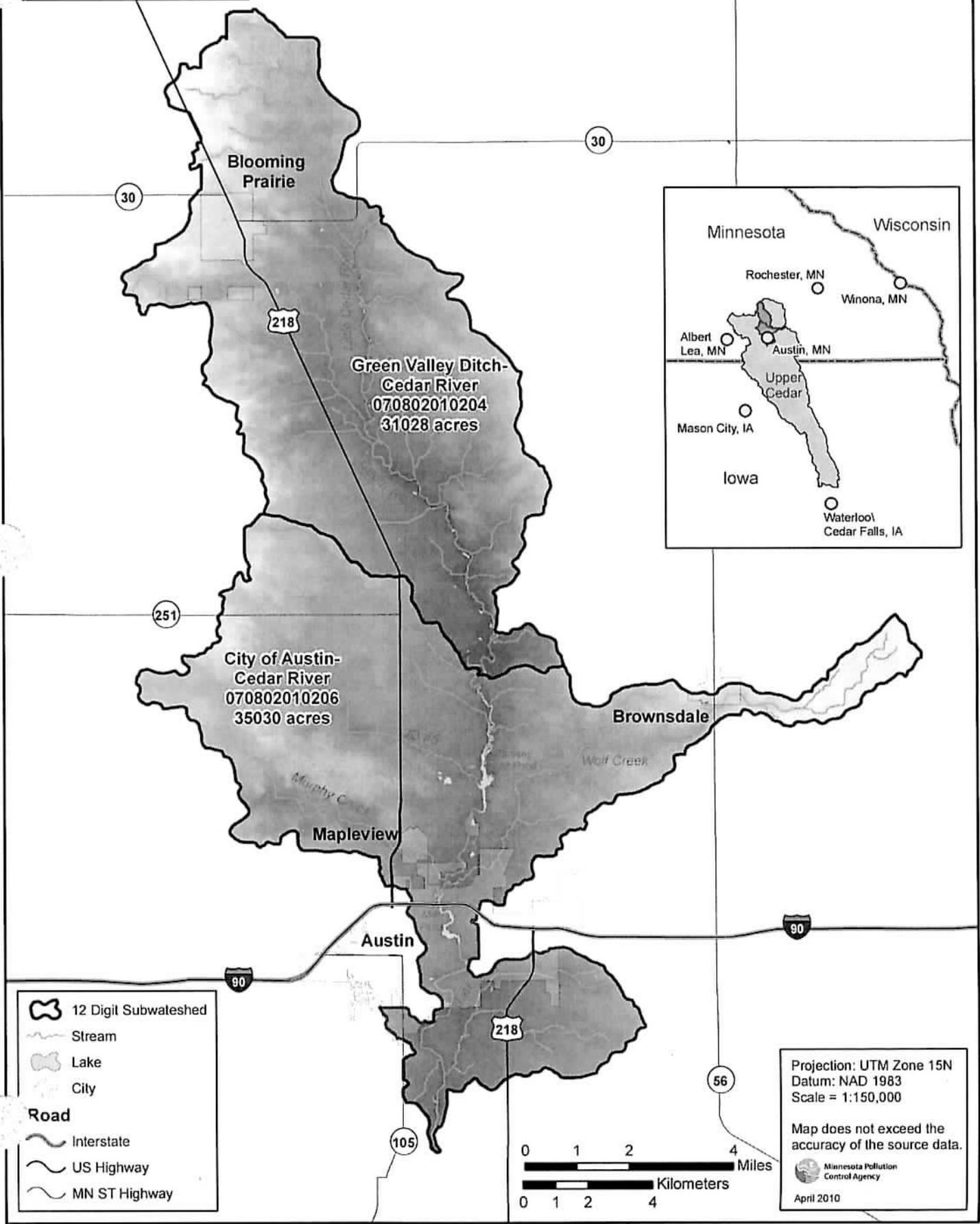


1:180,424

Justin Hanson  
 Mower Soil and Water Conservation District  
 1408 21st Ave NW Ste. #2  
 Austin MN 55912  
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**Cedar River Watershed  
07080201  
12 Digit Subwatersheds**

07080201



**Legend**

- 12 Digit Subwatershed
- Stream
- Lake
- City

**Road**

- Interstate
- US Highway
- MN ST Highway



Projection: UTM Zone 15N  
Datum: NAD 1983  
Scale = 1:150,000

Map does not exceed the accuracy of the source data.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
April 2010

# **Support Letters**



**Cedar River  
Watershed  
District**

1408 21st Ave. NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
507-434-2603

[www.cedarriverwd.org](http://www.cedarriverwd.org)

**Watershed  
Purpose:**

To reduce stream  
flows and protect  
improve water  
quality in the  
Watershed.

**Board of Managers**

Harlan Peck  
*Chair*

Al Layman  
*Vice Chair*

Jim Gebhardt  
*Secretary*

Mike Jones  
*Treasurer*

Dan Regner  
Richard Fuller  
Steve Kraushaar  
*Managers*

Bev Nordby  
*Administrator*

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Mower SWCD  
1408 21<sup>st</sup> St NW Suite 2  
Austin, MN 55912

RE: NRCS Mississippi River Basin Initiative

The Cedar River Watershed District is pleased to continue the partnership with the Mower SWCD and ag producers in the CRWD. We support the efforts of the MRBI applications for CCPI and WREP. We have agreed to contribute \$53,092.70 in monitoring and \$32,000 in incentives for wetland restorations and filterstrips.

These applications will fit well into our workplan for the next 10 years and help us meet our goals to reduce stream flows and improve the water quality in the watershed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harlan Peck".

Harlan Peck  
Chair



## DODGE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

916 2<sup>nd</sup> Street S.E.  
Dodge Center, MN 55927  
Telephone: 507-374-6364 Ext. 3

April 25, 2010

Don Baloun, State Conservationist 6  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
375 Jackson Street Suite 600  
St Paul, MN 55101-1854

To Whom It May Concern:

Speaking for the Dodge County Soil & Water Conservation District, we wish to express our support for the Green Valley Austin Watershed Initiative.

The Dodge County Soil & Water Conservation District will work to promote and implement this Initiative. We fully support the MRBI, CCTI, and WREP application.

Thank you for this opportunity, and we look forward to being part of this project.

Sincerely,

Dodge County SWCD Chairperson



Freeborn Soil & Water  
Conservation District  
1400 West Main Street  
Albert Lea, MN 56007-1816  
Phone: 507-373-5607 Ext. 3  
FAX: 507-373-7654  
[www.freebornswcd.org](http://www.freebornswcd.org)

April 27, 2010

Mr. Don Baloun, State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
375 Jackson Street  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1810

Re: Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) Application

Dear Mr. Baloun:

I'm writing this letter in support of the MRBI Application being submitted by Mower County SWCD for two 12 Digit HUC Areas located in the headwaters of the Mississippi River Basin. These two watershed areas have land that is located primarily in Mower County but also partially in Freeborn, Dodge and Steele Counties.

Be advised that if funded, we intend to promote and support all aspects of the project on land areas within the HUC codes that are located in Freeborn County. This additional funding source would allow us to implement additional projects that reduce storm water runoff and improve downstream water quality.

Thank you for considering this MRBI Application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Don Flatness'.

Don Flatness, District Manager  
Freeborn County SWCD



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Rochester Office

April 29, 2010

Ms. Bev Nordby, District Manager  
Mower County Soil and Water Conservation District  
1408 – 21<sup>st</sup> Street Northwest  
Austin, MN 55912

Dear Bev:

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) strongly supports applications for the funding of small watershed restoration projects within the Cedar River watershed as part of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative. The Cedar River watershed has become a high priority site for a variety of resource investigation and restoration efforts. Collectively, state agencies and local governmental units have gathered excellent baseline monitoring data at several sites against which future progress can be measured. The funding of priority watersheds under the MRBI will provide an excellent opportunity to see how intensive implementation efforts within a small area can make a difference to water quality and broader ecosystem indicators. Such results are needed as we seek to improve the selection of BMPs to address erosion, water storage, and water quality concerns in the challenging terrain of southeast Minnesota.

The MPCA is currently involved in a turbidity TMDL study on the Cedar River that includes many water quality monitoring stations. If previously collected data can be of help to this project, it can be summarized and provided as needed. Also, if there is a need for further monitoring with current equipment and staffing capabilities, that support is available.

The MPCA looks forward to working with Mower County in this effort.

Sincerely,

Katherine Logan  
Supervisor, Watershed Unit  
Rochester Office  
Regional Division

KL:ml





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

|   |   |  |   |  |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|
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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



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Rochester Office

April 29, 2010

Ms. Bev Nordby, District Manager  
Mower County Soil and Water Conservation District  
1408 – 21<sup>st</sup> Street Northwest  
Austin, MN 55912

Dear Bev:

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) strongly supports applications for the funding of small watershed restoration projects within the Cedar River watershed as part of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative. The Cedar River watershed has become a high priority site for a variety of resource investigation and restoration efforts. Collectively, state agencies and local governmental units have gathered excellent baseline monitoring data at several sites against which future progress can be measured. The funding of priority watersheds under the MRBI will provide an excellent opportunity to see how intensive implementation efforts within a small area can make a difference to water quality and broader ecosystem indicators. Such results are needed as we seek to improve the selection of BMPs to address erosion, water storage, and water quality concerns in the challenging terrain of southeast Minnesota.

The MPCA is currently involved in a turbidity TMDL study on the Cedar River that includes many water quality monitoring stations. If previously collected data can be of help to this project, it can be summarized and provided as needed. Also, if there is a need for further monitoring with current equipment and staffing capabilities, that support is available.

The MPCA looks forward to working with Mower County in this effort.

Sincerely,

Katherine Logan  
Supervisor, Watershed Unit  
Rochester Office  
Regional Division

KL:ml





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April 28, 2010

Mower Soil and Water Conservation District  
Attn. Bev Nordby, District Manager  
1408 21<sup>st</sup> Ave NW Suite 2  
Austin, MN 55912

Re: NRCS Mississippi River Basin Initiative

Dear Mrs. Nordby:

The Nature Conservancy is pleased to continue working with Mower SWCD and agriculture producers within the Upper Cedar River Watershed. TNC and our partners in agriculture support your efforts to increase water storage capacity within the watershed. We have agreed to contribute \$20,000 toward acquisition and/or restoration of wetland and associated upland habitat within the Green Valley subwatershed.

The Nature Conservancy will also help with project coordination and promotion of practices. TNC will continue to work with our agriculture partners in the area to pair interested landowners with sound conservation practices.

We have identified altered hydrology, primarily increases in peak flow, as a major stressor to aquatic systems. Restoring wetlands will reduce peak flow while reducing nutrient delivery and bringing back much needed upland and aquatic habitat in the Upper Cedar.

TNC will continue to seek additional funds and expand our partnership to continue this and other working lands conservation efforts in the future and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Thomas Landwehr  
Assistant State Director

Cc: Todd Holman, Prairie Forest Border Program Manager



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[www.agtechnfarm.net](http://www.agtechnfarm.net)

April 28, 2010

Bev Nordby, Administrator/District Manager  
Mower SWCD  
1408 21st St NW, Austin, MN 55912

**RE: Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative**

Dear Ms. Nordby:

The Ag Technology and Environmental Stewardship Foundation (ATESF) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative for the Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative grant application. ATESF is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure implementation of this valuable project. In particular, ATESF will provide staff time and resources to advance the On-Farm Network® component of the Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative CCPI:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts, especially for the On-Farm Network® in the watershed.
- Provide guidance to the Mower SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate, especially related to advancement of the On-Farm Network®.
- Assist in identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall planning efforts.
- Assist with in field monitoring and evaluation of nutrient management efforts, including data analysis, interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance for advancement of the On-Farm Network® when possible.

ATESF looks forward to partnering with the Mower SWCD on the USDA MRBI Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative. We are proposing providing cash and of in-kind support over the five-year project to match CCPI resources invested in On-Farm Network® related activities (guided stalk sampling, aerial imagery, replicated strip trials, and related CCPI funded practices). We will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Blackmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Blackmer, Ph.D.  
Director of Research  
Ag Technology and Environmental Stewardship Foundation  
Iowa Soybean Association



April 28, 2010

Bev Nordby, Administrator/District Manager  
Mower SWCD  
1408 21st St NW, Austin, MN 55912

**RE: Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative**

Dear Ms. Nordby:

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative for the Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative grant application. EDF is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure implementation of this valuable project. In particular, EDF will provide staff time and resources to advance the On-Farm Network<sup>®</sup> component of the Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative CCPI:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts, especially for the On-Farm Network<sup>®</sup> in the watershed.
- Provide guidance to the Mower SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate, especially related to advancement of the On-Farm Network<sup>®</sup>.
- Assist in identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall planning efforts.
- Assist with in field monitoring and evaluation of nutrient management efforts, including data analysis, interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance for advancement of the On-Farm Network<sup>®</sup> when possible.

EDF looks forward to partnering with the Mower SWCD on the USDA MRBI Green Valley/Austin Watershed Initiative. We are proposing providing cash and of in-kind support over the five-year project to match CCPI resources invested in On-Farm Network<sup>®</sup> related activities (guided stalk sampling, aerial imagery, replicated strip trials, and related CCPI funded practices). We will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

Suzy Friedman, Deputy Director, Center for Conservation Incentives at EDF  
[sfriedman@edf.org](mailto:sfriedman@edf.org), 202-492-1023