

Application for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative (MRBI) – Middle MN River

1. Proposal Cover and Summary

1a. Project Title: Redwood County – Middle Minnesota River Watershed Initiative

1b. Project Manager: Marilyn Bernhardson, Redwood SWCD District Administrator
Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District
1241 East Bridge Street, Suite C
Redwood Falls, MN 56283
(507) 637-2427, Ext. 3
marilyn.bernhardson@racgroup.net

1c. Lead Partner: Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District

Collaborating Partners: Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area (RCRCA)
Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Minnesota River Joint Powers Board (MN JPB)
Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc. (Area II)
Southwest Technical Service Area (TSA)
Central Crop Consulting

1d. Contact Info for Lead Partner:
1241 East Bridge Street, Suite C
Redwood Falls, MN 56283
(507) 637-2427, Ext. 3

1e. Watershed/HUC Info: Focus Area: Middle Minnesota River Watershed (07020007)
Project Area: Crow Creek (070200070401)
Wabasha Creek (070200070203)
City of Morton – Minnesota River (070200070403)

The Focus and Project Areas are in the state of Minnesota, county of Redwood, and Minnesota Congressional District 7.

See project map on Page 3.

1f. Project Summary

The Minnesota River is a major tributary to the Mississippi River, and it is also a system that has been documented to produce high concentrations of sediments and nutrients (including both phosphorous and nitrogen). Various impairment studies have been addressing these pollutants. Data are indicating that nutrients continue to generate from a variety of sources, including field crop applications. Sediment research has recently demonstrated strong evidence that gully and

ravine erosions, along with streambank degradation, are significant contributors to sedimentation and total suspended solids concerns. This project intends to target an area (Middle Minnesota River Watershed) that has rarely received funding to implement sediment and nutrient reduction measures. Our intentions are to utilize soil grid sampling on several sites to facilitate variable rate fertilizer applications and to demonstrate that this technique is viable to reduce the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen needed for crop production. In addition, we plan to address two destabilized stream stretches and 8 gully/ravine erosion sites, all of which have demonstrated significant cutting in the past few years and are contributing substantial amounts of sediment. Simple models and implementation data will be used to demonstrate results, along with ongoing monitoring of pour points in two of the subwatersheds.

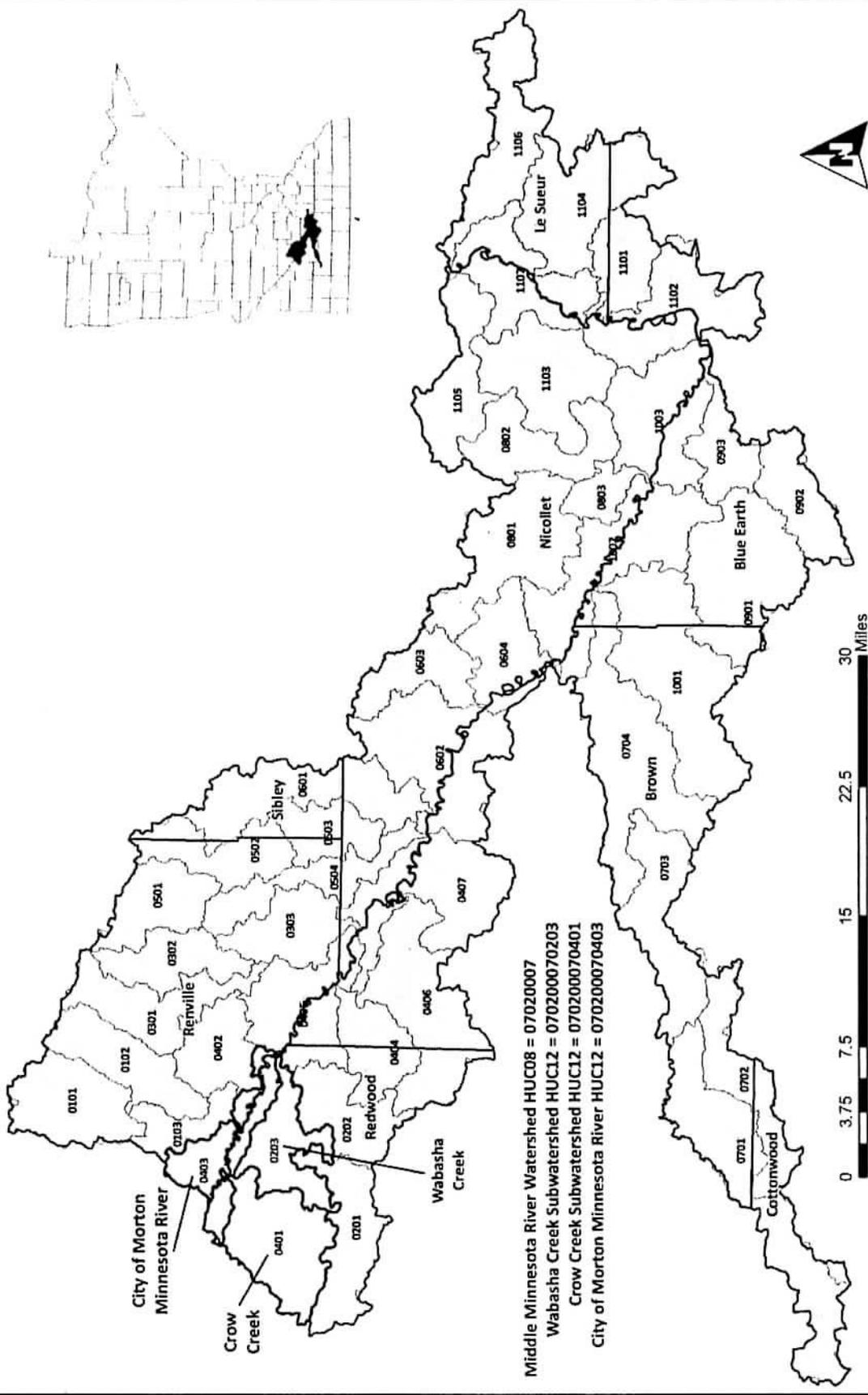
1g. Planning Completed:

In 2009, RCRCA completed a diagnostic work plan that included the watersheds that are in the application. Water quality monitoring at the pour points of Wabasha and Crow Creek has been completed by staff from the Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area, and sediment and nutrients have been identified as a water quality concern in these areas. Staff at the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resource Conservation Service have considered these results and been working over the past few years to identify gully, ravine, and streambank erosion sites in the Middle Minnesota River Watershed. Numerous sites were identified; however, two streambank sites and eight gully/ravine sites have been identified as priority areas. The landowners at these 10 sites have already been approached regarding environmental enhancement options and all have expressed strong interest in cooperating with conservation practice implementation – a huge first step that is already done.

In regards to nutrient reductions, soil grid sampling has been shown to be a readily adapted practice in many areas, but due to costs, assistance is often requested by producers. Crop advisors in the project area have indicated that they have numerous producers that have a strong interest in soil grid sampling and variable rate application practices. With the proposed management incentive it is anticipated there will be great interest in this practice. In a previous project completed within Redwood County, grid sampling funds were depleted 7 minutes after the program opened – interest in this area for this practice is very strong. This practice aids in meeting the NRCS systems approach for nutrient management by avoiding the over-application of fertilizer.

- 1h. Approved Practices:
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Core: | 590 – Nutrient Management |
| | 402 – Dams |
| | 580 – Streambank and Shoreline Protection |
| Supporting: | 342 – Critical Planting Areas |
| | 484 – Mulching |
| | 345 and 329 – Residue Management |
| | 328 – Conservation Crop Rotation |

Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) Application Redwood County - Middle Minnesota River Watershed Initiative



Middle Minnesota River Watershed HUC08 = 07020007
 Wabasha Creek Subwatershed HUC12 = 070200070203
 Crow Creek Subwatershed HUC12 = 070200070401
 City of Morton Minnesota River HUC12 = 070200070403



- 1j. Total Budget Request: \$366,000 (fiscal year breakdown is as follows)
All grid sampling, streambank, and gully/ravine funds would be requested as part of the EQIP Program. Monitoring funds would be handled as per program specifications.

FY11: Grid Sampling* \$ 24,000 (used fully in FY11)
Monitoring** \$ 8,000 (used fully in FY11)
Streambank \$ 15,000 (completed in FY11 and FY12)
Ravine/Gully \$ 32,000 (initiates 4 projects to be completed in FY12)
FY11 Total \$ 79,000

FY12: Monitoring** \$ 8,000 (used fully in FY12)
Ravine/Gully \$ 96,000 (completes 4 projects started in FY11)
FY12 Total \$104,000

FY13: Grid Sampling* \$ 24,000 (used fully in FY13)
Monitoring** \$ 8,000 (used fully in FY13)
Streambank \$ 15,000 (completed in FY13 and FY14)
Ravine/Gully \$ 32,000 (initiates 4 projects to be completed in FY14)
FY13 Total \$ 79,000

FY14: Monitoring** \$ 8,000 (used fully in FY14)
Ravine/Gully \$ 96,000 (completes 4 projects started in FY11)
FY14 Total \$104,000

*Grid Sampling falls under practice 590 – Nutrient Management (adjustment requested, see 3I)

**Monitoring costs are 8.7% of the total funding request, below the 10% maximum allowed.

2. Project Natural Resource Objectives and Actions

- 2a. The Minnesota River has been identified as a primary source of sediment and nutrients to Lake Pepin, and has been identified as a significant allocation source in the current Lake Pepin Total Maximum Daily Load Study. The Water Resources Center at Minnesota State University, Mankato has prepared several "State of the Minnesota River" reports since 2000 and identified three primary water quality concerns, including excessive sediment and nutrient enrichment risks. Extensive areas of the Minnesota River Basin do not meet current water quality standards, including bacteria, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and biotic status – we do not have an established nutrient standard. Over the past ten years, trends have shown some decline in total suspended solids and phosphorous, however, nitrate-nitrogen has been increasing. Regardless of the trends we are seeing, the levels of sediment and nutrients currently seen in the Minnesota River are problematic. The overall goal of this project is to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients

entering the Minnesota River, thereby reducing the overall impact of the Minnesota River on the Mississippi River system. The objectives of this project are basically two-fold:

Objective 1: Using a systems approach by avoiding excessive nutrient applications on productive lands, utilize a soil grid sampling approach to accommodate variable rate fertilizer applications – thereby reducing nutrients available for transport into surface and tile water, demonstrating the utility of this tool to local producers, and facilitate continued production on important croplands.

Objective 2: In light of research regarding the significance of sedimentation related to eroding stream banks, gullies, and ravines, implement stabilization projects that will substantively reduce additional sediment inputs from the project areas.

Objective one is fully justified because local unpublished case studies in the Minnesota River Basin completed by the applicant have shown that variable rate technology, when used in corn and soybean rotations, saved producers on average 15 pounds of phosphorus and 15 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per acre per year. These savings can be realized in both economic and environmental benefit – with little to no impact on crop production results. In addition, although much less of a concern, variable rate technology can also save up to 32 pounds a year per acre of potassium application as well. As stated earlier, nutrient concentrations in the Minnesota River are elevated and variable rate technology can serve as an important practice that has high implementation palatability to producers because it keeps productive lands producing and saves them money. The practice has been shown to reduce surface runoff of phosphorus via overland flow and entry via open tile intakes. In addition, reduced nitrogen application typically leads to reduced nitrogen concentrations in tile flow, as nitrates do not build up on the soil, leaching is reduced, and the crops uptake a greater percentage. Results of objective 1 can be summarized by working with producers to determine their average fertilizer application rates, and to then compare that with rates applied using variable rate technology. Field-edge monitoring sites are possible (water quality monitoring) and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Objective one will be completed in two phases: grid sampling assistance for a maximum of 160 acres per producer during year 1 of the funding. Based on previous grid sampling funds made available in Redwood County, these funds will readily be utilized. A second round of grid sampling would be offered during year 3 of the project.

Objective 2 has become an elevated concern in light of research conducted by staff of the Minnesota Science Museum, the University of Minnesota, and the US Geological Survey that shows streambank and ravine/gully erosion is a much larger contributor of sediments to the Minnesota and Mississippi River systems than field erosion. Therefore, more attention has been given to eroding lands in and adjacent to the waterways proper. Several sites proposed for work if this funding request is approved have been monitored by NRCS/SWCD staff and examples include streambank sites where 3 feet of bank has been lost in a 4-ft high by 500-ft long stretch, resulting in some 285 tons of sediment delivered to the Minnesota River – and this was in just one year. In addition, ravine and gully erosion that has been watched by several producers that have expressed

interest in this project have reported that some areas of erosion (over a 5-year period) are 500-ft long, by 4-ft wide, and 4-ft deep, which equates to soil loss of some 380 tons, or 76 tons per year from each site – and there are likely hundreds of sites like this in the Middle Minnesota River. Results for objective 2 could be modeled with simple calculations based on know soil loss that has occurred, compared with stabilization reductions in soil loss. As part of both objectives combined, we propose to assist with ongoing monitoring at the pour points of Wabasha and Crow Creeks. The two streambank and eight ravine/gully sites will be divided into two groups. The first group will be initiated during year 1 of the project and implementation of the project will be completed by the end of year 2. The second group will be initiated during year 3 and completed during year 4.

- 2b. Actions to be completed to achieve objectives are discussed below. Please note that these actions will be largely paid for by EQIP funding provide via the MRBI-CCPI funding request. Staff time via NRCS, SWCD, and other collaborators would be covered under existing duties; however, soil testing, engineering, design, and construction services would be paid as part of the projects.

Objective 1 - Actions:

- a. Work with local crop advisors/consultants to identify landowners (largely already complete) that are willing to utilize soil grid sampling to dictate their variable rate nutrient applications. HUP funds indicated in the payment Adjustment Request section found on page 12 would be available to new and beginning farmers, tribal producers, and those producers in critical habitat areas (steep slopes and those with open tile intakes).
- b. Establish contracts via EQIP funding (adjustments will be needed to meet program requirements – see 3I).
- c. Complete soil grid sampling with the producer and appropriate crop advisor, cooperative staff member, or other qualified individual.
- d. Apply variable rate application based on grid sampling results.
- e. Collect previous application data from producer and compare with application data using variable rate technology.

Objective 2 - Actions:

- a. Identify landowners with sites that considered critical priority areas and determine producer willingness to participate in the program (already completed)
- b. Assess extent of problem and initiate design and engineering of solution.
- c. Work with producer to assess and implement supporting practices to complement and enhance core practices of dam construction and streambank stabilization.
- d. Complete structural work and habitat enhancement efforts.
- e. Model soil loss based on measurements from existing losses that have already occurred and compare with anticipated/observed losses after project completion.

3. Detailed Proposal Criteria

3a. Partner History of Working with Producers

The partners associated with the project have an outstanding record of working with local producers to implement conservation practices and complete environmental enhancement projects. The unfortunate reality of these successes, however, is that funding to the Cottonwood and Redwood Watershed has been very steady, whereas, funding to the Middle Minnesota River Watershed has been scant. Therefore, the partners have had amazing success in areas where funding has been available, and are eager to secure opportunities for producers in the Middle Minnesota River. Examples of the applicant's and collaborating partner's success would include the utility of \$900,000 in Clean Water Legacy Funds in the 2007 and 2008 seasons. These funds, combined with decades of state cost-share implementation have results in significant implementation of buffers, dams, wetland restorations, and grassed waterways. A grid sampling effort recently completed was depleted of funds in 7 minutes! In FY10, the collaborators also implemented over \$130,000 in EQIP funds as well.

The use of funds is important, but so are results. Monitoring completed in the area by the partners has indicated that their work has had an impact. To demonstrate how effective these groups have been, we need only look to Redwood Lake, a reservoir on the Redwood River. A request was made to dredge this water body, and dredge proposals are almost always rejected in the state of Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has expressed that the only dredging projects that will be improved are those in areas where significant progress in watershed restoration has been completed – including major reductions in sediment deliver to the waterways. The Redwood Lake dredging project was approved – an approval that the Minnesota River Board and other partners indicated speaks volumes about the success these collaborators have had in improving watershed integrity.

Given these examples, funding provided to the Middle Minnesota River will allow the collaborators to do good work there too – in an area that has seen little enhancement and has amazing potential.

3b. Detailed Description of the Watershed Area

The three subwatersheds identified on the project map include areas adjacent to the Minnesota River that includes considerable riparian habitat that terraces up steeply through a matrix of wooded and eroding ravines and gullies. Once atop the river bluff, the land is extremely flat, with little to no grade. Producers and soil experts in the area indicate that the soils in the project area are some of the best in the county, therefore, production pressure is very high. To improve crop production, the tillable lands are heavily tilled and ditched – delivering runoff to the ravines and gullies. Therefore, the two objectives notes above are appropriate for this setting – nutrient management in the productive lands and gully, ravine, and streambank stabilization in the steep-sloped areas. The two conservation priorities in this area would include nutrient transport reduction and sediment stabilization – both of which are addressed by the proposal included here.

Funding provided as a result of this proposal would not be combined with any existing program, such as CRP, CCRP, etc...; however, supporting practices will be evaluated at each site in conjunction with core

practices and it is possible that additional program implementation could result. These funds would all be delivered via existing EQIP processes, with some adjustments requested (see 3I). Although formal integration with other programs is not planned, the intensity of farming in this area will likely result in inevitable overlap. In addition, active marketing of this program in combination with existing conservation program enrollment options will be completed.

Participation is expected to be excellent. Local producers have strongly demonstrated that variable rate technology is of interest and those dollars are expected to be utilized rapidly during each open session. The structure streambank and gully/ravine improvements are also expected to be completed successfully, as at least 10 willing landowners have already been identified and all are ready to go if funding should become available.

3c. Partner Roles, Responsibilities, and Capabilities

The following list indicates each partner and their anticipated role in this funding request.

Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District – project administration, landowner contacts, technical assistance, enrollment facilitation

Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area – Water quality monitoring

Natural Resource Conservation Service – Engineering and design assistance, technical input, EQIP contract formation, program advising

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources – Technical assistance, site assessment, permitting

Minnesota River Joint Powers Board – funding request preparation, marketing, Middle Minnesota River advocacy

Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc. – Engineering and design assistance, dam expertise

Southwest Technical Service Area – Engineering and design assistance

Central Crop Consulting – Landowner recruitment and soil sampling assistance

Any resources that are being specifically committed to the project will be indicated in the attached letters of support and the sections below.

3d. Project Duration, Plan of Action, and Implementation Schedule

The Redwood Initiative is designed to run in two manageable cycles. Each cycle would include a round of 1600 acres of variable rate applications, 1 streambank stabilization project, and 4 gully/ravine stabilization projects in a 2-year period. For additional information on the timeline, please see the Gantt Chart on Page 9.

FY 11 Item/Action	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Nutrient Mgmt – Var. Rate*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Streambank Project 1												
Landowner Agreements	X	X										
Site Assessment		X	X	X	X							
Engineering and Design					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Structural Implementation											X	X
4 Gully/Ravine Stabilizations												
Landowner Agreements	X	X										
Site Assessment			X	X	X							
Engineering and Design					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Structural Implementation											X	X
Water Quality Monitoring	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X

FY 12 Item/Action	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Streambank Project 1												
Structural Implementation	X	X										
Observation and Assessment			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4 Gully/Ravine Stabilizations												
Structural Implementation	X	X										
Observation and Assessment			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Water Quality Monitoring	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X
Nutrient Mgmt Recruitment								X	X	X	X	X

FY 13 Item/Action	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Nutrient Mgmt – Var. Rate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Streambank Project 1												
Landowner Agreements	X	X										
Site Assessment		X	X	X	X							
Engineering and Design					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Structural Implementation											X	X
4 Gully/Ravine Stabilizations												
Landowner Agreements	X	X										
Site Assessment			X	X	X							
Engineering and Design					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Structural Implementation											X	X
Water Quality Monitoring	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X

FY 14 Item/Action	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Streambank Project 1												
Structural Implementation	X	X										
Observation and Assessment			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4 Gully/Ravine Stabilizations												
Structural Implementation	X	X										
Observation and Assessment			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Water Quality Monitoring	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X
Final Project Report											X	X

*Producer recruitment would occur for the first year prior to the arrival of the funds.

3e. Description of Resources Requested from each NRCS Program

All funds associated with the projects discussed above would route through EQIP; however, the nutrient management practices we are proposing would require program requirement adjustment (see 3l). The grid sampling is a proven practice that is amenable to producers; however, it does not quite fit many, if any, existing programs and is therefore still considered to be an innovative solution. In addition to financial resources of \$366,000, the collaborators would require assistance from the NRCS with EQIP contracts and technical services in the form of site assessment and engineering would be greatly appreciated. The value of any non-federal services provided as in-kind and described in section 3c above are listed in the table below and verified in the attached letters.

Non-Federal Contributing Partner	Value of Inkind Services (not covered by requested funds)
Redwood SWCD	\$20,000
*Board of Water & Soil Resources	\$24,000
Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area	\$1,200
MN Dept. Natural Resources	\$1,000
MN River Joint Powers Board	\$6,300
Area II MN River Basin Projects, Inc.	\$400
Southwest Technical Service Area	\$500
Central Crop Consulting	\$2,200

The total project budget request is \$366,000, of which \$32,000 would be utilized for monitoring efforts. The program requires that no more than 10% of the total project budget be allocated for monitoring. Our request is 8.7% of the total project, thus we respectfully request some access to monitoring funds to help verify results of the projects being implemented.

*These are Technical and Administrative dollars being requested from a commitment from the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

3f. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Plan

As part of the monitoring strategy associated with this project, we intend to continue outlet monitoring of Wabasha and Crow Creeks (currently conducted by the Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area). The existence of baseline data prior to the addition of projects in these watersheds is critically important in the evaluation of our projects, and other efforts to determine associated benefits from practice implementation. In addition, field site monitoring will be assessed; however, we are not currently aware of any tile systems and/or ditch systems that would be confined to the fields likely to be utilized for nutrient management. Variable rate applications will be assessed by reviewing long-term application records of the producers involved and comparing that to the variable rate application rates – demonstrating likely reductions and then using existing literature and/or unpublished data to extrapolate the potential impacts of these reductions. For those sites where structural practices will be implemented (streambank, ravine, and gully stabilizations), LiDar, aerial photographs, and observational data will be used to show how much soil has been lost over known periods of time and then compared with simple calculation models to show what that reduction would now be after practices are in place.

Reporting will be completed as arranged by the contractual agreements of MRBI, EQIP, and NRCS.

3g. Potential Criteria for Prioritization of Projects

Given that all of the practices and projects targeted as part of this MRBI request will likely be associated with EQIP procedures, we intend to use the national, state, and local ranking questions typically used with EQIP ranking processes. We have identified potential project sites and all of these sites will be ranked utilizing the local EQIP ranking criteria.

3h. Producer Participation

The 12-digit HUCs within the project area have an estimated 65 producers actively engaged in row-crop agriculture. The practices proposed here would include streambank projects (2 producers), ravine/gully projects (8 producers), and nutrient management (minimum of 20 producers). Therefore, 30 producers would be involved in this effort at some point in the project, or approximately 46%. For the 10 structural practice sites, landowners have already expressed interest and project success is anticipated to be at 100%. Grid sampling and variable rate applications are also expected to be in high demand and 10% of the funding will be used. Based on an assessment from Central Crop Consulting staff, there will be more interested producers than there will be funds. In summary, producer participation in this project area, where implementation funds have been scant, is expected to be extremely good.

3i. Targeted Farmer Participation

There is a presence of beginning farmers, disadvantaged producers, and tribal producers in this project area. It is not believed that any of the 10 structural practice landowners qualify for any of these designations; however, we anticipate that there is potential for these groups to be considered for the nutrient management funds. If producers come forward that can be identified as belonging to one of the groups mentioned above, the pay schedule will offer a HUP pay rate. Outreach could be targeted at these individuals as well, as the crop consultants have indicated they know which producers belong to these classes of farmers.

3j. Listing and Description of Practices to be Implemented

The timeline for practice implementation is noted in the Gantt Chart (see 3d above). The practices intended to be implemented are already listed in 1h above, but for the sake of listing intended implementation targets, the core practices are again listed below. NRCS assistance will be requested for assistance on EQIP contracts and assessment, engineering, and design of structural projects.

590 – Nutrient Management	1,600 acres FY11 and 1,600 acres FY13
402 – Dams	8 units (4 in FY11-12 and 4 in FY13-14)
580 – Streambank and Shoreline Protection	800 ft FY11-12 and 800 ft FY13-14

Additional information on fiscal year project plans and funding requests is detailed in 1j and 3d above. Grid sampling is considered innovative, as it is not covered under any current approved practices.

3k. Producer Funding Needed by Program

FY11 EQIP	\$71,000
FY12 EQIP	\$96,000
FY13 EQIP	\$71,000
FY14 EQIP	\$96,000

An additional \$8,000 per year is requested for monitoring, but we were unsure how to list that in association with the program options.

3l. Program Adjustment Request

Nutrient management is critically important to "avoid" the introduction of excessive nutrients into the environment; however, under practice 590, grid sampling and variable rate application assistance does not qualify as an approved practice. We request that this practice be allowed for this project under practice 590, as it will have the desired outcome of reducing nutrient concentrations in the soil that could be deemed excessive and be subjected to transport via surface runoff or tile drainage.

We are requesting a change to the payment schedule:

Practice	Component	Unit	PR/unit	*HUP/unit
Nutrient Management	Grid Sampling/Application	Per acre	\$15.00	\$18.00

Grid sampling has been documented to reduce nutrient inputs for crop production which in turn improves water quality. The type of sampling/application is a higher level of management than identified in the current payment schedule. The cost of grid sampling will increase production cost for the producer. The cost to grid sample has limited the adoption of this practice.



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

<i>Benish</i>	<i>Brainerd</i>	<i>Duluth</i>	<i>Fergus Falls</i>	<i>Marshall</i>	<i>Mankato</i>	<i>New Ulm</i>	<i>Rochester</i>
701 Minnesota Ave. 144 St. Paul, MN 55101 (612) 311-8001	1601 Minnesota Ave. 144 Fergus Falls, MN 56401 (763) 835-7483	3915 South Lake Ave. 100 Duluth, MN 55801 (218) 734-4700	1001 Exchange Drive 100 Fergus Falls, MN 56447 (763) 736-3447	1400 East Lyon St., Box 267 Marshall, MN 56258 (507) 537-6060	1160 Victoria Drive S. Suite 3 Mankato, MN 56001-3335 (507) 389-1967	2611 Highway 13 South New Ulm, MN 56073 (507) 459-6073	1300 Silver Crest Rd NE Rochester, MN 55905 (507) 306-2889

Central Office / Metro Office 520 Lafayette Road North, Saint Paul, MN 55155 Phone (651) 296-3767 Fax (651) 297-5043

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

redwood-cottonwood rivers control area

April 29, 2010

Redwood SWCD
Attn. Marilyn Bernhardson
1241 E. Bridge Street
Redwood Falls, MN 56283

RE: Letter of support for the RFP of the MRBI.

Dear Ms. Bernhardson,

This letter is to pledge the Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area's (RCRCA's) support in the application and implementation of the Redwood County Middle Minnesota River Watershed Initiative. RCRCA supports the reduction of nutrients and sediments in the river systems of Redwood County.

RCRCA has the ability to commit time and effort in technical assistance or promotional in-kind to this effort.

The Redwood County SWCD has a long history of cooperation with the RCRCA and we look forward to working on this project with you upon the successful award of the grant.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Goodrich, Executive Director

AREA II

MINNESOTA RIVER BASIN PROJECTS, INC.

1400 East Lyon Street • P.O. Box 267 • Marshall, MN 56258 • 507-537-6369

April 28, 2010

BLUE EARTH
Courthouse
Mankato, MN

To Whom it Concerns:

BROWN
Courthouse
New Ulm, MN

On behalf of the nine member counties of Area II Minnesota River Basin Projects, Inc., hereinafter Area II, this letter firmly supports the application being submitted for \$301,600 of cost-share assistance. The Mississippi River Basin Initiative priority area for this assistance is the Middle Minnesota Watershed, a tributary of the Minnesota River watershed.

COTTONWOOD
Courthouse
Windom, MN

LAC QUI PARLE
Courthouse
Madison, MN

Area II was created by statute in 1978 to provide technical and financial assistance to local government units for the installation of floodwater retention or retardation projects within our portion of the Minnesota River watershed. Due to tremendous topography of southwestern Minnesota, with elevations drops of up to 80 feet per mile, annually recurring flooding and the associated erosion caused by the flooding have become top priorities for conservation organizations.

LINCOLN
Courthouse
Ivanhoe, MN

LYON
Courthouse
Marshall, MN

The Middle Minnesota watershed, lying adjacent to the Minnesota River, is heavily characterized by severe ravine gully erosion stemming from the forceful floodwaters from the higher reaches. As part of this application, a proposal is being made to install up to eight small, earthen dams to help slow the floodwaters and reduce the associated erosion downstream. Area II would be proud to partner with the Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District to provide the engineering and technical services needed to incorporate these structures onto the landscape.

MURRAY
Courthouse
Slayton, MN

PIPESTONE
Courthouse
Pipestone, MN

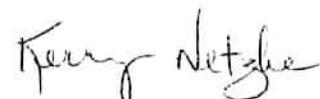
With the enormous effort that has been put into the restoration of the Minnesota River as a whole, it is with great anticipation that this application be considered for funding. If funded, these projects will continue the forward motion to clean up the Minnesota River and to get the results more quickly.

REDWOOD
Courthouse
Redwood Falls, MN

YELLOW MEDICINE
Courthouse
Granite Falls, MN

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely, and on behalf of the Board of Directors for Area II,



Kerry Netzke
Area II Coordinator



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



April 27, 2010

Marilyn Bernhardson, Redwood SWCD District Administrator
Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District
1241 East Bridge Street, Suite C
Redwood Falls, MN 56283

Subject: Support Letter for MRBI application

Dear Ms Bernhardson,

The Minnesota River Board is pleased to provide assistance to the Redwood Soil and Water Conservation District in support of your Mississippi River Basin Initiative application. We have already provided assistance with preparing the grant application and would be very pleased to advocate on behalf of the Middle Minnesota River, Redwood County, and your office. The Minnesota River Board has direct contact with some producers, legislative leaders, and local elected officials from your area and we will work to provide assistance in marketing, outreach, and reporting for this project as needed.

By my estimates, I could spend up to 4 days per year assisting with this effort. The going rate for Minnesota River Board assistance is \$525/day – including labor, benefits, travel expenses, etc..... Therefore, I am committing up to \$6,300 of in-kind services to this effort as needed.

Your record of success in implementation projects and the strong needs for nutrient management and structural sediment retention make this application timely and highly likely to succeed.

Regards,

Shannon J. Fisher

Executive Director

MINNESOTA RIVER BOARD

354 Franklin Street, 2nd Floor, S. Minnesota State University, Mankato, Mankato, MN 56001
Phone: 507-439-5400 Fax: 507-439-5401 Email: info@mnriverboard.org <http://mnriverboard.org>

TECHNICAL
SERVICE AREA #5



SOUTHWEST PRAIRIE TECHNICAL SERVICE AREA

2740 22ND ST. SUITE #4

SLAYTON, MN 56172

OFFICE: (507) 836-6061 CELL: (507) 829-5359 FAX: (507) 836-6697

Date: April 28, 2010

To: To Whom It May Concern

From: Michael Skoglund, Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area

Subject: Support of RFP for the MRBI

The Southwest Prairie Technical Service Area (SWPTSA) is willing to support the Redwood County Middle Minnesota River Watershed Initiative.

SWPTSA supports the reduction of sediments, phosphorus, and nitrogen in the fields and along riverbanks. Control of erosion in ravines is important in the reduction of sediments and nutrients in our surface water.

Thanks,

Michael Skoglund
Civil Engineering Technician



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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

April 29, 2010

Marilyn Bernhardson
District Administrator
Redwood Soil & Water Conservation District
1241 E Bridge St, Ste C
Redwood Falls MN 56283

RE: Letter in Support of Little Cottonwood MRBI Application

Dear Ms Bernhardson:

Please consider this as the Department of Natural Resources' letter of support for the 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.

The strategies you are proposing for improving land management and water quality in three sub-sheds of the Middle Minnesota River Watershed 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark D. Matuska".

Mark D. Matuska
Regional Director