



Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

Stearns County SWCD
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Website: www.StearnsCountySWCD.net

April 30, 2010

Gregory K. Johnson
Director, Financial Assistance Programs
Department of Agriculture-NRCS
1400 Independence Ave, SW,
Room 524, South Building
Washington, DC, 20250

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please accept our proposal for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative titled "Accelerated Protection and Restoration of Targeted Watersheds in the Sauk River Watershed" (HUC 07010202).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis J. Fuchs".

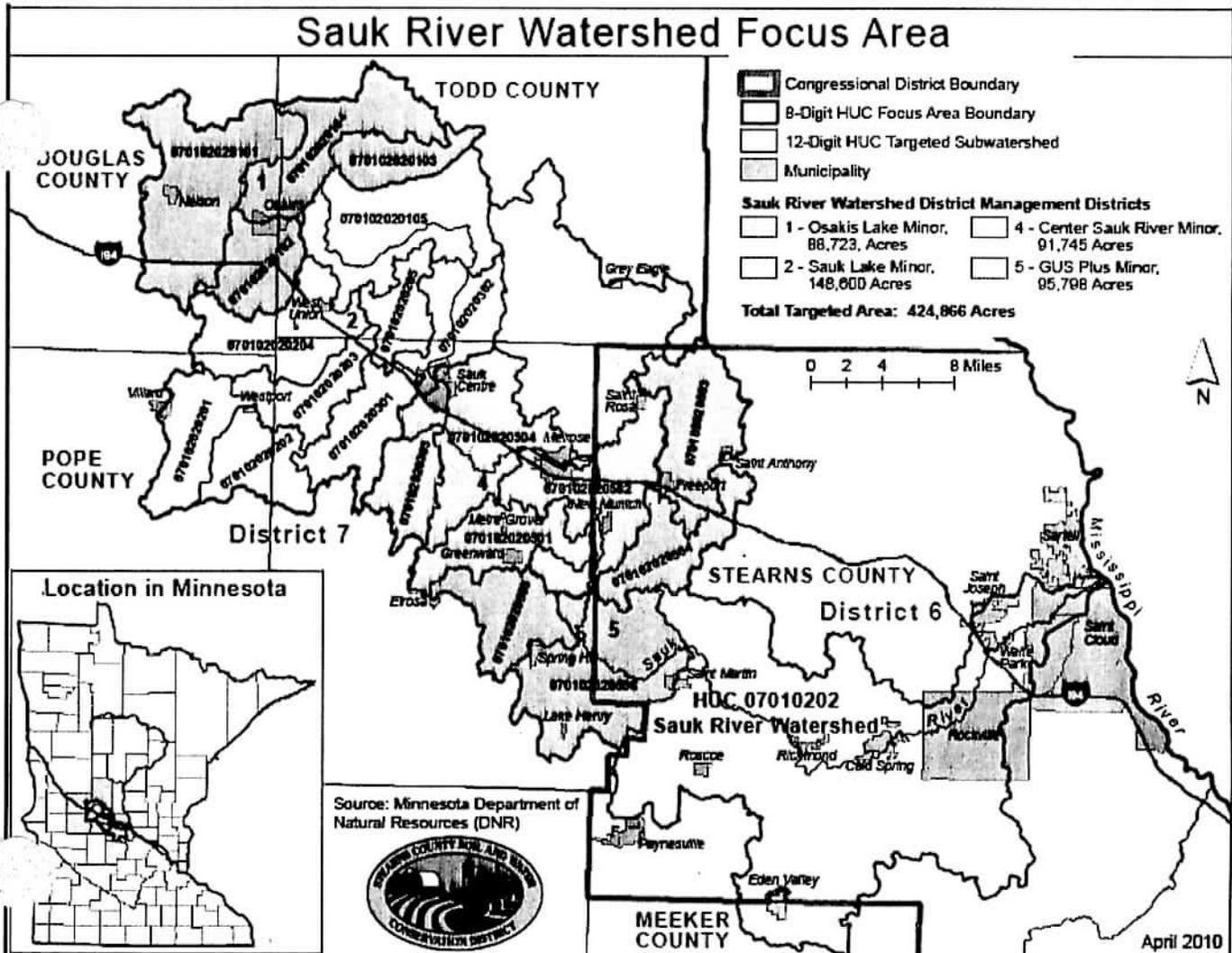
Dennis J. Fuchs
Administrator

✓ C: Don Baloun, MN NRCS State Conservationist

1. Proposal Cover and Summary:

- a. Project Title: Accelerated Protection and Restoration of Targeted Watersheds in the Sauk River Watershed
- b. Project Director/Manager: Dennis J. Fuchs Dennis.fuchs@mn.nacdnet.net 320-251-7800 ext. 132
- c. Name of Lead Partner Entity: Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
 Other Partners: NRCS, USFWS, USGS, Douglas County SWCD, Todd County SWCD, Pope County SWCD, Meeker County SWCD, Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD), Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), WesMIn RC&D, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Minnesota Department of Agricultural (MDA), Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), Minnesota Milk Producers Association (MMPA), Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition (MAWRC), Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA). Selected letters of support attached.
- d. Mailing Address & Telephone 110 2nd St. S. Suite 128, Waite Park, MN 56387
320-251-7800 ext. 3
- e. Designated 8 digit Focus Area: 07010202, located in central Minnesota (see attached Map 1.)
- f. 12 Digit HUC (s): 070102020102, 070102020502, 070102020202, 070102020104, 070102020506, 070102020103, 070102020504, 070102020302, 070102020301, 070102020505, 070102020303, 070102020203, 070102020503, 070102020501, 070102020105, 070102020205, 070102020204, 070102020101, 070102020304, 070102020201

Map 1



- g. Description of Planning: An extensive long term water quality monitoring network has identified numerous locations that require additional conservation practices to protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources within targeted 12 digit HUCs. This proposal will simultaneously reduce nitrogen and phosphorus contributions while improving the functionality of the ecosystems and supporting agricultural productivity. It also asks for specific natural resource concerns to be addressed – this might be the double whammy of water quality and habitat enhancement in a highly agricultural watershed.
- h. List of approved NRCS FOTG Conservation Practices: All core and supporting practices to avoid, control and trap nutrients. Producers will be provided assistance with a system of practices that will control soil erosion, improve soil quality, and provide wildlife habitat while managing runoff and drainage water for improved water quality.

The list of approved practices are listed here:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_step_two_core_and_supporting_conservation_practices_tables.html

- i. Project Start and End Date: Start Date: August 2010, End Date July 2015.
- j. Total Budget: \$5,000,000; \$1,000,000/year
2. Project Natural Resource Objectives and Actions
- a. Identify and provide detail about natural resource concerns.

The Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD) has an extensive history of monitoring data on lakes, streams, and tributaries within the watershed since 1986. This information provides an understanding of the baseline information and areas of emphasis by the SRWD and partners on implementation of projects to improve the water quality within the watershed basin.

In 2003 as part of an Overall Plan Revision the SRWD Board had the foresight to more clearly define areas of the watershed on a smaller sub basin level. There are distinct physical differences in the natural resource base within the entire watershed. So the SRWD developed ten "management districts" under M.S. 103D.729 in order to better analyze and assess resources and facilitate future implementation of resource initiatives on a water management district basis. The boundaries were determined by three criteria: hydrologic boundaries, water quality trends and monitoring sites, and socio-economic and land use patterns. This proposal targets five of the 10 districts that are located at the headwaters of the watershed where water quality improvements have the best chance of being captured in the data.

Priority resource concerns were identified by local agencies, including the county soil and water conservation districts, and compiled in the Natural Resources Rapid Watershed Assessment (NRRWA) report developed by the NRCS.

SRWD priority resource concerns align with NRRWA report recommendations as outlined below:

- *Soil Quality, Excessive Erosion*
 - *Sheet and rill as well as gully erosion and consequential soil deposition have ranked as high concerns for the counties in the watershed.*
- *Woodland Management*
 - *Management opportunities include, but are not limited to planting trees or shrubs, timber stand improvement, timber sales, enhancing wildlife habitat, prescribed burning, and controlling invasive species.*
- *Surface Water Quality, Nutrients, Priority Pollutants*
 - *Reduction of priority pollutants and sediments in surface waters is a priority issue throughout the watershed. Excessive amounts of sediments, nutrients, and bacteria degrade the water quality causing fish community with depressed populations and limited diversity. Mercury and PCB levels are affecting Aquatic consumption, aquatic life, and aquatic recreation.*

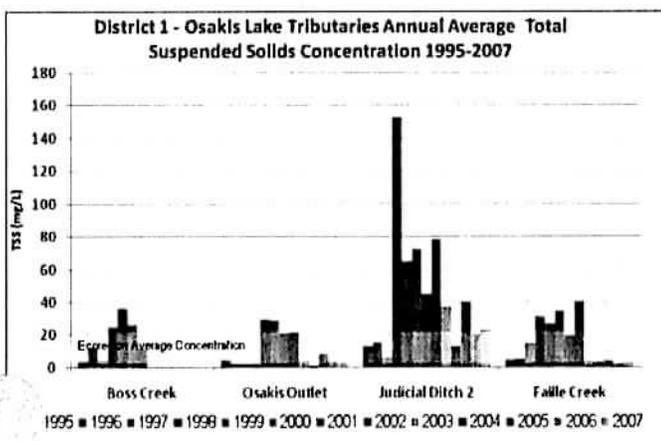
- *Ground Water Quality, Nutrients, Organics, Animal and Human Wastewater Management*
 - *Aging septic systems, feedlot runoff, tilling practices, improper closure of old manure pits, and abandoned wells all pose threats to groundwater quality throughout the region. Improved management of wastewater ensures safe water for all uses.*
- *Ground Water Quantity*
 - *Land alterations have transformed the flow, retention, and replenishment of the hydrologic cycle. Pattern tiling, ditching, wetland removal, development, storm water drainage, excessive groundwater use, etc. have resulted in the cumulative effect of rapidly transporting a greater amount of water to major rivers and streams, and away from groundwater recharge potential.*
- *Surface Water Management, Gully Control, Drainage Management*
 - *Drained wetlands, crop production in flood prone areas, and aging dams all diminish surface water quality and productivity. Restoration of wetlands, dam repair and placing flood-prone lands in CRP/RIM all serve to lessen the impact of flooding and improve drainage.*
- *Wetland Management*
 - *Area groups recognize that development and agricultural practices have had major impacts on wetlands. Physical changes have taken place, wildlife and plant species composition have been altered greatly changing the function and value of the areas plentiful wetlands. Priority should be given to the protection and enhancement of remaining wetlands in the basin."*

The SRWD also clearly addresses in their Overall Plan that land use impacts the quality of the District's lakes, streams, and tributaries through erosion of Phosphorus-laden sediment. This is highlighted in various areas within volume 1: Section 4-Resource Assessment.

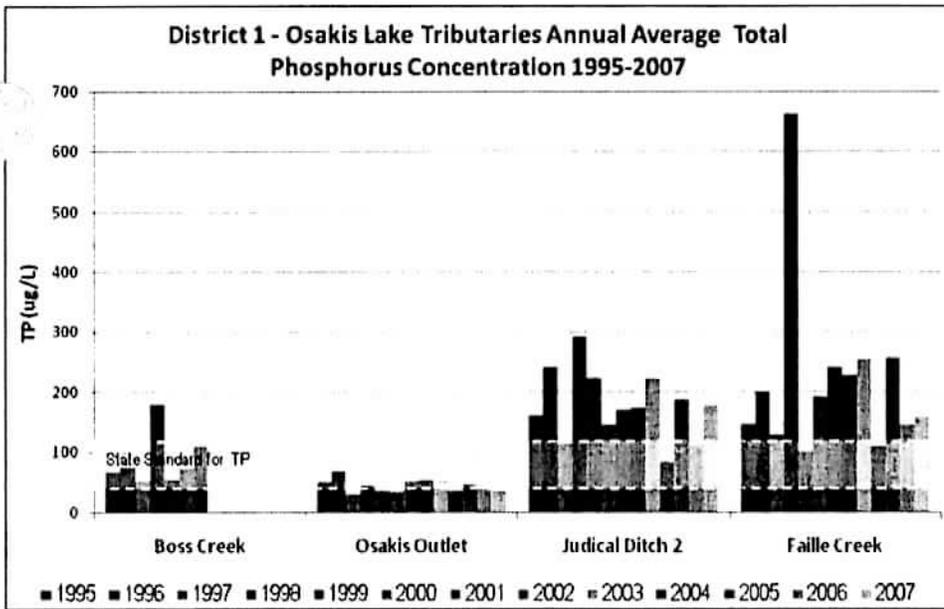
Volume 3 of the plan highlights implementation activities that will further the mission of the SRWD, which are included in the approved conservation practice list for avoiding, controlling and trapping nutrients.

Management District #1 (Osakis Lake): Osakis Lake is the headwaters of the Sauk River. This lake is on the state 303d list for excessive nutrients, particularly Phosphorus. The three contributing 12 digit HUCs to Osakis Lake have been monitored extensively since 1995. The data indicates that Osakis Lake will continue to be impaired unless land use improvements are made within these 12 digit HUCs (Graph 1). The 2008 TMDL study conducted on Sauk Lake, downstream of Osakis Lake, determined that 34% of the nutrient loading to Sauk Lake is coming from the headwaters (pg 44, Sauk Lake TMDL study 2008). A TMDL study is currently in progress for Osakis Lake and the Clifford Lake 12 digit HUC.

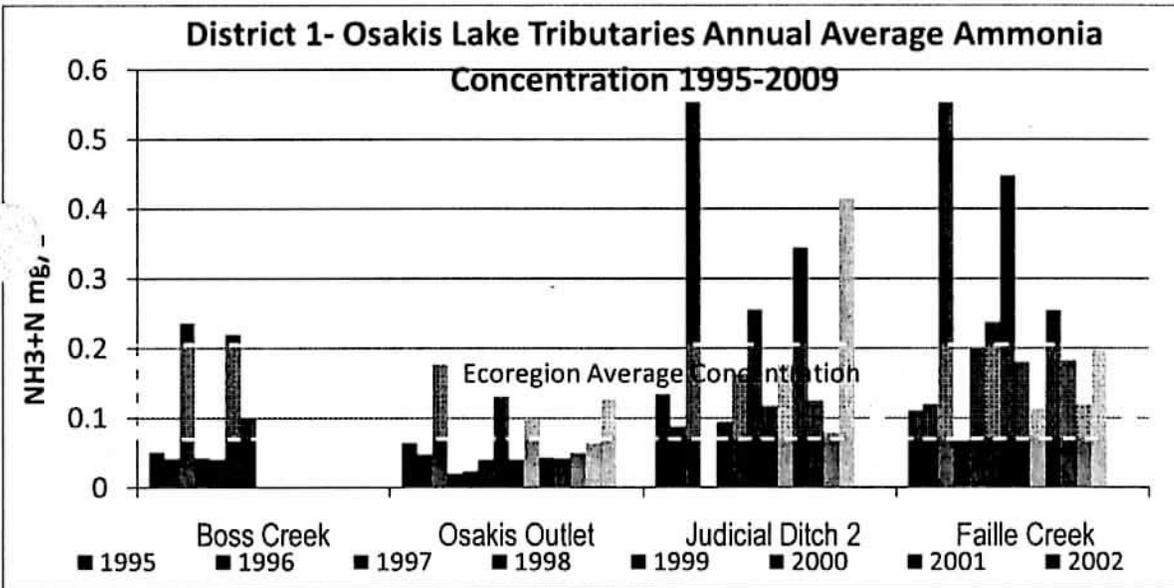
Graph 1



Graph 2

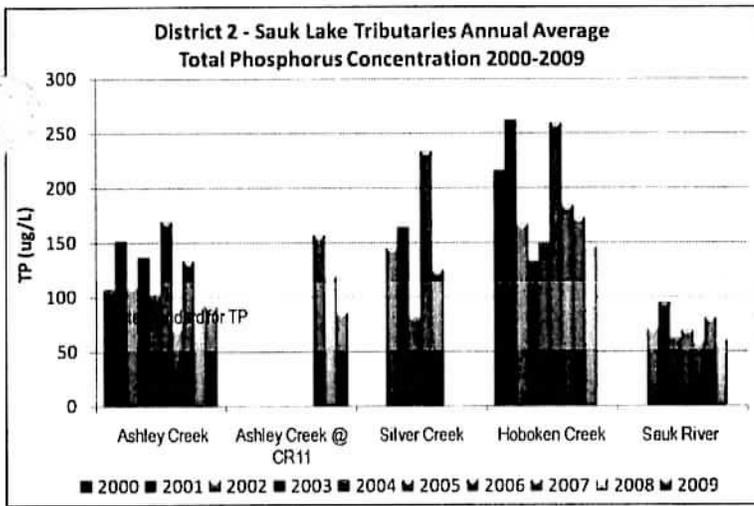


Graph 3

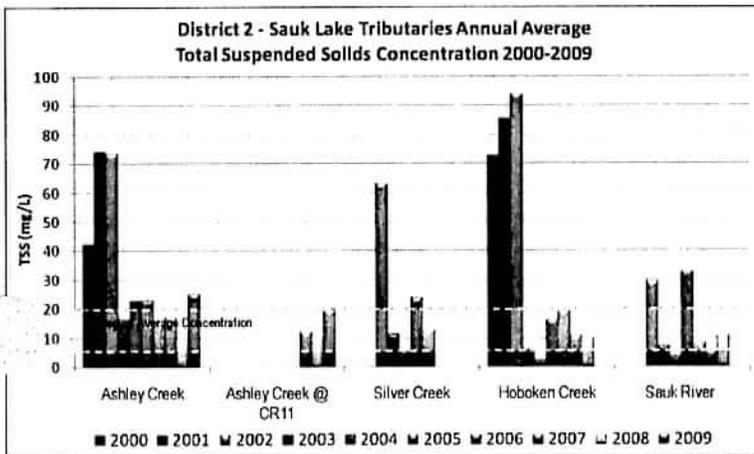


Management District #2 (Sauk Lake): Sauk Lake is a reservoir on the Sauk River that has been impacted by the landuse practices within it watershed. The 8 contributing 12 digit HUCs have been monitored annually since 20001. The TMDL study, completed in 2008, reports that a 50% phosphorus reduction is needed on the Sauk River and a 60-75% phosphorus reduction is needed from the 5 contributing 12 digit HUC coming in from the Southwest (Section 7.2.2 pg. 65) in order for Sauk Lake to achieve state water quality standards (Graph 2, 3).

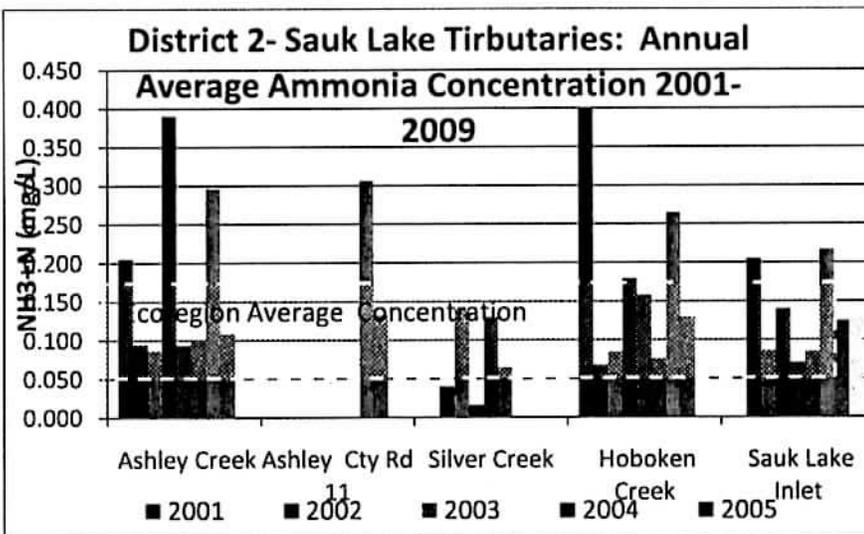
Graph 4



Graph 5.



Graph 6



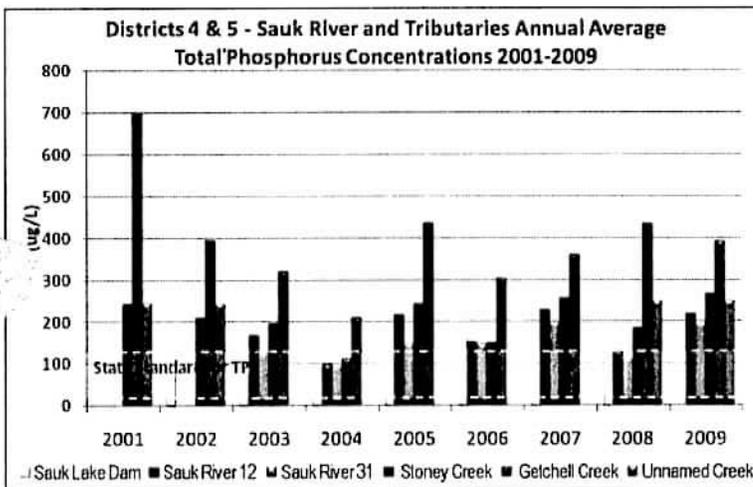
management District #4 (Central Sauk River): This stretch of the Sauk River does not have any large (10 digit HUC) tributaries; however it has an extensive series of intermittent streams and private drainage ditches. The monitoring data from 2005-2009 shows a 60-75% increase in phosphorus concentration from the Sauk Lake dam (District 2) to

County Road 31, which is the end of this management district. This increase in concentration averages about 64,000 pounds of phosphorus loading to the Sauk River.

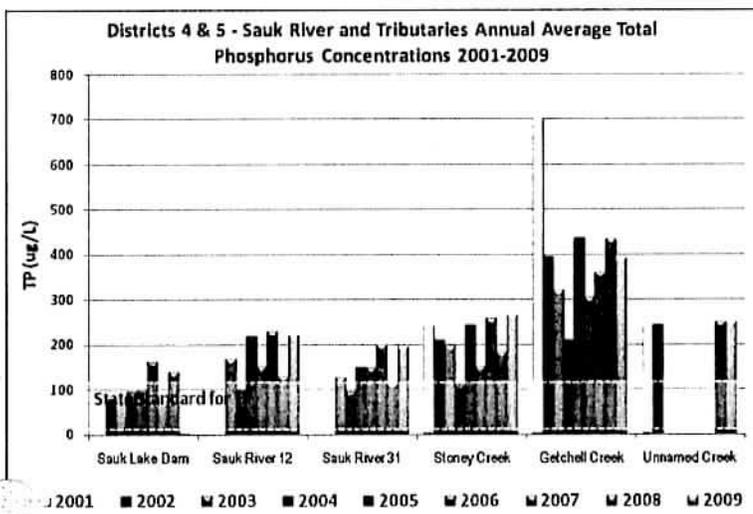
Management District #5 (Getchell, Unnamed and Stoney Creeks): This management district is made up of three tributaries to the Sauk River, Getchell Creek, Unnamed Creek, and Stoney Creek (GUS). These 12 digit HUCs have been extensively monitored since 1995. In 2010, a Turbidity TMDL study was completed for these tributaries. The draft final report in Section 4.2.1 pg 4-4 highlights that the majority of the sediment reaching these streams is from overland runoff and field erosion. The study results indicated that an average of 45% sediment reduction is needed to comply with water quality standards (Section 3.2.4 pg 3-5). It is anticipated that by reducing erosion and keeping the sediment in place a large impact can be made in this management district to reduce phosphorous levels and address the MRBI resource concerns.

The MPCA has a proposed total phosphorus standard of 110ug/L for streams in MN. The river and tributary monitoring data collected by the SRWD for the past 15 years has show water quality improvements since the 1980's diagnostic studies, however additional phosphorus reductions are still needed to achieve water quality standards. This is a goal for the MRBI project "Accelerated Protection and Restoration of Targeted Watersheds in the Sauk River Watershed".

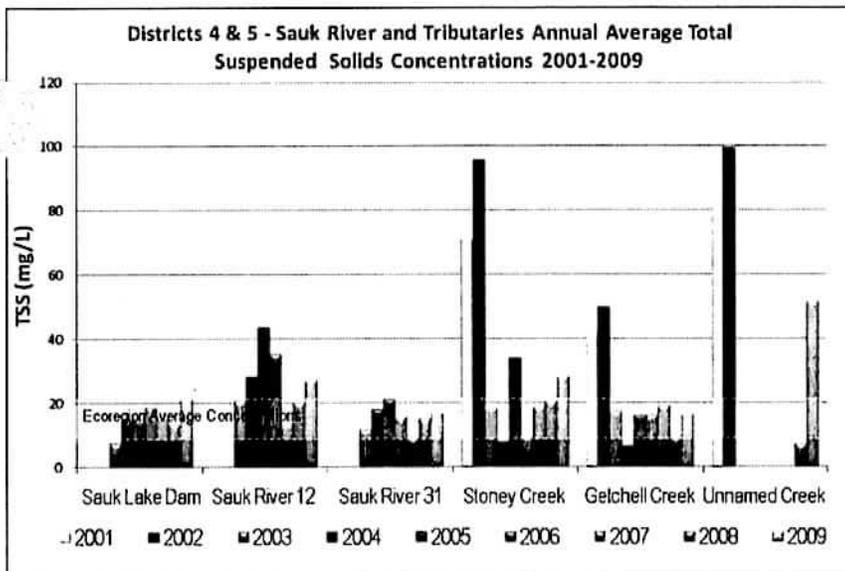
Graph 7



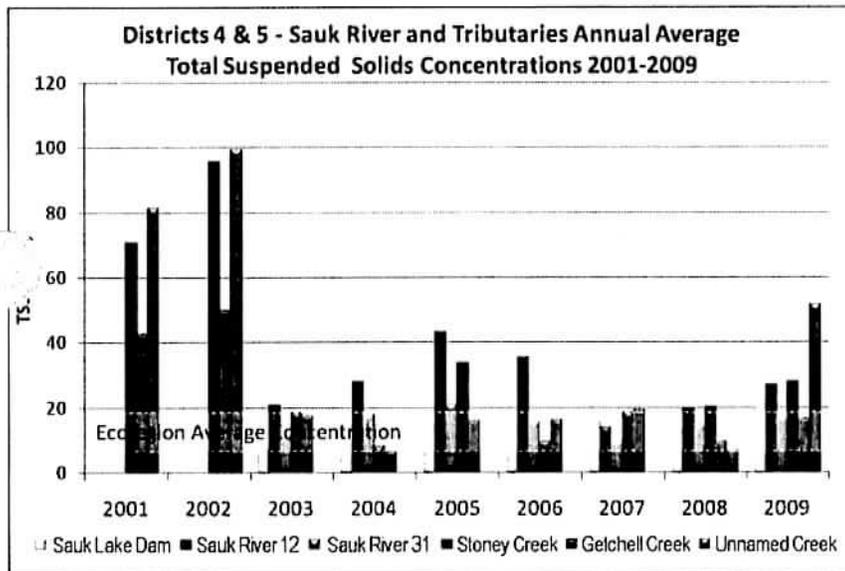
Graph 8



Graph 9

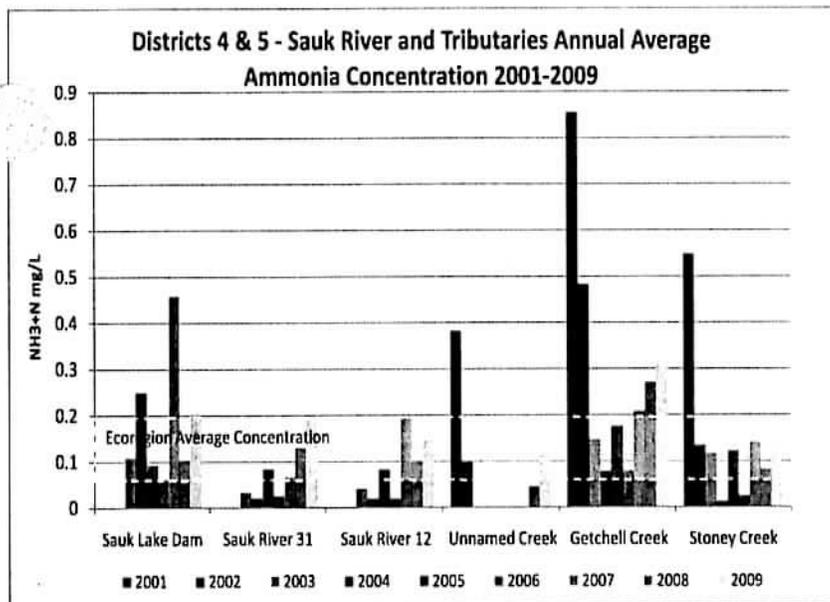


Graph 10



Nutrient loading of Nitrogen is also a concern for the Sauk River Watershed. The SRWD has been monitoring for Ammonia and other forms of Nitrogen throughout the District. Graphs 1, 2, and 3 highlight the Ammonia concerns found in Districts 1, 2, 4 and 5. In District 1 (Osakis Lake) the two primary tributaries to Osakis Lake have had annual average concentrations well above the Ecoregion average. Districts 2 and 5 also have tributaries exceeding the Ecoregion annual average. This project proposes to address the Ammonia concerns within these 12 digit HUCs

Graph 11



b. For each objective, provide actions to be completed.

Objective 1. Reduce nutrient and sediment loading.

Action 1. A systems approach will be used to obtain the objectives of avoiding, controlling and trapping nutrients in the environment. 1) Identify Problems. Using high resolution digital elevation maps, soils and other natural resources data, high priority sites will be identified. The conservation planner will assist the client in determining the resource problems, opportunities, and concerns in the planning area. This includes an early identification of all natural resource problems. This will be further clarified as the process continues. 2) Determine Objectives. The conservation planner will record the client's objectives. This might include how the area is to be used, what is the intended use of the property over the long term, what are the family considerations, and other factors that might influence the choice of conservation practices to be applied. 3) Inventory Resources. A comprehensive inventory will be completed of the natural resources, such as the soils, plants, animals, physical structures, available labor, equipment, and anything else that might be needed to solve the conservation problems. 4) Analyze Resource Data. The information gathered in Step 3 will be analyzed to clearly define the conditions of the natural resources along with the economic and social issues. The causes and effects of conservation problems will be summarized. 5) Formulate Alternatives. One or more conservation alternatives will be prepared that will achieve the client's objectives, solve the natural resource problems, and take advantage of opportunities to improve or protect resource conditions. Clients will be provided any products explaining the details of the conservation practices being considered. This would include job sheets, fact sheets, standards, or similar materials. 6) Evaluate Alternatives. Each of the alternatives will be evaluated to determine if it is addressing the client's objectives and the natural resource problems. The effects of the alternatives should be evaluated both for on-site and off-site impacts. The alternative should also be acceptable to the client. Special attention will need to be given to those ecological values protected by law or Executive Order. 7) Make Decisions. The client will select the alternatives that will best serve their business. The conservationist then prepares the conservation plan of operations (CPO) for the client which includes the practices to be implemented and the schedule. The CPO is a record of conservation decisions made by the client. 8) Implement Plan. The conservation planner will deliver the plan to the client and reviews it for accuracy and clarity. The plan contains a listing of the conservation practices and a schedule for implementation. Included with these practices should be a description of the impacts of the selected practices on their natural resources. Plans usually include a map,

field boundaries, soil map and other items specific to the clients' property. The conservationist may also include other alternatives that the client has not or is not ready to make a decision on, but are needed to protect the resource. The client then requests needed assistance from the NRCS and partners to implement the practices. 9) Evaluate the Plan. NRCS and partners will assist the client to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan as it is implemented. Conditions often change and may bring about the need to adjust the plan. NRCS and partners will use information gathered during evaluations to "fine-tune" our conservation practices in meeting natural resource needs.

Objective 2. Monitor Water Quality Changes

Action 1. Field Scale Monitoring

Also, to increase awareness of the potential nutrient runoff from fields an "edge of field" monitoring site and cooperating farmer has been identified. A primary objective will be to establish baseline water quality data that can be used to determine environmental impacts of various farm management practices. Baseline information will be collected in year 1 and 2. Post conservation practice implementation information will be collected in 3, 4, and 5. Monitoring will be on a single field with both surface and groundwater monitoring.

Action 2. Small and Large Watershed Scale Monitoring

The SRWD will continue to monitor sub-basins for water quality improvements during the duration of the grant application.

Objective 3. Launching the On-Farm Network® for Nutrient Management

Action 1. Reduce

Objective 4. Promotion and Education

Action 1. Promote MRBI

A public relations and promotional campaign will be initiated in the area to increase awareness of natural resource concerns and programs available through the MRBI-Sauk River Watershed Project.

Action 2. Educate

Education will occur through several different strategies:

- 1) The On-Farm Network® component of the project will demonstrate how the new Monitoring and Evaluation practice standard can be used to verify and document quantifiable results from nutrient management through data collected from each farmer each year, combined with Corn Stalk Nitrate Tests (CSNT) results that provide a report card on N use efficiency for that growing season, strip trials comparing the relative effectiveness of different practices, and aerial imagery. In addition, farmers are surveyed annually to verify improvements in N management. The data are reported back to the farmers as their individual farm data and as aggregate results. Aggregate results are used publically for educational purposes. Field history information is collected from every participating farmer – previous crop, manure history, manure applications, commercial N applications (including timing of application, form, and rate), and tillage. This information is combined with analysis of results from on farm evaluation plots comparing different management practices (timing, form, application rate, etc). Assessing and distributing information on the economic benefits of the network and its tools is critical to the success of the On-Farm Network® and to the adoption of an approach by farmers to continually improve. As detailed above, we will gauge the cost-effectiveness of the tools and the overall approach by developing a cost/benefit analysis based on our data. The analysis will be a partial budget analysis of N costs, costs of using the CSNT, costs for data collection, aerial imagery, and for winter meetings. We will collect information to assess the relative nutrient use efficiency of different management practices

through strip trials, which will be developed into a method of benchmarks to rank practices. Preliminary analysis of data from Iowa and the Chesapeake Bay using survey logistic regression indicates that timing and form of N (which includes different forms of both fertilizer and manure N) and crop rotation are important factors affecting N use efficiency.

The progress of the project in terms of EQIP enrollments and practice implementation; aggregate data results, especially from CSNT and on farm evaluation plots; and economic evaluation will be reported to NRCS and other interested stakeholders at minimum on an annual basis, and more frequently as requested. Results and impacts will be published via fact sheets, brochures, and other means as well to reach additional producers, technical assistance providers, and others.

2) Edge of Field Monitoring/Discovery Farm Field Days

Discovery Farms conducts on-farm research on real farms to determine the environmental effects of agricultural practices. Several sites in Minnesota have been identified for participation in the Discovery Farm representing various livestock and landscape scenarios in Minnesota. The focus of the on-farm research is to identify and implement effective environmental practices that are compatible with profitable agriculture.

3. Detailed Proposal Criteria:

a. A description of the partner history

All SWCDs have a strong partnership with the SRWD. Where the SWCD and NRCS provided the local technical leadership in implementing conservation practices and the SRWD provided the water quality and monitoring education leadership. Other partners listed are critical in achieving a higher level of applied conservation practices. The Stearns County SWCD and partners have delivered conservation at record levels. Stearns County has more completed EQIP contracts than many States.

b. A detailed description of water area

The Sauk River Watershed is the 8 digit Hydrologic Unit code sub-basin located within the North Central Hardwood Forest Ecoregion. The watershed extends from the Mississippi River near St. Cloud into the eastern portions of Douglas County to within 3 miles of Alexandria. The watershed, like the Sauk River, extends in a northwest to southeast direction. The overall watershed is about 75 miles in length with some areas being up to 20 to 30 miles in width. The Sauk River meanders for 120 miles.

The watershed is mostly comprised of agricultural lands with about 97% of the land privately owned. Land use includes 49.9% Row Crop, 27.4% Grass/Hay/Pasture, 8.7% Forest, and 5.9% Residential/Commercial Development.

The Sauk River Watershed encompasses 667,214 acres in five counties including Todd (137,589 acres), Douglas (57,951 acres), Pope (30,347 acres), Meeker (9,491 acres), and Stearns (431,831 acres).

The watershed has been further defined by ten water management districts. These were determined by the hydrologic boundaries, water quality trends and monitoring sites, and socio-economic and land use patterns.

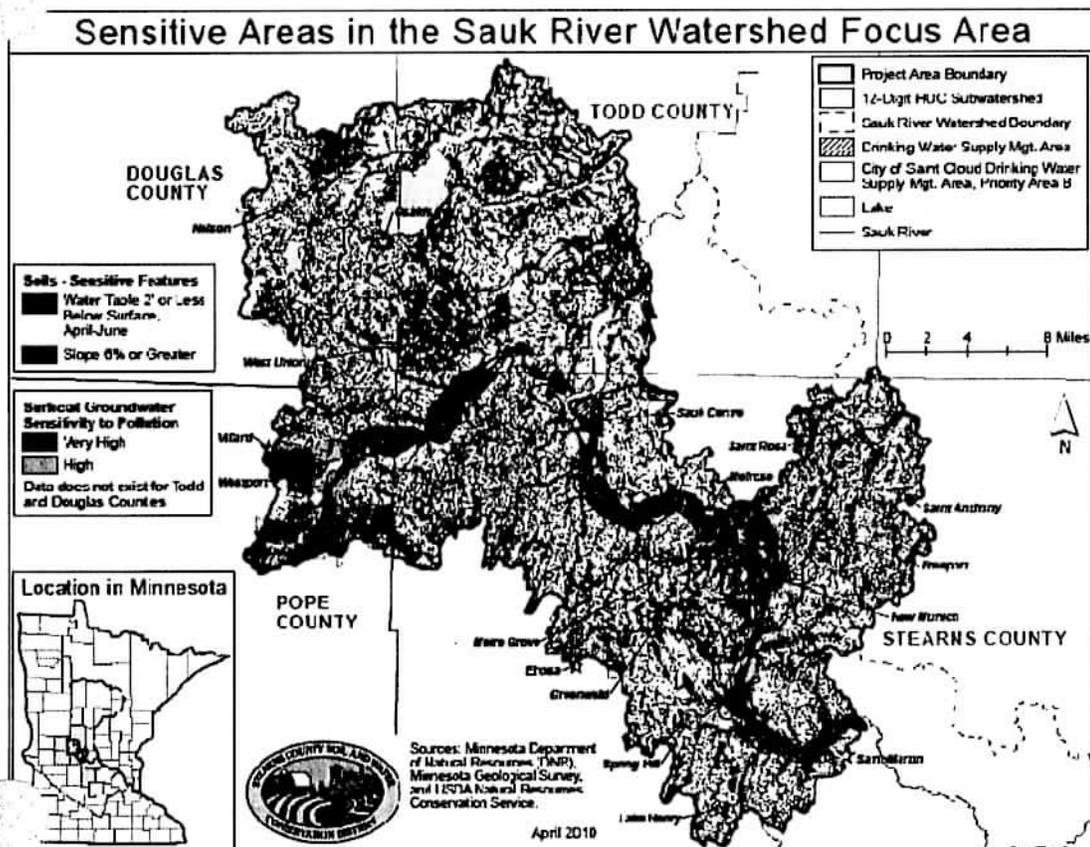
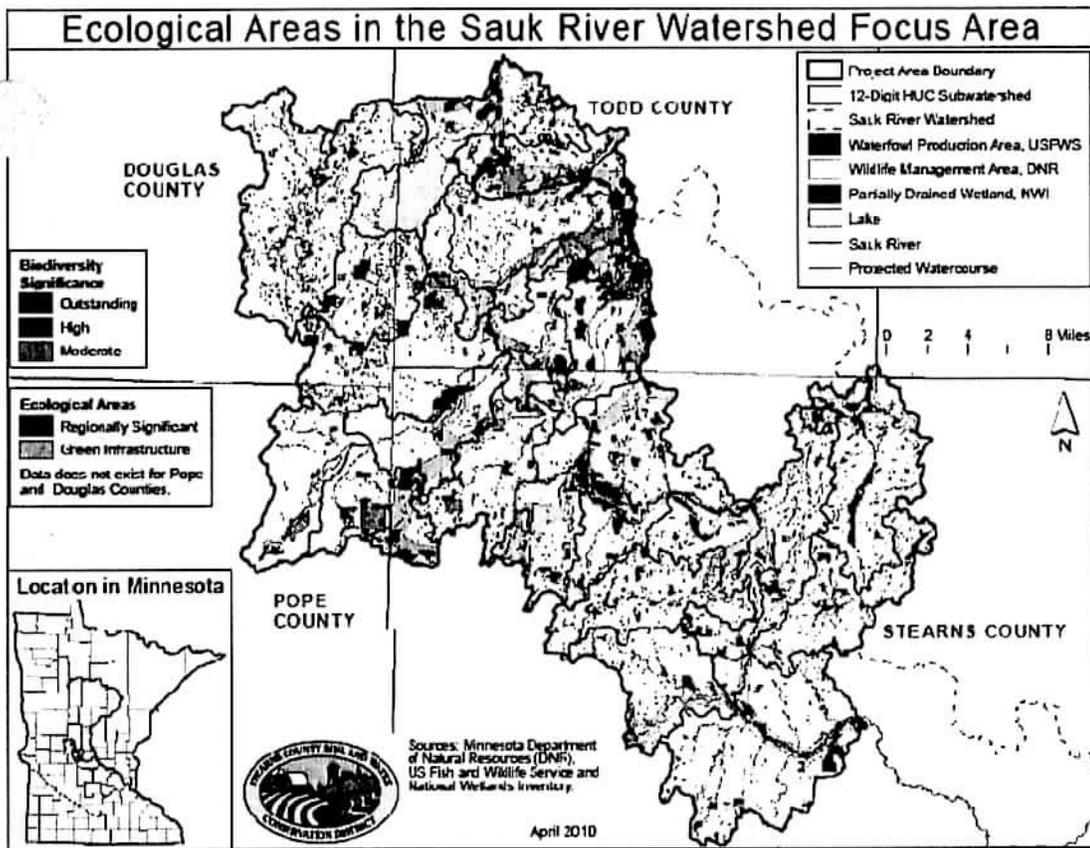
The area proposed area will include the listed Management Districts 1, 2, 4, and 5: Osakis Lake Minor, Sauk Lake Minor, Adley Creek Minor, Center Sauk River Minor, and GUS Plus Minor (listed in table below, and Maps 1, 2 and 3)).

Management Districts #	Management District Name	12 Digit HUC's w/in Management District	Acres
#1	Osakis Lake Minor	070102020102, 070102020104, 070102020103, 070102020101	88,723
#2	Sauk Lake Minor	070102020202, 070102020302, 070102020301, 070102020203, 070102020105, 070102020205, 070102020204, 070102020201	148,600
#4	Center Sauk River Minor	070102020502, 070102020303, 070102020501, 070102020304	91,745
#5	GUS Plus Minor	070102020506, 070102020504, 070102020505, 070102020503,	95,798
TOTAL			342,295

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR), through its County Biological Survey, has evaluated the quality of the natural habitats in these watersheds that will assist in the planning and conservation work in the SRWD targeted sub-basins. Maps were a result of field evaluation of plant assemblages characterized as Sites of 'Outstanding', 'High', and 'Moderate' Biodiversity Significance. These areas exhibit healthy, native species and will provide the watershed with a high degree of function with regard to filtering surface runoff and promotion of groundwater recharge. Focusing habitat establishment efforts adjacent to these natural areas maximizes their effectiveness by the additional benefits of buffering and through the reduction of habitat fragmentation.

Through further evaluation of these habitats, the MN DNR has delineated land areas, including all along the Sauk River and many of its tributaries that complete a web of interconnected wildlife habitat called 'Green Infrastructure'. Preservation, restoration and establishment of habitat in these corridors not only provide the water quality benefits inherent with natural landscapes, but adds the combined benefits of interconnected wildlife habitat and other ecosystem services (see map 2).

This proposal is integrated with the MRBI application: "Crooked Lake Restoration", Project Director/Manager: Jerome Haggemiller, Name of Lead Partner Entity: Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District.



c. A description of partners and roles and responsibilities (see attached letters of support for additional details)

- SWCDs/NRCS: provide leadership in identifying natural resource concerns, motivated producers, program promotion and marketing.
- Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD): monitoring and program promotion and marketing.
- USFWS: Identification of potential wetland restoration
- USGS: Monitoring support
- Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR): Financial assistance
- Minnesota Department of Agricultural (MDA): Program promotion and technical assistance
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): Program promotion and technical assistance
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Program promotion and technical assistance
- WesMin RC&D: Program promotion
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC): Program promotion and technical assistance
- Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES): Program promotion
- Minnesota Milk Producers Association (MMPA): Program promotion and technical assistance
- Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition (MAWRC): Program promotion and technical assistance
- Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA): Program promotion
- Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA): Program promotion
- Integration with MRBI-WREP application: "Crooked Lake Restoration", Project Director/Manager: Jerome Haggemiller, Name of Lead Partner Entity: Douglas Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) will coordinate the On-Farm Network® program within the watershed. In addition to providing outreach to producers through publications, meetings, and on-on-one interactions, EDF will train the SWCDs and crop consultants on aerial imagery analysis, setting up strip trials, and collecting corn stalks for lab testing.
- Iowa Soybean Association will manage all data submitted by producers through On-Farm Network®. ISA will analyze and communicate nutrient data on the level of the individual farm as well as aggregate. From the data analysis, ISA will provide guidance on nutrient management practices within the watershed to enable adaptive nutrient management farming practices as producers react to the datasets.

d. A description of project duration.

The project would be five years in duration, beginning August 1, 2010 to July 31, 2015. A final report would be provided at the end of the project describing the results of all of the objectives.

e. A description of resources (financial and technical assistance)

Requested MRBI funds are in the table below.

EQIP	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL (\$)
Practices	500,000	750,000	750,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Monitoring	33,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	66,000
						4,066,000

Technical assistance will be provided by the SWCDs and project partners.

f. A description of plan for monitoring, evaluating and reporting Watershed

Currently the SRWD has water quality monitoring anchor sites located on the exit point of each management district and at each 10 HUC that enters the Sauk River. This monitoring network provides a baseline measurement water quality. Future monitoring would include the anchor sites as the flow exits each management district (located in the table of section b) and at the pour point of the identified 12 digit HUCs within each management district. Data collected following the implementation of this project will be compared to the baseline information and state standards. Effectiveness monitoring will be scheduled for high flows and rain events. The monitoring results will be made available for all project partners to review and will be placed on the SRWD website for general viewing.

All monitoring information is reported to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agencies through their STORET Database (long term data retrieval). This information is available from the MPCA and on the SRWD's website.

- g. Potential criteria to be used by NRCS to prioritize and rank producer applications:
The National and State Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool will be used to prioritize and rank producers.
- h. An estimate of percentage of producers that would participate:
We estimate approximately 10-20 percent of the producers will participate. The Minnesota farm economy has struggled in the past year (See Figure 1.). This may reduce farmer participation. We are requesting a payment rate increase for practice standards 329 & 346 that may increase participation. Also, an aggressive marketing plan will be developed to encourage participation.

Home | Business

Minnesota farmers' income drops a whopping 63%

Minnesota farm income plunged by nearly two-thirds in 2009, a report said.

By **MIKE HUGHLETT**, Star Tribune
Last update: April 16, 2010 - 6:33 AM

Farm income in Minnesota dropped a whopping 63 percent in 2009 -- one of the largest declines in recent history -- with pork, beef and dairy producers getting hammered particularly hard, according to a report released Thursday.

Farmers were hurt by the lackluster economy. Demand was relatively weak, but supply continued unabated, pushing prices down.

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Minnesota business by the numbers

Figure 1. Minnesota farm economy article from the Star Tribune, April 16, 2010.

A statement describing participation of beginning farmers:

Beginning farmers and historically underserved people will be targeted for participation through an aggressive promotional campaign, including local newspapers, radio, partners' newsletters and websites, and one-on-one personal contact.

j. A list of description of conservation practices, activities and enhancements:

All conservation practices that avoid, control and trap nutrients will be used. The nine step planning process will be used to identify the appropriate conservation practices for each individual producer. All partners identified in this application will have a role to increase conservation practice implementation. The partner activities have been identified in their letter of support (attached).

A detailed breakdown of each conservation practice to be implemented by producers in the targeted watersheds is not available at this time. MRBI funds would be used to assist farmers with feedlot regulatory compliance issues that do not require a NPDES permit.

k. A description of amount of funds needed annually.

The table below summarizes the MRBI funding request.

EQIP	Year	Year	Year	Year	Year	TOTAL (\$)
	1	2	3	4	5	
Practices	500,000	750,000	750,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Monitoring	33,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	8,200	66,000
						4,066,000

l. A description of any requested policy, procedure and technical adjustment

We would like to request an increase in the payment rate for Practice Standards 329 & 346 – Residue and Tillage Management - Notill, Strip Till and Ridge Till from \$23/ac to \$40/ac. Many farmers are reluctant to pursue practice standards 329 & 346 because of the risk of reduced yield. Additional subsurface drainage may need to be installed to in poorly drained fields to insure a high level of crop yield. Subsurface tile drainage will require substantial capital outlay. The increased payment rate may increase farmer participation by covering potential yield losses and equipment purchases.

M
C
G
A



MINNESOTA CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

738 1st Avenue East • Shakopee, MN 55379 • (952) 233-0333 • Fax (952) 233-0420 • www.mncorn.org

April 23, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) supports the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

As a representative of the farmers and rural landowners who will actually implement the practices that will ultimately lead to better soil and water resources, maintain agricultural productivity and provide wildlife habitat, we appreciate the opportunity NRCS has provided for us to help craft a program targeted toward improving the Sauk River Watershed.

As a member of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition (MAWRC), we are committed to the core education and outreach efforts vital to the success of the MRBI program. We are also pleased that the Stearns County SWCD has welcomed us as partners in developing their watershed program. The MAWRC provides a mechanism for coalition members to work cooperatively in research and outreach efforts very much in harmony with efforts of the NRCS and Stearns County SWCD. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance where possible.

cc: pr →

MISSION STATEMENT

To promote and create opportunities for the profitability of corn farmers while enhancing quality of life



www.mncorn.org



PHEASANTS

forever[®]

REGIONAL OFFICE
Matthew Holland
679 W. River Drive
New London, MN 56273
Voice and Fax: (320) 354-4377
E-mail: ringneck@rds.net

April 14, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

Pheasants Forever supports the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

PF is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions will be to enhance wildlife habitat efforts that are part of this initiative. Our efforts are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in wildlife habitat education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

PF looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. Please keep us informed of progress, needs and how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Matt Holland, Sr. Field Coordinator
Pheasants Forever, Inc.



1255 SW PRAIRIE TRAIL PARKWAY • ANKENY, IA 50023 • 515-251-8640 • 800-383-1423
www.agtechonfarm.net

April 28, 2010

Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128, Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Ag Technology and Environmental Stewardship Foundation (ATESF) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

ATESF is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure implementation of this important and necessary project. In particular, ATESF will provide staff time and resources to advance the On-Farm Network® component of the Sauk River Watershed CCPI:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts, especially for the On-Farm Network® in the watershed.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County 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 Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River 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,

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



April 28, 2010

Dennis Fuchs, Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128, Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

EDF is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure implementation of this important and necessary project. In particular, EDF will provide staff time and resources to advance the On-Farm Network® component of the Sauk River Watershed CCPI:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts, especially for the On-Farm Network® in the watershed.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County 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.

EDF looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River 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,

Suzy Friedman, Deputy Director, Center for Conservation Incentives at EDF
sfriedman@edf.org, 202-492-1023

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

940 Industrial Drive, Suite #103
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379



April 9, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
District Administrator
Stearns County SWCD
Marketplace Mall
110 2nd Street South, Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

Dear Dennis –

During the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative meeting at Melrose on March 30th, you had offered to act on behalf of other soil and water conservation districts and submit a proposal to the NRCS. Congratulations and thank you for stepping forward as you have done so many times in the past.

As the discussion about the possibilities for a submission in the Sauk River Watershed were unfolding, it became apparent that there were a discrete number of landowners that may have eligible practices that could be part of the proposal. You had also indicated to that you may not be able to commit the time that you would like to assembling the proposal.

As we discussed with you after the meeting, we would like to assist you with data that may strengthen your proposal and lead to a healthier Sauk River Watershed. To that end, there are existing mapping products that we will provide to you under separate cover that may help your proposal. As one of the three objectives of MRBI is to restore / enhance wildlife habitat, we will provide to you two maps: the Green Infrastructure Map that indicates where corridors of natural vegetation can create an interconnected web of habitat within and outside the watershed, mostly focused around riparian areas. The other is the Minnesota County Biological Survey map that indicates where high quality natural habitats exist in the watershed. As the primary objective of the MRBI is to avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff, we can provide you water quantity data that we have available (either surface or groundwater). Please let us know if this would be helpful. We would also draw your attention to the Sensitivity of Groundwater Systems to Pollution plate of the Stearns County Geologic Atlas.

Thank you again for dedicating your time and talent to improve the condition of the Sauk River Watershed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Hauck".

Mark Hauck
Community Assist. Spec.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Lais".

Dan Lais
Area Hydrologist

Cc: Joe Kurcinka
Terri Yearwood
Dave Leuthe

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

1200 Warner Road
St. Paul, MN 55106
651.259.5800



April 27, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
District Administrator
Stearns County SWCD
Marketplace Mall
110 2nd Street South, Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

Dear Dennis,

We understand that the Stearns County SWCD has chosen to forward a proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative. The MN Department of Natural Resources is in full support of your proposal.

We recognize the opportunity that this proposal provides to the high priority minor watersheds of the Sauk River Watershed. In an area that has seen large scale, historic conversion of land from natural landscapes to intensive agricultural practices, the decision to partner with agricultural producers to propose implementing additional conservation practices to protect, conserve, and enhance natural resources is wise.

When considering the health of these 20 minor watersheds, we support the practices that improve water quality and sustain adequate quantities of water, improve biodiversity and secure ecosystem services for residents of the watersheds into the future. Your application is supported by data that we have generated and that we have forwarded to you: the Minnesota County Biological Survey map of Biodiversity Significance that indicates where high quality natural habitats exist in the watershed and Regionally Significant Ecological Areas, and the Green Infrastructure Map that indicates where corridors of natural vegetation can create an interconnected web of habitat within and outside the watershed, mostly focused around riparian areas.

The practices described in your proposal for avoiding, controlling and trapping nutrients will be effective. Of particular interest to the Department are those practices that exhibit multiple benefits, including Restoration & Management of Declining Habitats, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, Riparian Herbaceous Cover, Riparian Forest Buffer, Filter Strip, Vegetative Barriers and Treatment Areas, Wetland Restoration and Enhancement. As your proposal moves forward, we would like to provide continued support to you through consultation and technical support where possible.

Thank you again for your part in improving condition of the Sauk River Watershed for the water, land and for its people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kurcinka". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph M. Kurcinka
Central Region Director

mndnr.gov
An Equal Opportunity Employer

NATIONAL



WILD TURKEY
FEDERATION

April 23rd, 2010

Tom Glines
Sr. Regional Director
13075 Linnet St NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55448
Office 763-767-2717
Email: bosstom@comcast.net

To Whom It May Concern:

Re:Minnesota River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative – Sauk River Watershed

On behalf of the Minnesota Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation, I would like to voice my support of this Project for the area. The NWTF believes in science based conservation of our lands and wildlife. We believe the NRCS to be a great partner to help accomplish the mission and goals of the NWTF.

Clean waters and healthy lands all go hand in hand to develop great habitat to support wildlife populations for recreation. A better understanding of what is going on on the landscape can only help us in increasing nesting success and food sources for wild turkeys and other wildlife.

Please consider this application as a worthwhile project with a partner that can get the job done!

Yours in conservation,

Tom Glines

Tom Glines
Regional Field Supervisor NWTF
13075 Linnet St NW
Coon Rapids, MN 55448
612-810-7704



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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Martin".

Joe Martin
Assistant Commissioner



Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation®

April 21, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation (Farm Bureau) supports the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

As a representative of the farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners who maintain agricultural land productivity, provide wildlife habitat and who will implement the practices that will ultimately lead to better soil and water resources; we appreciate the opportunity NRCS has provided for us to help craft a program targeted toward improving the Sauk River Watershed.

As a member of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Coalition (MAWRC), Farm Bureau is committed to the education and outreach efforts vital to the success of the MRBI program. We are pleased that the Stearns County SWCD has welcomed us as partners in developing their watershed program. The MAWRC provides a mechanism for agricultural groups to work cooperatively on research and outreach efforts like those proposed in this project.

Farm Bureau looks forward to working with the Stearns County SWCD and project partners to enhance education and outreach efforts, to establish a comprehensive communication strategy, to assist in identifying critical need areas, and to provide input on edge of field water quality research efforts. Farm Bureau members will continue to be engaged in water quality efforts across Minnesota.

Farm Bureau looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. The cash and in-kind support of MAWRC members over the five-year project for all pertinent grant activities will allow leveraging of applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Paap".

Kevin Paap
President



524 4th St South
Sauk Centre, MN 56378
Phone: (320) 352-2231
Fax: (320) 352-6455
Visit us online at: www.srwdmn.org

April 14, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Sauk River Watershed District has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

The Sauk River Watershed District is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

The Sauk River Watershed District looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. We are proposing \$75,000 in cash and of \$15,000 of in-kind support over the five-year project for all pertinent grant activities. We will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Holly Kovarik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Kovarik, Administrator
Sauk River Watershed District



United States Department of the Interior
Fish & Wildlife Service
434 Great Oak Drive
Waite Park, MN 56387



In Reply Refer to:
FWS/PL

April 23, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Minnesota Private Lands Office through its *Partners for Fish and Wildlife* (PFW) program has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

The PFW program is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Provide technical and financial assistance when possible to on-the-ground wildlife habitat conservation projects that will benefit federal trust resources, i.e. migratory birds and/or threatened, endangered or candidate, wildlife species.

The PFW program looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. As our program funding is distributed by Congressional allocation, we will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal where possible.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Myerchin, State Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Minnesota Private Lands Office



524 4th St South
Sauk Centre, MN 56378
Phone: (320) 352-2231
Fax: (320) 352-6455
Visit us online at: www.srwdmn.org

April 14, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Sauk River Watershed District has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

The Sauk River Watershed District is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

The Sauk River Watershed District looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. We are proposing \$75,000 in cash and of \$15,000 of in-kind support over the five-year project for all pertinent grant activities. We will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

Holly Kovarik, Administrator
Sauk River Watershed District



MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES COALITION

3080 Eagandale Place - Eagan, MN 55121
Email- info@mawrc.org

Phone (651)768-2106 – Fax (651)768-2159
Web- www.mawrc.org

April 21, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

As coordinator of the Minnesota Discovery Farms program, I agree to be a cooperator on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application. This initiative in Stearns County would fit very nicely with the other "Discovery Farms" efforts throughout Minnesota. One site is established and data are being collected. A second monitoring site is nearly complete.

I am committed to provide in-kind resources as a coordinator of an edge-of-field monitoring site to assure that this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. My specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts stated briefly below:

- Facilitate and assist in education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, through project evaluation, and group facilitation whenever appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge-of-field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.

I look forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Initiative. I am committed to providing in-kind support over the five year project for all pertinent grant activities.

Sincerely,



George Rehm, Minnesota Discovery Farms Coordinator



United States Department of the Interior

U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Water Science Center of Minnesota
2280 Woodale Dr.
Mounds View, MN 55112
763-783-3230

April 21, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) has interest in cooperating with the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Cooperative Conservation Partner's Initiative--Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

The USGS has interest in cooperating with the SWDC by providing staff and resources to assure that this important project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Assisting in educational and outreach efforts.
- Providing support to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners for establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation, where appropriate.
- Assisting in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning.
- Assisting with edge-of-field water-quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide cooperative funding where appropriate.

The USGS looks forward to cooperation with the Stearns County SWCD on the Sauk River Watershed Initiative. We propose to provide federal cooperative matching funds, where appropriate, in support of the project.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

James R. Stark
U. S. Geological Survey
Minnesota Water Science Center Director

MIDWEST ORGANIC
& Sustainable Education Service
MOSES

April 16, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs,

The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) agrees to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

We are committed to providing the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

MOSES looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on a June 2010 field day in support of the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. We agree to leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal as they are available.

Sincerely,

Jeff Gunderson, Outreach Coordinator
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)
P.O. Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767
Phone 715-778-5775
Fax 715-778-5773
jeff@mosesorganic.org | www.mosesorganic.org

April 21, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

The MPCA is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

The MPCA looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. We are proposing to support the effort over the five-year project for all pertinent grant activities. We will leverage applicable & available funds, programs, and staff to help support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,



Greg Van Eeckhout
MPCA Regional Watershed
7678 College Rd Suite 105
Brainerd, MN 56425
218-316-3896



MINNESOTA MILK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION
108 Marty Drive, Suite 2 – Buffalo, MN 55313
Phone: 763-355-9697 ★ Fax: 763-355-9686
E-Mail: mmpa@mnmilk.org ★ Web: www.mnmilk.org

April 14, 2010

Dennis Fuchs
Stearns County SWCD Administrator
USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed Project Director
110 Second St. S. Suite 128
Waite Park, MN 56387

RE: USDA Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed

Dear Mr. Fuchs:

The Minnesota Milk Producers Association (MMPA) has agreed to be a cooperator and partner on the USDA Cooperative Conservation Partners Initiative: Mississippi River Basin Initiative for the Sauk River Watershed grant application.

MMPA is committed to provide the necessary staff and resources to assure this important and necessary project is completed within the budget and time limits specified in the proposal. Our specific contributions are expected to be, but are not limited to, the efforts outlined below:

- Help facilitate and assist in the education and outreach efforts.
- Provide guidance to the Stearns County SWCD and project partners on establishing and maintaining a comprehensive communication effort, thorough project evaluation, and group facilitation when appropriate.
- Assist in the identification of critical areas, project selection, and overall project planning efforts.
- Assist with edge of field water quality monitoring equipment setup, quality control and assurance, data analysis and interpretation, and reporting.
- Provide financial assistance when possible.

The MMPA looks forward to partnering with the Stearns County SWCD on the USDA MRBI Sauk River Watershed initiative. We will leverage applicable funds, programs, and staff to support this grant proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert P. Lefebvre". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Bob Lefebvre
Executive Director

The Voice of Minnesota's Dairy Industry



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>Beauregard</i>	<i>Brainerd</i>	<i>Duluth</i>	<i>Fergus Falls</i>	<i>Marshall</i>	<i>Mankato</i>	<i>New Ulm</i>	<i>Rochester</i>
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