

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

**Request for Funding Form
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
Fiscal Year 2011**

Program or Project Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

Date: October 29, 2009

Manager’s Name: Kevin J. Lines
Title: Conservation Easement Section Manager
 Board of Water and Soil Resources
Mailing Address: 520 Lafayette Road, Suite 200, St. Paul MN 55155
Telephone: 651-297-1894
Fax: 651-297-5615
E-Mail: .lines@state.mn
Web Site: .bwsr.state.mn

Manager’s Name: Tim Koehler
Title: Assistant State Conservationist
 USDA NRCS
Mailing Address: 375 Jackson Street, Suite 600
 St. Paul MN 55155
Telephone: 651-602-7857
Fax: 651-602-7926
E-Mail: .koehler@mn.usda
Website: .mn.nrcs.usda

	Council Funding Request	Out-Year Projections of Needs		
Funds Requested (\$000s)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Outdoor Heritage Fund	18.0M	18.0M	18.0M	18.0M

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

A. Summary

The Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Partnership will accelerate the restoration and protection of approximately 12,000 acres of previously drained wetlands and associated upland native grassland wildlife habitat complexes via perpetual conservation easements. The goal of the RIM-WRP Partnership is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, while optimizing wildlife habitat on every acre enrolled in the partnership. The RIM-WRP partnership enables Minnesota to leverage \$1.4 of federal WRP funding for every state dollar available through RIM Reserve. This appropriation request of \$18 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) will leverage \$25 million of WRP funds to Minnesota. We expect to enroll approximately 120 permanent conservation easements totaling 12,000 acres of wetland grassland wildlife habitat complexes. This will enable the RIM-WRP partnership to restore approximately 600 previously drained wetland basins totaling 4,000 wetland acres, and the restoration of native grassland prairies on approximately 8,000 acres. Since WRP is an annual funded program through the 2008 Federal Farm Bill, this leveraging opportunity is available to Minnesota for at least the next four years.

B. Background Information

1. What is the problem or opportunity being addressed?

Minnesota's original wetland and prairie landscapes have been lost at an alarming rate over the last century and a half of European settlement. Minnesota's prairies once comprised nearly 20 million acres, extending from the borders of Iowa and Wisconsin in the southeast to North Dakota and Manitoba in the northwest. Less than 1% of this native prairie remains. Minnesota has lost an estimated 42 percent of its original 16 million acres of wetlands to drainage or fill activities. The loss of wetlands is most severe in the prairie regions of the state. Approximately 90% of prairie wetlands have disappeared and in the southwestern area of the state losses are as high as 99%.

Prairie wetlands are depressional wetlands that fill with snow melt and rain in the spring. Some prairie wetlands are temporary, while others may be essentially permanent. Prairie wetlands are particularly important for migratory waterfowl. Although the North American pothole region contains only about 10% of the waterfowl nesting habitat on the continent (including a significant portion of Minnesota), it produces 70% of all North American waterfowl. This extensive loss of Minnesota's prairie and wetland habitat has led to the decline of many wildlife and plant species originally abundant in the state. Of the nearly 1,200 known wildlife species in Minnesota, 292 species, or approximately one-fourth, are at risk because they are rare; their populations are declining or they face serious risks of decline due to loss of habitat.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

The Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan, a statewide look at the species/habitat relationship, shows that prairies, rivers and wetlands are the three habitats used by the most species in greatest conservation need. These are the habitats that have also experienced some of the greatest loss and degradation in the state.

2. What action will be taken?

The RIM-WRP Partnership will acquire permanent conservation easements on lands with previously drained wetlands and associated upland grassland complexes. Restoration of previously drained wetlands and native prairie complexes will be accomplished on all conservation easements using designs and specifications that provide the greatest wetland functions and values optimize wildlife habitat.

In the winter of 2010, the RIM-WRP Partnership will conduct a statewide landowner application sign-up. All private landowner applications will be scored and ranked using the Minnesota Wetlands Restoration Evaluation Worksheet (see attached). The worksheet determines which projects will provide the greatest wetland functions and values and optimizes wildlife habitat on the selected and enrolled acres.

Although the RIM-WRP Partnership is a statewide program, it gives priority to that portion of Minnesota that has had the greatest loss of wetland and prairie grassland complexes and subsequently significant decline in many species of wildlife that are wetland complex dependent. The RIM-WRP Partnership is the premier private lands wetland restoration program in the nation. The RIM-WRP Partnership is a local-state-federal partnership that combines the state's RIM Reserve Conservation Easement Program with the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program.

3. Who will take action and when?

The RIM-WRP Partnership is a local-state-federal partnership that is currently developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Minnesota State Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to ensure the RIM-WRP Partnership is a longstanding and successful program in Minnesota. In addition, this partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners including NRCS, BWSR, local SWCDs, Ducks Unlimited (DU), the Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA) and the United States Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS).

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

Most important in the success of the RIM-WRP Partnership are Minnesota's private landowners who voluntarily enroll in this partnership to provide critical conservation protection on their lands which benefits all Minnesotans.

Specifically, the RIM-WRP is delivered by local NRCS staff, local SWCD staff and assisted by program staff from both NRCS and BWSR. Further assistance is provided by DU contract employees and staff provided by MWA.

4. How will you coordinate this program with the other Constitutional Funding?

The RIM-WRP Partnership closely coordinates its activities with many of Minnesota's natural resources and conservation focused agencies and organizations, including (but not limited to) the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ducks Unlimited (DU), Minnesota Waterfowl Association (MWA), Pheasants Forever (PF), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The RIM-WRP Partnership's Minnesota Wetlands Evaluation Worksheet recognizes and gives priority to easement applications that complement existing public investments such as DNR WMAs and USFWS WPAs. Acquiring permanent conservation easements in conjunction with public Wildlife Management Areas and Waterfowl Production Areas builds upon the private- public benefits of conservation. Increasing wildlife habitat production of game and non-game species on private land provides benefits to hunting and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

Specifically, the RIM-WRP Partnership and other partners in this collaborative project will coordinate with a TNC-led proposal called the *Prairie Recovery Project*. The RIM-WRP Partnership will give priority in selection and funding of lands identified in the *Prairie Recovery Project*.

5. What specific habitat changes will occur if this item is funded? Be specific about and list multiple benefits if they exist.

The RIM-WRP Partnership will protect and restore an estimated 600 wetland basins totaling 4,000 wetland acres and associated restored native grassland prairie on 8,000 acres in 120 permanent conservation easements totaling 12,000 acres. These restored wetlands and native grassland complexes will provide critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife species in Minnesota. Wetlands provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. They improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

biological diversity, sequester carbon and increase recreational opportunities.

6. When do you expect to see these habitat changes?

The RIM-WRP Partnership would acquire a 30-year federal WRP easement and a permanent state RIM Reserve easement in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. The wetland and native grassland restoration would occur in 2012-2013. We would expect that the restored wetland/grassland complex could be providing full wetland function, values and benefits as well as optimum wildlife habitat in five years.

7. Will your Outdoor Heritage Fund dollar request complete the planned accomplishments?

 X YES

 NO

8. How will you pay for the maintenance of the accomplishments?

Once a RIM-WRP easement is acquired, NRCS is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring during the life of their 30-year WRP easement, including all associated costs for this activity. NRCS monitors the easement each year and provides detailed on-site review of compliance and ecological functions at least one of every three years.

The State of Minnesota assumes sole responsibility via its perpetual RIM Reserve easement once the 30-year WRP easement has expired.

The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, inspections are performed every three years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

9. How does this action directly restore, enhance, or protect prairies, wetlands, forests or habitat for fish, game, and wildlife?

The RIM-WRP Partnership is focused directly on the permanent protection through acquisition of conservation easements and the restoration of previously drained wetlands and associated restored native grasslands in wetland-grassland complexes primarily in the prairie pothole region of Minnesota. The RIM-WRP partnership will acquire 120 permanent conservation easements, restore 600 wetland basins totaling approximately 4,000 acres and restore 8,000 acres of associated native grassland complexes in the prairie pothole region of Minnesota.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

10. If you are restoring or enhancing property, is the activity on permanently protected land?

YES

NO

If yes briefly describe the kind of protection.

The RIM-WRP Partnership requires the acquisition of permanent conservation easements through the State of Minnesota Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve Conservation Easement program as authorized in M.S. 103F.515.

11. How will you ensure transparency and provide information about your work and use of Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars.

Frequent RIM-WRP Partnership updates will be provided to the L-SOHC describing easement acquisition and restoration activities. All funds will be tracked and monitored using the BWSR's administrative process. A recently upgraded database will be used to log and track easements and a website mapping program will allow the public to view the locations of RIM easements. Signage is an agency requirement.

12. Why will this strategy work?

With the appropriation we received from the FY2010 OHF in 2009, the RIM-WRP Partnership was able to enroll 70 conservation easements totaling 7,812 acres. We enrolled approximately 350 previously drained wetland basins totaling 3,800 acres and restored native grasslands on over 4,000 acres. The \$9.05 million OHF appropriation leveraged \$14 million in WRP funds for Minnesota. The RIM-WRP Partnership is a proven program with an excellent track record of delivery in Minnesota and a glowing national reputation based on recent results. (See attached funded easements table and map in Section K.)

13. Who might make decisions that assist or work against achieving the expected impact program?

The RIM-WRP Partnership is the premier private land wetland restoration program in the nation. The USDA-NRCS Washington, D.C. administration has an objective to increase enrollment in WRP nationwide by 900,000 acres over the next three years.

If Minnesota has sufficient state funding for RIM Reserve, we have the potential to leverage unprecedented amounts of WRP funds to restore wetlands and native grasslands to provide critical wildlife habitat in Minnesota. Ultimately, the private landowner determines the fate or success of the RIM-WRP Partnership. In 2008 and 2009 the RIM-WRP Partnership, during short sign-up periods, received over twice the demand from landowners than we had dollars available to acquire conservation easements. We would expect this interest from landowners to continue.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

14. If this is acquisition of land, has the local government formally approved the acquisition?

Not applicable.

15. If this is fee simple acquisition of land, is the land free of any other permanent protection such as a conservation easement?

Not applicable.

16. If this is an easement acquisition, will the easement land be open for public use?

YES

NO

If Yes what kind of use?

The RIM-WRP Partnership is a private land conservation easement program that provides significant conservation benefit to the public. However, public access is dependent upon the landowner allowing recreational access. In a 2002 survey of RIM reserve easement landowners by the Water Resources Center of the University of Minnesota, two-thirds of the survey respondents said that they allow non-family members to recreate on their land. It is important to note that the restoration of wetland and associated native grasslands provides critical habitat for wildlife. The RIM-WRP Partnership is restoring these habitats where they provide the greatest benefits for wildlife and are done in collaboration with WMA and WPA acquisition and management.

17. If easement acquisition, will the easement be a permanent conservation easement as described in MS 2009, Chapter 84C.01, specifically protecting the natural resource values of real property forever?

YES

NO

The RIM-WRP Partnership requires the landowner to enroll in a 30-year federal WRP easement and a permanent RIM Reserve conservation easement. Minnesota statutes 103F.515, subd. 5 requires a permanent easement be taken for all wetland restorations.

18. If you are proposing funding for a new or ongoing program how long into the future do you expect this program to operate?

24 Years

Since 1994, the WRP has been and will continue to be one of the USDA-NRCS' largest and most successful conservation programs. Nationwide, WRP has been responsible for the restoration and

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

enhancement of over two million acres of wetland and associated upland habitat.

The 2008 Federal Farm Bill increased the maximum enrollment in the WRP to 3,041,200 acres. As of the end of fiscal year 2009, NRCS has enrolled approximately 2,175,000 acres in the program. In order to enroll the maximum allowed by the Farm Bill, NRCS will need to enroll approximately 900,000 acres by September 30, 2012. The average nationwide enrollment for WRP has been approximately 150,000 acres over the last few years. In order to accomplish this task, NRCS will need to increase their current ability to enroll easements by 200 to 300 percent, annually.

Minnesota's successful RIM-WRP Partnership makes us uniquely qualified to receive unprecedented amounts of WRP funds if state funds can be generated to leverage federal funds via the RIM Reserve program.

19. Which planning sections will you work in? Check all that apply in the list below.

The RIM-WRP Partnership is available statewide, however, the following sections will be targeted because of their potential for high quality wetland restorations and native grasslands and their value as critical wildlife habitat.

- Northern Forest
- Forest/Prairie Transition
- Southeast Forest
- Prairie
- Metropolitan Urbanizing Area (partial)

20. Does the request address an urgent conservation opportunity that will be lost if not immediately funded?

YES NO

If yes, please explain.

Minnesota's successful RIM-WRP Partnership, a combination of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program and WRP, was the key to Minnesota's success as the number one ranked state in the country in number easements funded in 2009. The partnership is possible through collaboration among many local, state and federal partners, including NRCS, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Ducks Unlimited and Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

According to NRCS, this successful effort means that the 2010 Farm Bill allocations for WRP in Minnesota will potentially double in total acres and dollars available.

NRCS estimates that \$25 million in federal funds will be allocated to Minnesota for WRP in federal fiscal year 2010 (Oct. 1, 2009 to Sept. 30, 2010). An additional \$25 million is expected for federal fiscal year 2011 (Oct. 1, 2010 to Sept. 30, 2011) and future federal fiscal years.

The RIM - WRP Partnership enables Minnesota to leverage \$1.4 of federal WRP funding for every \$1 of state money available through RIM Reserve.

A state match of \$18 million in each of the next two state fiscal years for the RIM Reserve program would enable Minnesota to leverage the estimated \$25 million per year in federal WRP dollars.

- **\$25 Million:** Estimated federal WRP dollars available to Minnesota in federal fiscal year 2010 (Oct. 1, 2009-Sept. 30, 2010)
- **\$18 Million:** Estimated state funds that would enable Minnesota to leverage federal WRP dollars at a ratio of \$1.4 federal to \$1 state
- **\$25 Million:** Estimated un-used WRP dollars returned by other states that could be available to Minnesota
- **\$18 Million:** Estimated state funds that would enable Minnesota to leverage federal WRP dollars at a ratio of \$1.4 federal to \$1 state

Each year, most states turn back portions of WRP dollars that are available to them. Because of Minnesota's RIM-WRP partnership, Minnesota is uniquely positioned to compete for those un-used WRP dollars that were available to other states. NRCS estimates that an additional \$25 million could be available to Minnesota in federal FY2010 due to the amounts turned back from other states. That means that a state investment of \$36 Million for RIM Reserve in state fiscal year 2010 (July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011) could leverage \$50 million (a 1.4 to 1 ratio) in federal WRP dollars for conservation easement acquisition, site restoration and program implementation costs.

21. Does the request restore and/or enhance habitat on existing state-owned Wildlife or Aquatic Management Areas or Scientific and Natural Areas?

Not applicable.

22. Is this request based on assessment through a science based strategic planning and evaluation model similar to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's Strategic Habitat Conservation model?

 X YES

 NO

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

If yes explain the model briefly.

The Wildlife Habitat Potential Model for use with the Wetlands Reserve Program and ReInvest In Minnesota Reserve Program Environmental Evaluation, prepared by The USFWS HAPET Office, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, is used by the partnership and is explained by USFWS below.

One of the primary goals of the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is to benefit migratory birds. Birds choose where within their range they will breed or stop to refuel during migration based on the characteristics of all of the sites they could select and the area within several miles of each potential site. We commonly call the latter the landscape surrounding a site. Landscapes can exert powerful effect on which sites are selected. Many people have found that more bird species will occupy sites surrounded by landscapes rich in wetlands or grasslands and conversely, have found only a few birds in sites surrounded exclusively by cropland.

We often study birds that are high priority species for conservation or that represent the habitat needs of groups of other species. To understand the affects of site factors like patch size, plant communities, water depth, etc., and the affects of the landscapes around them, scientists compare areas that are used by a certain species of birds with a random sample of sites – some that are used and some that are not. By doing these comparisons, we can determine what factors birds are keying in on when they choose a site for breeding or migration. This information on species habitat selection is written out as models in either words or mathematical variables and symbols. The real key feature of useful models is that every term in the model must be measurable using the information we have on wetlands, croplands, grasslands, etc., which usually come from satellite images or aerial photographs.

All of us use models every day. A model is a simplified version of reality that helps us make decisions. For example, a pheasant hunter has a model in her head about where to find pheasants on a snowy winter day. Every snowy winter day she hunts, she is testing and refining the model. We each have models for what we think make good teachers, bad boyfriends, good politicians, etc. and we are constantly evaluating and refining these models through life experiences. Their purpose is to help us make good choices based on past life experiences.

The only difference between models used by scientists and models used in daily life is that scientists write models down so others can see and possibly challenge the criteria used for making decisions. This is called transparency. If our models are pretty close to representing reality, they will make our management more reliable and we will be more efficient. Transparency and efficiency lead to credibility. Think about a situation where you have a choice of investing in two projects: one where every variable is written down, based on past experience or research and regularly tested and updated, versus another project where you're asked to simply take everything on faith – the claims or gut feelings of the person asking you to invest? Which would you choose?

To develop the Wildlife Habitat Potential scores for WRP, the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) used a variety of models representing an array of migratory birds that use the Minnesota Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) for breeding or migration. We focused on the PPR because it is a National Conservation Priority area for USDA and other Federal agencies due to its importance to ducks and other birds.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

The process we used in 2008 was more sophisticated and included more species than the process we used in 2003. We expect this trend to continue.

In 2008, HAPET combined models of the density of upland breeding waterfowl, grassland birds and breeding shorebirds to determine where restoring grassland would provide the greatest benefits for these species, and models for migrant shorebirds and other wetland birds to determine where wetlands should be restored (see the list of focal species below). Each of these models is available for review. Some estimate the number of birds per acre, and some estimate habitat suitability. Each model was applied to every pixel in satellite land cover and/or National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data covering the Prairie Pothole and Prairie Hardwood Transition regions of Minnesota. This resulted in a digital map that showed the best areas to conserve each species. Before the species maps were combined, each pixel was rescaled from 0-100 so that each map (data layer) would be weighted equally. The final WRP scores are the average of the individual species scores and were reported for legal 40-ac parcels.

HAPET is currently acquiring landscape models from our partners in the Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Region Migratory Bird Joint Venture to run the same process for northeast and southeast Minnesota so that the entire state is covered using the same techniques, although different species may be used to represent the potential of habitat restoration from farmland. We expect this process to be completed and the data to be ready for distribution by the end of December, 2009.

Focal Species used in the 2008 WRP Prioritization Process in the PPR:

- Waterfowl – Thunderstorm map – combined score for:
 - Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Pintail
- Migrant Shorebirds – Modeled spring migrant stopover landscapes - combined the models for:
 - Marbled Godwit, Willet, American Avocet
 - Wilson’s Phalarope, Semipalmated Sandpiper
 - Upland Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Dunlin, White-rumped Sandpiper
 - Breeding Shorebirds - landscape model for breeding Marbled Godwit
 - Grassland birds – combined score for:
 - Bobolink, Clay-colored Sparrow, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, LeConte’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Western Meadowlark, Greater Prairie-chicken
 - Waterbirds
 - Black Tern

23. Explain the scientific foundation for your project, and the benefits it will produce.

Minnesota has a rich heritage of protecting, restoring and enhancing wetland ecosystems. This is manifested by the many state and federal programs in Minnesota dedicated to restoring and preserving wetlands on private lands, including the RIM Reserve program, WRP, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the USFWS’s Private Lands and Partnership for Wildlife Programs.

The BWSR first published the Minnesota Wetland Restoration Guide in 1992. It provided the technical guidelines for restoring and managing drained wetlands in Minnesota with an emphasis on engineering design. In 2002, BWSR published the Native Vegetation in Restored

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

and Created Wetlands; Its Establishment and Management in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest (D. Shaw) and more recently developed additional vegetation guidance with Guidelines for Restoring and Managing Native Wetland and Upland Vegetation (Jacobson, 2006).

We are presently updating the Minnesota Wetland Restoration Guide, incorporating information from previously published documents along with new and updated wetland restoration and creation concepts that draw from recent research and the accumulated experience of restoration practitioners from across the state. Wetland restoration projects that are implemented using sound engineering and ecological principles have a great likelihood of success, both for the short-and long-term.

Combining the state and federal programs via the RIM-WRP Partnership is critical for success because the partnership:

1. Offers competitive payments to landowners because of the combined state and federal payment -- landowners enroll in a 30-year federal conservation easement and a perpetual state RIM easement, and
2. Effectively distributes the costs of securing the easement and restoring the wetland among the local, state and federal partners – state RIM Reserve dollars leverage the staff time provided by NRCS employees with expertise in engineering, wetland hydrology, and native vegetation establishment.

The benefits of wetland restoration include restoration of wildlife habitat, enhanced native plant communities, water quality improvement, flood damage reduction, carbon sequestration and potential bio-energy production. Wetland restoration sites average about 100 acres in size and include restoration of adjacent prairie grasslands to assure these public benefits are sustained.

24. How do you set priorities? (Be sure to list the criteria you use and the weight you give each one.)

The RIM-WRP Partnership uses the NRCS State Technical Committee's established subcommittee for WRP to provide statewide guidance for WRP in Minnesota. In addition, the RIM Reserve Management Planning Committee – a subcommittee of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources – provides oversight and guidance on behalf of the BWSR.

The RIM-WRP Partnership holds one to two joint meetings per year to provide program oversight and guidance and to establish payment rates

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

for upcoming sign-ups to be held. Specifically, the RIM-WRP Partnership has had the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET), located in Fergus Falls, develop a Wildlife Habitat Potential Model for use with the WRP and RIM Reserve programs' environmental evaluation. In addition, the RIM-WRP Partnership has developed the *Minnesota Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet* (attached) which is used to evaluate each easement application on its potential to restore wetland functions and values along with optimum wildlife habitat benefits.

C. Relationship to the *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* and Other Published Resource Management Plans

Several recent statewide Minnesota planning efforts have called attention to the dramatic loss of wetlands and native prairie grasslands over the last century and a half. Minnesota has lost over 99% of its original native prairie and over 90% of its prairie wetlands. The following is a list of strategic plans considered in development of RIM-WRP leveraging proposal that will permanently restore and protect wetland and native grassland complexes in strategically targeted areas of Minnesota.

The *Minnesota Conservation and Preservation Plan* calls for protecting priority land (habitat recommendation #1) and this proposal is working to protect and restore priority grassland and wetland habitats important to waterfowl, grassland and wetland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands and wetlands home. This proposal will also implement the following habitat recommendations within the plan:

- Protect priority land habitats – the RIM-WRP partnership contains priority grassland and wetland habitats important to waterfowl, grassland and wetland birds as well as the myriad species that call grasslands and wetlands home.
- Protect critical shore lands of rivers and lakes – there are RIM-WRP easements being acquired that will protect shoreline of shallow lakes contained within this proposal.
- Restore and protect shallow lakes – there are RIM-WRP easements being acquired that will include protection of shallow lakes contained within this proposal.
- Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds – the RIM-WRP partnership protects and restores wetlands and grasslands. A majority of the lands acquired will be prior-converted.
- Keep water on the landscape – by protecting and restoring wetlands and grasslands, the RIM-WRP partnership will return water to the landscape (permanent wetland restoration) and help keep water on the landscape (permanent native vegetation restoration).

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

Minnesota DNR Long-range Duck Recovery Plan has priority goals for long-term protection and restoration for wetland and grassland habitat for duck production. The RIM-WRP partnership will contribute 12,000 acres to the 2,000,000 acre goal set under the plan. Specifically, it will permanently protect and/or restore 4,000 acres of wetlands towards the 600,000 acre wetland goal and permanently protect and/or restore 8,000 acres of native grasslands towards the 1,400,000 acre grassland goal.

Minnesota DNR Long-range Plan for the Ring-Necked Pheasant in Minnesota has priority goals to protect and restore nesting and winter habitat for pheasants. The RIM-WRP partnership contributes approximately 5,000 acres to the plan goal of restoring 1,560,000 acres of habitat within the pheasant range of Minnesota.

The RIM-WRP partnership contributes to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan by contributing 12,000 acres of breeding habitat (wetlands and grasslands) to the 11.8 million acre goal to restore continental waterfowl populations. Most of the work will occur within the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, which is recognized as a national priority for wetland and grassland habitat and breeding waterfowl and grassland bird species.

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare – An Action Plan for Minnesota's Wildlife, is Minnesota's comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy. It identifies the species-habitat relationships that show wetlands and grasslands are two of the habitats used by the most species in greatest conservation need. These are the habitats that have experienced some of the greatest loss and degradation in Minnesota.

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

D. Budget

Budget Item	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
Personnel	\$ 238,650	\$ 245,810	\$ 253,184
Contracts	200,000	200,000	200,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies	30,000	30,000	30,000
Fee Acquisition			
Easement Acquisition	4,320,000	8,640,000	1,440,000
Easement Stewardship			
Professional Services			
Travel	64,436	66,369	61,553
Additional Budget Items			
Conservation Practices	297,000	693,000	990,000
TOTAL	\$5,150,086	\$9,875,178	\$2,974,737

E. Personnel Details

Title	Name	Amount.
Civil Engineer (.5)		\$ 51,500
Civil Engineer Technician (1.5)		109,900
Plant Ecologist (.5)		41,200
Realty Specialist (.5)		36,050

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

F. All Leverage

Source of Non-State Leverage	Fiscal Year 11	Fiscal Year 12	Fiscal Year 13
USDA -WRP	\$5,130,000	\$10,260,000	\$1,710,000
Easement and practice dollars	810,000	1,890,000	2,700,000
USDA-Technical Assistance	833,333	833,333	833,333
TOTAL	\$6,773,333	\$12,983,333	\$5,243,333

G. Outcomes

Table 1 Accomplishments	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Restore and Protect	<i>Restore and protect 600 wetland basins totaling 4,000 acres</i>	<i>Restore and protect 8,000 acres of native grassland</i>		<i>Restore and protect 12,000 acres of wetland/native grassland wildlife complexes.</i>

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

Table 2 Projected Sections Impacted and Impact Quantifier (based on 2009 RIM-WRP Partnership sign-up interest/funded applications)	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife			
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore and Protect	<i>Restore and protect 600 acres of prairie/forest transition</i>	<i>Restore and protect 1,200 acres of prairie/forest transition</i>		<i>Restore and protect 1,800 acres of wetland/native grassland wildlife complexes.</i>
Restore and Protect	<i>Restore and protect 200 metro-urbanizing acres</i>	<i>Restore and protect 400 metro-urbanizing acres</i>		<i>Restore and protect 600 acres of wetland/native grassland wildlife complexes.</i>
Restore and Protect	<i>Restore and protect 3,200 acres of prairie</i>	<i>Restore and protect 6,400 acres of prairie</i>		<i>Restore and protect 9,600 acres of wetland/native grassland wildlife complexes.</i>

Table 3 Recommend Fund Allocation	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife			
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore	600,000	1,200,000		1,800,000
Protect	4,800,000	9,600,000		14,400,000
Enhance				

Table 4 Leverage \$	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife			
	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	
Restore	1,800,000	3,600,000		5,400,000
Protect	5,700,000	11,400,000		17,100,000
Enhance				

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

Table 5 Acquisition Data	Wetlands	Prairies	Forests	Habitats for Fish, Game and Wildlife
Acquired in Fee with State PILT Liability				
Acquired in Fee without State PILT Liability				
Permanent Easement	<i>120 easements for 4,000 acres. 600 basins restored.</i>	<i>120 easements for 8,000 acres of native grassland.</i>		<i>120 easements totaling 12,000 acres of protected and restored wetland and native grassland wildlife habitat complexes.</i>

H. Accomplishment Time Table

Milestone	Date	Measure
<i>Conduct sign-up, ranking and selection for funding applications rec'd</i>	<i>Winter 2010</i>	<i>240</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Landowner notification 		
<i>Easement Acquisition Stage</i>	<i>2010–2013</i>	<i>120 easements ac</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RIM-WRP Agreements for Purchase – landowner signature ○ Field investigation/topographic survey/concept plan ○ Legal boundary surveys ○ Preliminary design and engineering report ○ Title work ○ Conservation plan development ○ Easement closing and recording of 30-year WRP and perpetual RIM Reserve easements 		
<i>Wetland restoration and conservation plan implementation restored</i>	<i>2011 – 2013</i>	<i>12,000 acres</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Final plans and construction ○ Restore wetlands (4,000 acres) ○ Restore native grasslands (8,000 acres) 		

I. Relationship to Your Current Budget

This request does not include any reliance on or connection to the base budget of any member of the RIM-WRP Partnership. The members of the RIM-WRP partnership have and will continue to seek funds from other sources to reach the \$36M of non-federal funds needed in 2010 and in each of the

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

following years to leverage the expected annual \$50 million of federal WRP funds. Below is a status list of state conservation easement appropriations. This information is dynamic, so please contact the BWSR program manager for the most current version.

BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES		FY10 active bonding appropriations		As of:		10/29/2009	
Appropriation	Approp. Year	Amount Appropriated	Amount Expended	Encumbered but not spent	Uncommitted Balance	Less: Pre-Encumbered	Unobligated Balance
MAPS ID Fund 500 (Bonding)							
CRP CREP 2 Easements	2005	\$20,000,000	\$12,906,171	\$4,012,380	\$3,081,449	\$3,081,449	\$0
CBI CREP 2 Implementation	2005	3,000,000	2,998,418	0	1,582	0	1,582
PRP Road Replacement	2005	4,362,000	3,357,771	1,004,229	0	0	0
All Area II MN River	2006	500,000	128,873	371,127	0	0	0
GRL Grass Lake Easements	2006	2,200,000	167,150	63,694	1,969,156	0	1,969,156
PRP Road Replacement (projects only)	2006	3,500,000	2,206,275	1,292,287	1,438	0	1,438
SLR Streambank Lakeshore Control	2006	1,000,000	984,228	0	15,772	0	15,772
GRL Con-Grass Lake Easements	2008	800,000	0	0	800,000	0	800,000
PRI Road Replacement Implementation	2008	720,000	0	0	720,000	0	720,000
PRP Road Replacement (projects only)	2008	3,480,000	783,929	1,321,083	1,374,988	0	1,374,988
RII RIM Implementation	2008	2,500,000	875,897	32,304	1,591,799	0	1,591,799
RIM RIM Easements	2008	21,250,000	1,525	1,485,230	19,763,245	19,763,245	0
RIS RIM Stewardship	2008	1,250,000	0	0	1,250,000	0	1,250,000
RMF RIM Easement Flood	2008	1,000,000	776,453	197,342	26,205	0	26,205
RRB Red River Basin	2009	500,000	0	0	500,000	0	500,000
RIM RIM Easement RRV	2009	500,000	0	0	500,000	0	500,000
Total Fund 500		<u>\$66,562,000</u>	<u>\$25,186,690</u>	<u>\$9,779,675</u>	<u>\$31,595,635</u>	<u>\$22,844,694</u>	<u>\$8,750,941</u>
MAPS ID Fund 110: General Fund							
PRP Road Replacement (Implementation)	2006	\$700,000	\$467,252	\$11,100	\$221,648		\$221,648
Total Fund 110		<u>\$700,000</u>	<u>\$467,252</u>	<u>\$11,100</u>	<u>\$221,648</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$221,648</u>
TOTAL ALL FUNDS		<u>\$67,262,000</u>	<u>\$25,653,942</u>	<u>\$9,790,775</u>	<u>\$31,817,283</u>	<u>\$22,844,694</u>	<u>\$8,972,589</u>

J. How Will the Habitat Improvements Be Sustained?

Once a RIM-WRP easement is acquired, NRCS is responsible for maintenance, inspection and monitoring during the life of their 30-year WRP easement, including all associated costs for this activity. The State of Minnesota assumes sole responsibility via its perpetual RIM Reserve easement once the 30-year WRP easement has expired.

The BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry-out oversight monitoring and inspection of its conservation easements. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, inspections are performed every three years. SWCDs report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations or problems are identified.

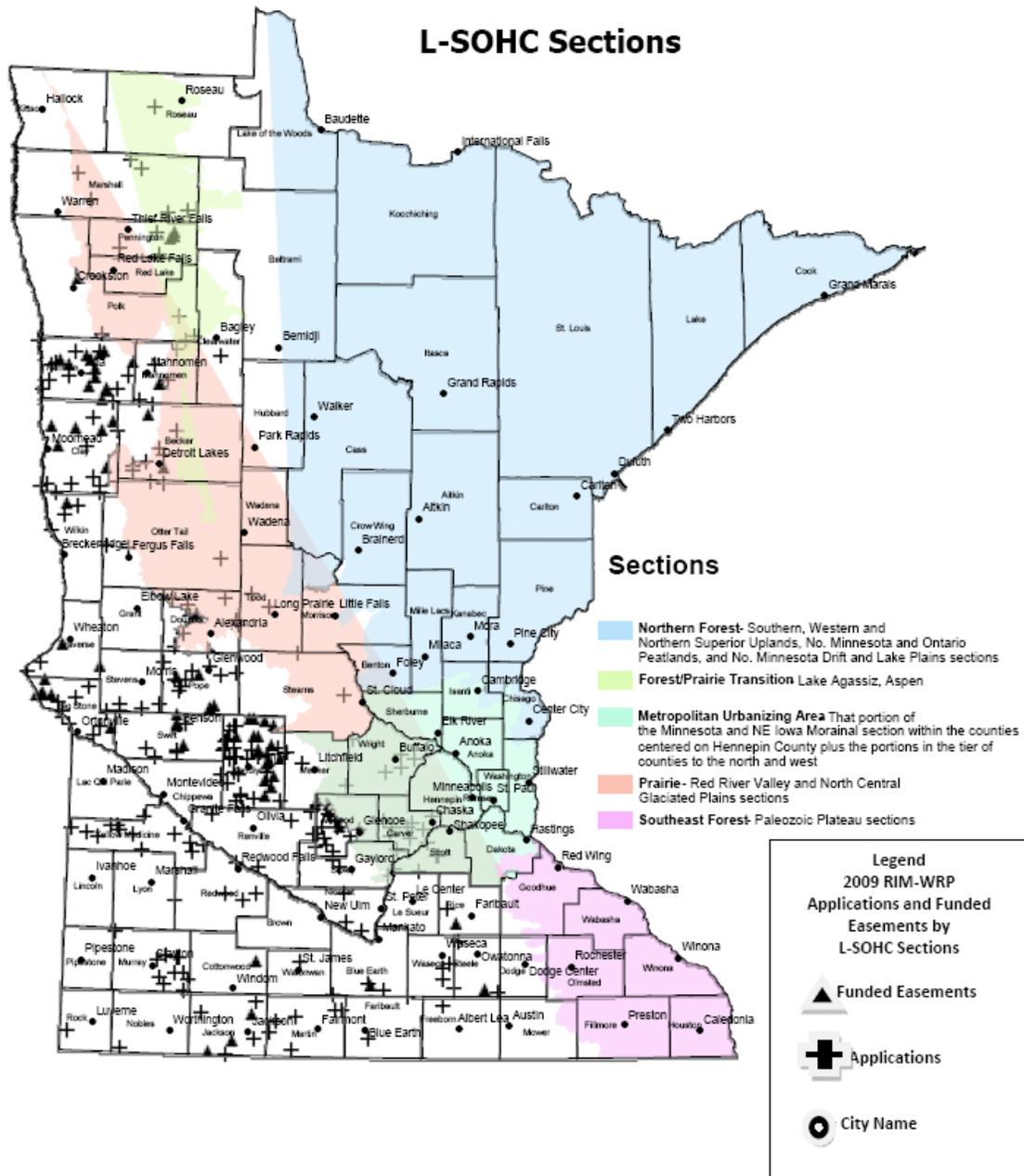
**Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve
Program (WRP) Leveraging Project**

K. 2009 RIM-WRP Outdoor Heritage Funded Easements

Funded Easements by LSOHC Planning Section and County		Total Acres	Number of Easements	Total WRP Dollars	Total RIM Dollars
Forest/Prairie Transition					
	Becker	90.8	1	\$89,828.16	\$70,690.50
	Douglas	96.5	1	\$123,031.44	\$92,143.80
	Pennington	758.0	3	\$364,316.72	\$284,371.33
	Polk	159.7	1	\$82,023.75	\$65,391.30
Forest/Prairie Transition Total		1,105.0	6	\$659,200.07	\$512,596.93
Prairie					
	Becker	155.0	1	\$156,952.08	\$124,671.89
	Big Stone	362.0	6	\$584,799.77	\$467,613.19
	Blue Earth	63.0	1	\$179,133.24	\$143,223.08
	Clay	964.3	6	\$781,602.89	\$610,109.70
	Cottonwood	71.0	1	\$175,829.66	\$139,405.22
	Jackson	113.0	3	\$252,138.43	\$200,818.46
	Kandiyohi	1,076.4	16	\$1,851,436.45	\$1,413,735.40
	Mahnomen	458.0	2	\$272,835.95	\$210,176.60
	McLeod	269.0	3	\$611,797.42	\$488,135.94
	Norman	1,599.7	12	\$1,042,163.73	\$810,888.93
	Pope	598.9	4	\$666,833.24	\$506,525.97
	Rice	50.3	1	\$255,200.66	\$202,801.65
	Steele	111.2	1	\$269,226.75	\$210,644.53
	Stevens	76.5	1	\$142,921.13	\$114,336.90
	Swift	544.6	4	\$729,122.34	\$556,482.94
	Traverse	92.6	1	\$146,561.25	\$117,249.00
	Wilkin	101.6	1	\$100,990.74	\$77,644.81
Prairie Total		6,707.1	64	\$8,219,545.73	\$6,394,464.21
RIM-WRP Restoration and Implementation Costs					
	RIM Restoration Funds/Acre			\$0.00	\$1,245,138.86
	RIM Implementation Cost			\$0.00	\$905,800.00
	WRP Expenses/Legal			\$560,000.00	\$0.00
	WRP Restoration Funds/Acre			\$3,515,444.98	\$0.00
RIM-WRP Restoration and Implementation Costs Total				\$4,075,444.98	\$2,150,938.86
Grand Total		7,812.1	70	\$14,000,000.00	\$9,058,000.00

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

2009 RIM-WRP Outdoor Heritage Applications and Funded Easements



Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

4/7/2009

Minnesota Wetland Restoration Evaluation Worksheet (for WRP and RIM-WRP)

Landowner/Project Name:	County (Field Office):	Prepared By:	Date:
-------------------------	------------------------	--------------	-------

SECTION I. Environmental Considerations

A. WILDLIFE BENEFITS *(determine score from Appendix I map and check appropriate score box)*

<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	Score <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
					(Maximum 20)

B. LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE *(only one check per wetland class/shaded region)*

PROPOSED RESTORATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND WETLAND CLASS						
Depressional				Floodplain		Non-Depressional (flats, swales, bogs)
Number of Restorable Basins	Upland : Wetland Ratio			Total Restorable Wetland Area (acres)		
	≥1:1	0.5:1-9:1	<0.5:1			
> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	≥ 120	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	≥ 120 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
3 - 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 15	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	40 - 119	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	40 - 119 <input type="checkbox"/> 3
< 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	< 40	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	< 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 1
- QR -						
Basin Size (Size of largest restorable wetland basin)						
≥ 50 acres		<input type="checkbox"/> 20				
30 - 50 acres		<input type="checkbox"/> 18				
10 - 30 acres		<input type="checkbox"/> 15				
						Score <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
						(Maximum 20)

C. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY BENEFITS *(only one check per wetland type/shaded region)*

PROPOSED HYDROLOGIC RESTORATION			
Current Condition/Status of Wetlands Proposed for Restoration		Expected Extent of Hydrologic Restoration	
Wetland Class	Extent of Drainage/Alteration	Full	Partial
Depressional	Effectively Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 20
	Partially Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
	Not Drained-Cropped	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Floodplain	Effectively Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
	Partially Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
	Not Drained-Cropped	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Non-Depressional	Effectively Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
	Partially Drained	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
	Not Drained-Cropped	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
			Score <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
			(Maximum 30)

WATER QUALITY BENEFITS OF EASEMENT	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5	Majority of easement area is in watershed of a designated impaired waters for excessive nutrients or turbidity
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5	Majority of runoff from easement drains to and is within 1/2 mile of DNR Protected Waters
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5	Majority of immediate contributing watershed(s) to easement is in agricultural use
<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5	Predominant soil in easement is HEL or PHEL
Score <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>	
(Maximum 10)	

Program Title: Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Leveraging Project

SECTION II. Cost Considerations	
A. EASEMENT VALUE	
AVERAGE PER ACRE COST FOR PURCHASING EASEMENT ¹	
< \$1,500 <input type="checkbox"/> 4	\$1,500 - \$1,999 <input type="checkbox"/> 3
\$2,000 - \$2,499 <input type="checkbox"/> 2	\$2,500 - \$2,999 <input type="checkbox"/> 1
> \$3,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 0	
<small>¹ Based on perpetual WRP payment or total partnership payment, whichever is higher</small>	
Score	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<small>(Maximum 4)</small>
B. RESTORATION VALUE	
<i>(only one check per shaded region)</i>	
ESTIMATED PER ACRE COST FOR RESTORING/ ESTABLISHING VEGETATION	
< \$200 <input type="checkbox"/> 3	\$200 - \$299 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
\$300 - \$399 <input type="checkbox"/> 1	> \$400 <input type="checkbox"/> 0
ESTIMATED PER ACRE CONSTRUCTION COST FOR RESTORING WETLAND AREAS	
< \$300 <input type="checkbox"/> 3	\$300 - \$699 <input type="checkbox"/> 2
\$700 - \$1,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 1	> \$1,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 0
Score	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<small>(Maximum 6)</small>
SECTION III. Additional Considerations <i>(check all applicable areas)</i>	
A. Easement application is beneficial to, and within 1 mile of breeding/population of Federal or State listed Endangered or Threatened species as identified by DNR Natural Heritage Database (State Special Concern species shall not be considered).	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5
B. Application is a local high priority resource project which is specifically identified in an existing comprehensive plan (site specific projects only, not general focus areas).	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5
C. Easement application is within a designated Habitat Conservation Partnership or Working Land Initiative target area.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5
D. Easement application is located within 1.0 miles of an existing permanent conservation area (public land, conservation easement etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5
E. Easement application contains CRP contract or limited duration easement expiring within 5 years.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2.5
F. Easement application is located within the Ecological Classification System (ECS) subsections (see Appendix 1) and did not receive points for wildlife benefits under Section I, Part A on page 1 of this form.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5.0
Score	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
	<small>(Maximum 10)</small>
APPLICATION TOTAL SCORE	<input style="width: 50px; height: 20px; background-color: #add8e6;" type="text"/>