

Request for Proposals

Landowner Outreach and Conservation Assistance Coordination in the Whitewater/Weaver Dunes/Lower Zumbro Region

Introduction

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council's (MFRC) Southeast Landscape Committee (SELC), the Whitewater Watershed Project, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) are seeking a qualified individual to help make contact with and deliver conservation assistance to key landowners within the biologically significant region around the Lower Zumbro and Whitewater River Valleys and the nearby Weaver Dunes habitat complex, including Weaver Dunes Preserve (The Nature Conservancy), Kellogg-Weaver Dunes SNA (MN DNR), McCarthy Lake Wildlife Management Area (MN DNR), and the Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge (US Fish and Wildlife Service). The project area includes some of the most biologically significant natural communities in Southeast Minnesota (See attached map below).

While a wide range of programs exist to incentivize private landowner stewardship of these resources, the web of assistance programs can be complex, and, currently, no centralized method of delivering those services to the most important landowners exists. A Landowner Outreach Coordinator is needed to cultivate relationships with those landowners, and to help provide guidance on available cost share or assistance programs.

Project Overview

This initiative is funded through December, 2017, with a budget of \$40,000. Additional funding is currently pending and will extend the contract work through December, 2018. The total budget is \$100,000.

Contractor will be responsible for the following duties:

Work Area 1: Landowner Outreach and Assistance

- Landowner Outreach. Make contact with landowners of key parcels within the project areas; build and maintain relationships necessary to help foster conservation within project areas. Assist and support the project steering committee in developing information handouts for landowners that summarize the conservation and land protection programs that are available within the SE Landscape. Assist and support partners on organizing landowner outreach events and activities.
- Forest Stewardship Plans. Prepare or arrange the preparation of Comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plans for landowners without a current plan in place.
- Technical Assistance. Prepare or arrange the preparation of Conservation Activity / Project plans in the first year (sufficient for applying for applicable cost share programs).
- Project Implementation Support. Guide landowners in implementing useful conservation practices on their lands, including but not limited to:
 - Timber Stand Improvement

- Invasive Species Control
- Reforestation/afforestation
- Grazing management exclusions
- Native grass and forb planting
- Prescribed burning
- Riparian and forest edge buffer planting
- Procurement of conservation easements

Work Area 2: Partner Coordination

- Liaison Role. Be a liaison between landowners and agency and non-profit conservation staff.
- Quarterback Role. Share and inform relevant conservation professionals and the landscape stewardship project teams about potential protection opportunities discovered during contact with landowners, help build useful connections between agencies and landowners.
- Invasive Species. Assist in exotic plant management amongst partners in the area, especially by reporting occurrences to benefit early detection efforts. Maintain awareness for potential infestations and inform appropriate agencies or land managers of invasive species occurrence when noted.

Work Area 3: Accomplishment Reporting

- Data Management. Maintain electronic lists of landowners and specific efforts on outreach, planning and implementation activities specific to each landowner. Provide records of contacts, notes on discussions and landowner requests, follow-up efforts completed and other work accomplishments to Steering Committee, DNR Forestry Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) Program, and the MFRC SE Landscape Committee.
- Accomplishment Reporting. Summarize and submit to Steering Committee, DNR PFM Staff and MFRC SE Landscape Committee a report on project accomplishments, including: landowner contacts, forest stewardship plans, and conservation projects implemented by landowners (e.g. trees planted, acres of prescribed fire, acres of invasive species management).

Work Area 4: Additional Duties (dependent on additional funding)

- Assist in land management activities, as approved by the SE Landscape Committee chair, in the Weaver Dunes – McCarthy Lake habitat complex, including:
 - Invasive species control
 - Undesirable brush management

Deliverables

- Landowner outreach products and documents.
- Completed Comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plans.
- Completed Conservation Activity / Project plans.
- Data on completed forestry and land management implementation activities.

- Landowner database and lists.
- Quarterly and annual reports including summary of working relationships and coordination efforts with other service providers.

Requirements for Submittals

Interested persons should submit a letter of intent to bid on the project, along with a resume and references to David Schmidt at: David.Schmidt@tnc.org. Or through mail at:

David Schmidt
327 Olmstead St.
Winona, MN 55987

Letters of intent with accompanying resumes must be received by Monday, April 24, 2017.

Selected contractors will be asked to submit a bid for the above described project. Bids should include a statement outlining approach to the tasks outlined above, and a project budget. Bids should include scenarios for the current level of secured funding (\$40,000 working through December 2017) as well as the anticipated funding level of \$100,000 through December 2018.

Project Area Map

