



Riparian Buffer Easement Program, Phase 2 (FY 2012/2013)



Clean Water Funds:

Grant	\$6M (FY12) \$6M (FY13)
Leveraged Funds*	N/A
Total Budget	\$12M

Project Sponsor:

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR)

Project Partners:

Minnesota Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Grant Period:

2012/2013

Project Contact:

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Project Narrative

This program is a part of a comprehensive clean water strategy to prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; protect groundwater and wetlands. Specifically the Riparian Buffer Easement Program targets creating buffers on riparian lands adjacent to public waters, except wetlands. Through the Reinvest in Minnesota Program (RIM) and in partnership with Soil and Water Conservation Districts and private landowners, permanent conservation easements are purchased and buffers established.

In 1986, the Reinvest in Minnesota Resources Act was enacted to restore certain marginal and environmental sensitive agricultural land to protect soil and water quality and support fish and wildlife habitat.

Utilizing the RIM conservation easement program, conservation easements on riparian lands adjacent to public waters, are purchased. Lands that were targeted were new or existing USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts with cropping history. Participating landowners receive a payment to retire land in agricultural production and to establish permanent buffers of native vegetation that must be at least 50 feet where possible and no more than 100 feet.

Buffer strips of native vegetation will be established on the above easement acres, all of which are adjacent to public waters. The program is targeted to critical CRP acres so these areas would be permanently protected instead of enrolled in short-term easements. These buffers slow and prevent sediment from entering lakes, rivers and streams, reduce hydrologic impacts to surface waters and increase infiltration for groundwater recharge.

Minnesota currently has just over 200,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Program in buffer practices at various stages of their 10-15 year contracts, some soon to expire. The buffer initiative compliments other programs, both existing and yet to be developed, over the next 25 years.

Proposed Measurable Outcomes

BWSR and SWCDs will work with private landowners to enroll 218 easements adjacent to public waters that will permanently protect more than 2,339 acres in 39 counties.

Measurable Outcomes—2012

Request for Proposals (RFPs) have been approved for 39 SWCDs and BWSR is accepting easement applications. Buffer strips of native vegetation were funded in 24 counties on the 1,418 easement acres, all of which are adjacent to public waters, except wetlands. The program was targeted to critical CRP acres, so that these areas would be permanently protected instead of enrolled in short-term easements.

Evaluation and Outcome Plans

These RIM easements are a part of a comprehensive public-private partnership to establish and restore permanent conservation easements on riparian buffers to keep water on the land in order to decrease sediment, pollutant and nutrient transport, reduce hydrologic impacts to surface waters and increase infiltration for groundwater recharge.

RIM easements are selected to meet local identified water quality goals within the larger scope of Minnesota's clean water efforts. The long-term evaluation of clean water fund projects will be monitored as part of the state's intensive watershed monitoring strategy. RIM easements are subject to ongoing inspection to ensure compliance for the duration of the easement in accordance with established guidelines.



Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve

CWF/LSOHC RIM Riparian Buffers: RFPs received as of 11/19/2012

