



## Partnership Project Fact Sheet

### What is it and does it work?

BWSR works collaboratively with a local government, state agency, landowner, or other entity to complete a wetland bank project. The credits that result from the project are then distributed between BWSR and the partner in accordance with the proposal submitted by the applicant. Partnership projects take advantage of the experience, capabilities and technical resources of each partner. Applicants considering this option should be familiar with the wetland banking process and understand the technical and financial commitments associated with wetland banking as well as the financial means to support construction of a wetland banking project. For this process, BWSR has defined the partnership roles and responsibilities in the following manner.

- BWSR will be responsible for the planning, designing, and obtaining regulatory approval of the Mitigation Bank Plan under the Wetland Conservation Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including a Section 404 permit, if necessary);
- Partners will be responsible for construction (including any other permits associated with construction), post-construction monitoring for a period five years, and preparing, submitting, and receiving approval of a final wetland delineation report. Alternative arrangements for completing the monitoring and final delineation will be considered.
- Partners may propose to take responsibility for vegetation establishment and management at the site or elect to have BWSR be responsible for this task.

The evaluation of partnership proposals will be conducted using a two-step process. The first step is intended to (1) identify projects from the submitted applications that are technically feasible and have the greatest potential to generate wetland credits and, (2) develop a concept plan that can be used as a basis for the applicant to submit a cost proposal in Step 2. Using the information provided by the applicant, BWSR will conduct an initial screening of projects to assess technical feasibility, credit yield, credit type, ecological sustainability, and easement compatibility. For the project(s) that move forward, BWSR will prepare a concept plan for the site and invite those applicants to a meeting in the BWSR St. Paul Central Office to review the concept plan and other project information. The purpose of the meeting is to jointly review and discuss the project and forecasted credit yield so that BWSR and the respondent understand and agree to the plan that will form the basis for the respondent's cost proposal (see next paragraph). Following the meeting, BWSR will provide the applicant with the preliminary design plan, narrative, credit yield and quantities consistent with the level of detail at this stage of the design. BWSR will also provide an estimate of the costs associated with the agency's tasks under the partnership.

The second step of the partnership proposal evaluation process is the applicant's submission of their cost proposal. After the meeting with BWSR, but on or before the Step 2 deadline, applicants that met with BWSR staff and are still interested in pursuing a partnership project may submit a final cost per credit proposal for the project along with the number of credits they are offering. BWSR will then calculate a total cost per credit number (the combination of the applicant's cost per credit and BWSR's project costs) that will be used with the other criteria described in this document to evaluate all potential projects.

Respondents considering this method should be aware of the following requirements:

- a. Applicants must be able to attend a meeting with BWSR staff at the St. Paul Central office during the timeframes specified in this announcement.

- b. Construction for partnership projects must begin no later than October 2021. Exceptions due to weather are allowed provided construction activities were scheduled and all necessary contracts, permits, or approvals were obtained or in place.
- c. The partner must be willing to sign the Mitigation Bank Instrument that is required for approval of the wetland mitigation bank under the Federal Mitigation Rule.

### **Who can participate?**

Any person or entity with the land ownership rights or interests to complete or commit to a wetland restoration project may respond to this announcement. The landowner of a proposed project location is not required to be the applicant, but applicants will be asked to demonstrate that they have sufficient legal interest in the property, or access to it, in order to complete the activities necessary to restore wetlands and manage the site long-term.

### **How much will BWSR pay?**

There is no set minimum or maximum amount that BWSR will pay under this method. Proposals must include the cost information based on the second of two-step review process.

### **What criteria does BWSR use when evaluating projects?**

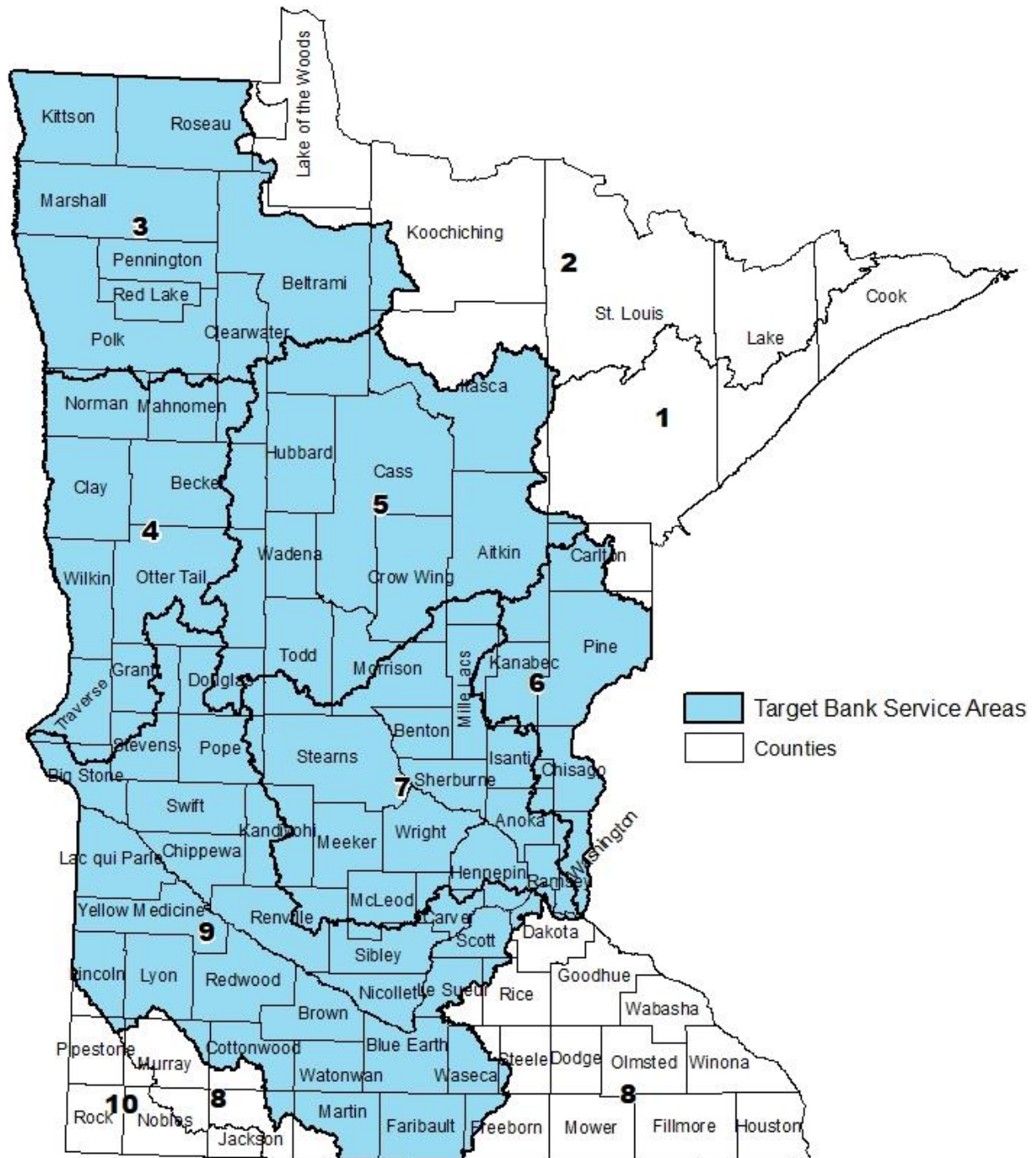
Restoration projects will be evaluated using the following criteria. The percentage in parentheses is the contribution of the criterion towards the total score for the project:

1. Credit Yield (20%)
2. Technical Feasibility (20%)
3. Functional Benefit for the Watershed (10%)
4. Rare or Difficult to Replace Wetland Functions or Characteristics (10%)
5. Qualifications of the Applicant (10%)
6. Cost per Credit (30%)

### **Does the location of the site matter?**

Yes, BWSR is restricting this solicitation to the following Wetland Bank Service Areas (BSAs) 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 (see Figure 1). This includes all or portions of the following counties: Aitkin, Anoka, Becker, Beltrami, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Carlton, Cass, Chippewa, Chisago, Clay, Clearwater, , Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Dakota, Douglas, Faribault, Freeborn, Grant, Hennepin, Hubbard, Isanti, Itasca, Jackson, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Koochiching, Lac qui Parle, , Lake of the Woods, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, Mahnomen, Marshall, Martin, McLeod, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Murray, Nicollet, Norman, Otter Tail, Pine, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Ramsey, Red Lake, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Roseau, Scott, Sibley, St. Louis, Steele, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, Waseca, Washington, Watonwan, Wilkin, and Yellow Medicine.

**Figure 1**  
**Wetland Banking Program Partnership Projects**  
**2020 Target Bank Service Areas**



### **What type of sites are eligible?**

BWSR is seeking to restore wetlands on the landscape that have been lost or significantly degraded as a result of drainage, fill, or excavation. To meet program requirements and maximize the amount of credits generated by the restoration, eligible sites should meet the following criteria:

- Wetlands were historically present at the site or are present in a degraded condition and the physical characteristics of the site will allow for hydrologic and/or vegetative restoration to take place;
- Because of limits in state and federal wetland banking rules, a majority (more than 50%) of the acres within the proposed easement area should be restorable wetlands (drained and/or degraded);
- The characteristics of the site and the proposed easement boundary should support an upland buffer adjacent to planned restored wetlands that is a minimum width of 25 feet and an average width of 50 feet;
- The property must be free of other easements or legal agreements that may conflict with or serve the same purpose as the wetland banking easement;

### **What types of sites are preferred?**

In general, sites which have restorable wetlands are preferred because they will yield the greatest amount of wetland banking credits. For example, restoration of a former wetland that is effectively drained will generally yield more credit than a partially drained wetland with infrequent cropping or haying due to periodic wetness. Both sites in this example are eligible, but the fully-drained and cropped site will be preferred. Other characteristics of preferred sites include:

- Sites that address aquatic resource impairments or goals for wetland restoration established in an approved watershed plan;
- For proposals in the St. Croix River watershed (Bank Service Area 6) and the Middle Mississippi River Watershed (Bank Service Area 7), sites that are located in a catchment prioritized for wetland banking by BWSR (see Attachment B)
- Sites that are a minimum of 80 acres in size;
- Sites that can be restored as closely as possible to a historical condition without reliance on structures;
- Sites that historically had wetland types that are declining in numbers in the watershed or region, provide habitat for threatened or endangered species, or serve as wildlife corridors and connections;

### **How many sites will be selected for the program?**

BWSR has approximately \$5.5 million dedicated for wetland credit development. Some or all of these funds may be used for third party projects. BWSR is also seeking applications for other project development options concurrent with this RFP and will make decisions between the options based on the selection criteria and the overall best value for the State. Additional funds may become available during the open period of this announcement and, if so, could increase the number of projects selected. BWSR has a goal of pursuing at least one project in each BSA shown on Figure 1 with the funds available. However, it is not possible to know exactly how many sites and associated projects that will be selected because we cannot reasonably predict the size, scope, and cost of potential projects that may be identified. Based on previous easement sign-ups and requests for proposals we anticipate that between seven and fifteen projects may be selected.

## **What is the process for deciding which sites/projects to fund?**

The steps in the review and selection process relevant to the landowner/applicant are provided below:

1. Applications due on or before 2:30 PM on May 21, 2020
2. Initial screening and evaluation of application materials (May 22 to June 15, 2020)
3. Partnership Meeting Notices 18 June, 2020
4. Partnership Step 1 Meetings (July 1-12, 2020)
5. Partnership Step 2 proposals due on or before July 26, 2020
6. Sites selected and notification provided to landowners August 27, 2020.

Depending on characteristics of the site and weather conditions, a field inspection/investigation may take place during the review of submitted applications.

Landowners may continue to utilize their property (cropping, haying, etc.) during this period. BWSR only requests that applicants allow the agency reasonable access to the site.

## **If my site is selected, what do I have to do?**

BWSR will work with the applicant to draft an agreement that lays out the responsibilities, payments, schedule, and terms and conditions. Once the agreement is signed by the State and the applicant both parties share the responsibility for completing the project in accordance with the agreement.

## **How do I apply?**

Landowners interested should contact their local SWCD office to obtain help determining if their site is a good candidate for the wetland banking program. The SWCD staff can also provide assistance with preparing the application materials for submittal to BWSR. Application materials are also available on the BWSR website.

Applications submitted must be received by U.S. Mail or courier in the BWSR St. Paul Office no later than 2:30pm Central Time, May 21, 2020. Email and faxed proposals will not be considered.

## **Further Questions?**

Questions can be directed to the SWCD where the project site is located or to the following BWSR Wetland Banking Staff

**BWSR Staff:** Dennis Rodacker, Wetland Mitigation Project Manager, [dennis.rodacker@state.mn.us](mailto:dennis.rodacker@state.mn.us) or (651) 666-0913 or Tim Smith, Wetland Mitigation Coordinator, [tim.j.smith@state.mn.us](mailto:tim.j.smith@state.mn.us) .