

Upper Mississippi Headwaters Restoration

This effort is a partnership between the sister agencies of the USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service that will provide \$185,000 in technical and financial assistance for interested forest landowners and farmers to help recover the Mississippi River Headwaters area from recent storm damage and subsequent ecological impacts.

Minnesota takes great pride and responsibility in protecting the source waters of the mighty Mississippi River, a watershed that covers ½ the United States. The headwaters watershed is used for timber, agriculture, recreation, and as a primary drinking water source. As a result of a severe wind storm in 2012 there is a need for hazardous fuels reduction and reforestation; other on-going needs include non-native invasive species control and long-term protection and management of the headwaters ecosystem including wildlife habitat and management. This effort will focus on the restoration and reforestation needs of tribal, private and Forest Service lands in the Mississippi Headwaters area.

This voluntary, incentives-based effort will leverage existing capabilities and resources, target assistance where it is most needed, cooperatively engage State and local partners and facilitate collaboration with forest landowners, agricultural producers, Tribes and others to help improve water quality and quantity, reduce risk of wildfire and enhance wildlife benefits by improving timber resources in the headwaters area of the Mississippi River.

The funding is a focused investment in the headwaters area including the Chippewa National Forest, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe tribal lands and adjacent private lands in the watershed along with the 6 counties associated with the headwaters of the Mississippi River: **Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard and Itasca.**

Funding will be provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives program (EQIP) to promote conservation practices on private lands that will result in a resilient forest that will support the diverse use of the landscape. Conservation practices such as tree/shrub establishment and site preparation, riparian forest buffer establishment, woody residue treatment, firebreaks, forest trails and landings, stream crossings, weed/brush control or management and wildlife management practices will help reduce wildfire risk, improve timber resources, maintain clean waters for drinking and enhance wildlife habitats including aquatic wildlife species.

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