

# Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)

## 2010 - Summary of Activities in Minnesota

In Federal Fiscal Year 2010 USDA NRCS, developed the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) in 12 states to improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin, including water quality and wildlife habitat. Through this new initiative, NRCS and its partners will help producers in selected watersheds voluntarily implement conservation practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrient runoff; improve wildlife habitat; and maintain agricultural activity.

Funding will be available through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), utilizing Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP), utilizing the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) ; and the Conservation Innovative Grant (CIG) program .

Early 2010 federal fiscal year –

Each of the 12 MRBI states worked with the State Technical Committees and partners to evaluate potential Focus Areas, 8 digit sized hydrologic units approximately 500,000 to 1 million acres in size. In Minnesota staff from the US Geological Survey (USGS) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) assisted with data compilation and presentations.

Three watershed s were able to be submitted by NRCS for consideration as Focus Areas. In Minnesota with recommendations from the State Technical Committee (MSTC) the Middle Minnesota, Root River and Sauk River watersheds were submitted and accepted by the USDA Secretary. In addition, the Upper Cedar was also approved, which is a joint Focus Area with the State of Iowa.

Spring of 2010 –

A request for proposals was advertized for partners to submit proposals for smaller watersheds (12 digit or combination of 12 digit watersheds) within the Focus Areas.

NRCS in Washington selected the following Minnesota proposals:

Approved for funding in 2010

Root River Watershed

Lower Root River – The Nature Conservancy - WREP -WRP

Rush-Pine Creek Watersheds-Hiawatha Valley RC&D – CCPI- EQIP and WHIP

Upper South Fork – Fillmore SWCD – CCPI - EQIP and WHIP

Watson Creek – Fillmore SWCD-CCPI – EQIP and WHIP

Sauk River

Portions of the Sauk River - Stearns SWCD- CCPI- EQIP

Upper Cedar

Green Valley/Austin Watersheds – Mower SWCD– CCPI- EQIP and CSP and WREP-WRP

Approved for funding in 2011

Middle Minnesota River

Little Cottonwood – Cottonwood County – CCPI-EQIP

Crow/Wabasha Creeks/City of Morton - Redwood SWCD- CCPI- EQIP

Sauk River

Crooked Lake Restoration- Douglas SWCD - WREP-WRP

Summer of 2010 –

NRCS worked with approved project partners to develop their program and conduct program sign-ups. Applications were received, scored and ranked. Individual applicants were funded and funds were obligated for work that will be performed during the next few years. Local NRCS and partners did an exceptional job working with applicants in a very short timeframe. The final obligated amounts include:

Root River Watershed

Lower Root River –

WRP - 3 easements on 84.1 acres for \$136,002

Rush-Pine Creek Watersheds

EQIP – 9 contracts for \$385,270

Upper South Fork –

EQIP – 1 contract for \$300,000

Watson Creek

EQIP – 5 contracts for \$507,488

Sauk River

Portions of the Sauk River

EQIP – 20 contracts for \$405,286

Upper Cedar

Green Valley/Austin Watersheds

EQIP – 3 contracts for \$22,006

WRP-1 easement on 148.4 acres for \$397,560

Final obligations only tied up approximately 50% of the funds that were allocated for 2010.

2011 –

NRCS will be working with partners to adjust the 2010 program and for the newly funded watersheds develop their programs. MRBI funds are slated to be released earlier, first quarter of federal fiscal year 2011, which should give NRCS and partners adequate time to work to secure enough applications to fully utilize the funds that are allocated.

Guidance is still being formulated in Washington on the MRBI in 2011, including funding of new proposals as well as first and second year funding for 2010 approved projects.