



North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District
505 3rd St N Suite A, Virginia MN 55792

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

To Develop a Watershed Management Plan for the Rainy River Headwaters & Vermilion River Watersheds

Overview

On behalf of the Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River One Watershed, One Plan Partnership (Partnership), the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District wishes to enter into an agreement with a consulting firm for development of a ten-year One Watershed, One Plan (Plan), also known as a comprehensive watershed management plan, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes § 103B.801. One plan will be developed for the Rainy River – Headwaters and Vermilion River Watersheds. The watershed planning area includes the counties and soil and water conservation districts of Cook County, Cook County Soil & Water Conservation District, Koochiching County, Koochiching Soil & Water Conservation District, Lake County, Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District, North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District and St. Louis County plus Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and 1854 Treaty Authority.

The selected consulting firm (Consultant) will work with local units of government, state agencies, citizens, and citizen-led organizations. The Consultant must be highly skilled in project management; gathering citizen input; GIS mapping and analysis; compiling existing plan information; organizing plan information; the use and interpretation of hydrologic, hydraulic and water quality modeling results; land use controls; resource planning; watershed protection and restoration; water quality; best management practices; capital improvements programs; facilitation; technical writing and documenting source information. The successful Consultant will deliver a Plan that:

- Demonstrates that the Partnership and Consultant listened to input and credibly responded in the Plan development process;
- Prioritizes the resources that will be targeted and describes what the Partnership will accomplish in terms of goals and responsibilities;
- Shows the mapped locations of both restoration and protection resources;
- Identifies the components of the Partnership's implementation program consistent with the Plan Content Requirements for One Watershed, One Plan;
- Demonstrates that the Plan is focused on the prioritized resources;
- Identifies the general number of projects and programs that are needed to achieve the measurable goals established by the Partnership;
- Allows for the identification and tracking of the measurable goals (numeric);
- Provides quantification of the benefits of the implementation program, including proposed projects; and
- Provides an estimate of total project and program costs.

Minnesota Statutes § 103B.801, Subdivision 4, lists areas that the Partnership will consider and discuss as part of the watershed plan development process. These issue areas include:

- Surface water and ground water quality protection, restoration, and improvement, including prevention of erosion and soil transport into surface waters.
- Restoration, protection, and improvement of surface water and groundwater storage and retention systems.
- Promotion of groundwater recharge.
- Flood damage reduction, especially to minimize future public expenditures needed to correct flooding problems.
- Wetland enhancement, restoration, and establishment.
- Shoreland and riparian zone management and buffers.
- Protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities.

However, our local water planning process is not limited to these issues. Broad issue areas that may also be identified for inclusion in the watershed planning process include:

- Soil health
- Altered hydrology
- Maintenance of core services; understanding of local capacity
- Water supply (protect, provide, and conserve)
- Drinking water supply
- Drainage system management
- Wastewater management
- Drought mitigation and wildfire risk
- Education, outreach, and civic engagement
- Contaminants of emerging concern
- Emerging issues
- Resiliency and risk management
- Invasive species management
- Climate change
- Forestry

The list above is not all-inclusive. Any land- and water-related issue could be part of the Plan. Further, issues may also include addressing administrative priorities (e.g., establishment of uniform local policies and controls in the watershed) or fiscal challenges (e.g., minimizing public capital expenditures in resolving problems in areas such as flood control or water quality protection).

Underlying themes within these requirements are the intent for the watershed-based plan to be succinct, with a thorough and science-based process used in development, and an emphasis on the implementation schedule and implementation programs. For example, the information found in a Land and Water Resources Inventory is extremely valuable to the planning process and ultimate implementation of the actions in the Plan; however, the majority of this information will be incorporated into the final Plan document by reference.

Finally, for this planning process, the successful Consultant will have demonstrated experience in the use and interpretation of GIS-based habitat evaluation models, hydrologic and hydraulic models, and water quality models. The tools utilized in developing a capital improvements program must be able to demonstrate prioritized, targeted, and measurable outcomes.

Understanding

This project is a comprehensive watershed management planning process, supported by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and taking place for the Rainy Rivers Headwaters & Vermilion River Watershed Planning Area as delineated in the attached [Partnership Boundary Map](#). The Consultant hired for plan writing services will be responsible for compiling available information as well as data generated by the Partnership's Planning Work Group, Steering Team and in the Partnership's Advisory and Policy Committee meetings; drafting a comprehensive watershed management plan; and editing that plan based on input from the Partnership's Advisory and Policy Committees into the final product to be submitted to BWSR for approval. The contracted plan writer will participate in a set number of meetings with the Watershed Policy and Advisory Committees. Meeting facilitation throughout the process will be led by North St. Louis SWCD or designee, except for the public hearings which the Consultant will lead. Information generated at the meetings will form the basis from which the Advisory and Policy Committees will create the Plan content, and the selected plan writing Consultant will be responsible for drafting a plan containing all required content. The selected Consultant will follow the requirements of [Minnesota Statutes §103B.801](#) and the Plan Content Requirements for One Watershed, One Plan, version 2.1, adopted August 29, 2019, which can be found at: <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/1W1P/index.html>.

General Parameters

1. This is a qualifications-based selection. A final scope, schedule, and budget will be negotiated with the successful Consultant. Only one Consultant will be selected to provide all services requested. The Consultant will be required to enter into a contract with the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District on behalf of Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Partnership.
2. Plan writing services will be provided by the Consultant with assistance and guidance from the steering committee. Meeting facilitation services will be provided by the Partnership. The consultant will preside at all public hearings. Tools for prioritizing, targeting and measuring will be provided by the Consultant. See page 6 for additional consultant responsibilities.
3. The *Plan Development Work Plan* outlines the task, lead, and the timeframe for task completion. It is anticipated that the Consultant hired will start at Task 2.1 and end at Task 3.2 of the Work Plan.
4. The final Plan will be outcome-based. The Consultant will work with the Partnership to 1) identify specific project locations; 2) provide an analysis of project load reduction benefits at multiple locations that have been identified as resource concerns; 3) develop estimated costs for the implementation of the practices; and 4) provide a comparison of the proposed reductions to measurable goals.
5. The selected Consultant will lead aggregating, evaluating, and mapping existing watershed data, including interpretation of the results from watershed models that have been completed. A partial list of existing plans and studies that are to be incorporated into the Plan includes:
 - a. Stressor Identification Report for each watershed
 - b. Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Report for each watershed
 - c. TMDL report for each watershed
 - d. WRAPS report for each watershed

- e. Rainy HW, Vermilion, and Rainy Lake Watershed HSPF model updates: December 2020
 - f. The status of coldwater fish in Dunka River (RRHW)
 - g. Paleolimnological Study of Myrtle Lake (VR)
 - h. A landscape stewardship plan for the planning area, when completed.
6. The estimated number of meetings which the Consultant will need to attend is 15-18. The final number of meetings and the specific role (preparation of agendas, maps, figures, meeting notes, technical facilitation) of the Consultant will be set during negotiation of a scope, schedule, and budget with the successful Consultant. The meetings to be attended may include:
- a. Advisory Committee meetings (support)
 - b. Policy Committee meetings (support)
 - c. Public Hearings (co-lead)
7. The draft and final plans will be developed within the parameters outlined in the One Watershed, One Plan Operating Procedures and Plan Content Requirements, version 2.1, adopted August 29, 2019, found at: www.bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/1W1P/index.html.
8. The ideal timeline is for work to begin in June 2022 with final plan submitted to BWSR in late 2023.

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Schedule

Publication of Request for Qualifications – May 5, 2022

Responses Due: Thursday, May 26, 2022 at noon

Interviews with steering team leads: Wednesday, June 1, 2022

Notification of Selection – by Monday, June 6, 2022

Contract Signature and Notice to Proceed will be issued after board approval on June 8, 2022

Responses Due

Interested parties should email one (1) electronic copy with the subject line **RFQ RRHW/VR** to Becca Reiss at:

Becca Reiss

North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District

505 3rd St N, Ste A

Virginia MN 55792

becca@nslswcd.org

Submittals are due by Thursday, May 26, 2022 no later than noon CDT. All electronic submittals must be in a .docx or .pdf format.

Submission Questions and Clarifications

You may contact Becca Reiss at becca@nslswcd.org, if you have questions or require clarification on any topics in this RFQ. All questions must be in writing and are due by Friday, May 20, 2022.

RFQ Submittal Format

The maximum page length for the Qualifications submittal is 5 pages. The suggested RFQ content includes:

- Cover Letter
- Approach to Scope of Services
- Assigned Personnel and Roles
- Quote for services described
- Relevant Projects

Also, submit a sample of a similar planning process and completed document. This document may be electronic or be a link to a website where the document can be viewed.

Proposal Format: Font: minimum size is 11 point; Page Limit: 5 pages; one side of an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper equals one page

Approach to Scope of Services: Describe how service will be provided. Include a detailed listing and description of tasks, assigned staff, assumptions, and deliverables.

Assigned Personnel and Roles: Identify the assigned staff, their background and experience, and their roles and responsibilities for the project. The Consultant will not change project staff assigned to this project without prior written approval by the Partnership.

Experience and Capacity: Demonstrate your firm's ability to provide the required services and the proposed cost to do so. Submit a sample of a similar planning process and completed document. This document may be electronic or be a link to a website where the document can be viewed.

The Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Partnership reserves the right to disqualify any proposals/proposers that do not follow the content and format as described above.

Selection of Consultant

The Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Partnership intends to negotiate a final scope, schedule, and budget with the highest-rated Consultant. The Partnership reserves the right to negotiate a final scope, schedule, and budget with the next highest rated firm if it is unable to reach agreement with the first firm.

Disclaimer

The Rainy River Headwaters/Vermilion River Partnership retains the right to modify or cancel this solicitation at its own discretion. This RFQ in no way obligates the Partnership or the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District to enter into a contract. Proposers are responsible for all of their own costs for preparing a response to this RFQ document.

Consultant Responsibilities

Kickoff meeting:

- Potentially provide input on survey questions or activities for kickoff meetings to gather input

Identify and Prioritize Issues (7-8 meetings)

- Attend 4-5 Issue Identification meetings: 3 hours each.
- Participate in at least 2 prioritization meetings: 1 for ranking issue statements, 1 for priority areas.
- Draft Issue Statements from data aggregated by the partnership for Topic Meetings / Advisory Committee.
- Participate in one (1) meeting to tie all facets together
- Provide post-meeting reports, all or part of which will later be incorporated into plan.

Establish Goals (2-3 meetings):

- Assist with modeling, if needed, to calculate goal numbers at this stage (acre/feet storage goal, ground water goals required).
- Participate in 2-3 advisory committee meetings (introduce draft goals and have AC indicate where they should be implemented; show goal numbers and request the AC approve)
- Provide post-meeting reports, all or part of which will later be incorporated into plan.

Target Areas (1 meeting)

- Participate in 1 in-person meeting; this could be incorporated into the two goals meetings.

Implementation Programs (2-3 meetings)

- Participate in 2 advisory committee meetings for implementation table/schedule
 - Provide template for implementation table ahead of meeting based on meeting discussions. (First meeting AC helps fill in where/who and when plus any additional actions; second meeting AC approves final draft; third, if needed)

Write Plan along with steering committee

- Write and/or edit draft sections of plan
- Compile sections
- Prepare draft plan for formal review
- Present to advisory and policy committees
- Make edits to draft plan

Public Comments and Hearing (3 meetings)

- Provide process for public comment
- Facilitate public hearings in each county

Update Draft Plan

- Incorporate public comments and other changes into a final plan
- Update plan language and formatting as needed