

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District

2026 Cost Share Incentive and Water Quality Restoration Program

Overview

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District ("LMRWD") values and supports efforts made by residents to help achieve the goals of the LMRWD. Through the Cost Share Incentive and Water Quality Restoration Program (the "Program"), the LMRWD hopes to engage citizens in community actions that protect local lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and fens.

This Program implements Policy 2.2 of the LMRWD's 2018-2027 Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (the "Plan"), which is to prevent further degradation of water quality and Strategy 2.2.3 which is to provide educational, technical and financial assistance to landowners; to implement projects that have water quality, water quantity, channel maintenance, trout stream, fen or wetland restoration or aquatic habitat benefit within the LMRWD; and to help achieve the goals of the Plan.

Purpose

Cost Share provides funding assistance to public or private landowners within the LMRWD to carry out projects that support one or more of the following goals:

1. Improve, protect or restore water quality of lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands or fens.
2. Increase the capacity of the watershed to store water.
3. Reduce bluff, streambank, or main stem erosion.
4. Protect or restore groundwater resources.
5. Enhance navigation on the Minnesota River, excluding dredging projects.
6. Reduce the impact of invasive species on lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands or fens.
7. Preserve, protect or restore native plant and wildlife habitats with emphasis on lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands and fens.
8. Provide public education benefits and engage the public in stewardship.

Available Funds

The LMRWD has allocated \$35,000 for the Program in 2026. The minimum grant amount is \$500. The maximum levels of cost share funding will provide up to %50 of the cost of a project up to a maximum of: \$2,500 per single family residential project; \$7,500 per neighborhood, townhome, condominium or lake association project; or \$20,000 per commercial/industrial or municipal project. The Board of Managers reserves the right to consider and award funding exceeding the stated maximums on a case by case basis. Cost share dollars are reimbursed upon submittal of a project report and paid receipts. Grant recipients are eligible to apply for one cost share grant per year.

Eligibility within LMRWD

- Residents
- Non-profit and religious organizations
- Local government units
- Public and private schools
- Businesses and corporations

Additional Eligibility Requirements

- Project must be located within the LMRWD.
- Private property owners must attend an introductory Landscaping for Clean Water class offered by Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District.
- Funding will not be awarded for work required as part of a permit requirement.
- Funding may be awarded toward the incremental cost of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will provide water-quality treatment beyond permit requirements.

Eligible Expenses

Applications must be submitted to and approved by the Board of Managers of the LMRWD before the project begins. Projects that are completed, or in progress, prior to application, are not eligible for funding. If the final project costs are less than the amount approved for funding, the LMRWD's contribution is limited to 50% of actual cost incurred. It is the primary intent of the program to reimburse for the design and implementation of the project. Aesthetic elements and other costs not directly related to the construction or implementation of the project will not be reimbursed. Labor and other in-kind contributions can be used for the required 50% match. Labor may be credited at \$25.00 per hour. In-kind labor costs cannot exceed the cost of material of the project. Eligible BMPs could include:

- Buffer strips
- Rain gardens
- Shoreline, streambank, or riverbank restoration
- Pervious pavers and porous concrete or asphalt
- Unique solutions for soil erosion and sediment control practices
- Native habitat restoration with priority given to waterways, lakes, buffers and ponds
- Volume reduction and runoff treatment practices (Infiltration basins & trenches, cisterns, green roofs & bio-filtration systems)
- Other innovative stormwater runoff treatment or volume reduction management practices

Eligible studies/investigations could include:

- Water quality management and restoration
- Water quantity management and restoration
- Groundwater management and restoration
- Unique resource (fen, trout stream) management and restoration
- BMP feasibility and restoration

Application Submittal and Approval

The LMRWD will accept new applications on a rolling basis. If funds remain, applications will continue to be accepted until all funds are used. Applications can be downloaded from the LMRWD website. Completed applications can be submitted via e-mail or US mail and must include all information requested.

Applications will be reviewed by the District Administrator and may be reviewed by the Technical Consultant for the District, which will make funding recommendations to the full Board of Managers.

Once available funding has been consumed, applications will no longer be reviewed and applicants will be informed of the situation. Applicants are required to submit a grant application that includes the following:

1. Signed and dated application form
2. Narrative of proposed project
3. Location map
4. Record of property ownership
5. Construction/installation site plan, designs and specifications
6. Estimate of water captured and pollution removed (if applicable)
7. Itemized budget
8. Contractor bid (if using)
9. Plant list (if applicable)
10. Accounting of in-kind contribution of labor and materials, if any

Applications can be sent via e-mail to: **proposal@lowermnriverwd.org**

Funding Agreement

Each applicant selected is required to enter into a Cost Share Grant and Maintenance Agreement with the LMRWD defining the obligations of the applicant and the LMRWD. The amendment of any terms of the agreement will be by mutual written agreement signed by all parties to the original agreement.

The agreement includes, but is not limited to, such items as promoting and acknowledging LMRWD sponsorship, reporting, payment schedule, terms of the agreement and use of funds, cost overruns and cancellation. The agreement also allows the LMRWD access to the project area for evaluation and promotion of the project. The applicant is responsible for securing all permits necessary for the work.

For projects receiving \$10,000 or more, the LMRWD may require an agreement for maintenance of the project up to ten (10) years.

Conformance to Plans

The LMRWD will not reimburse costs expended for construction of a project that does not substantially conform to the approved plans, designs and/or specifications. The LMRWD will not reimburse costs expended for partial completion of a BMP. However, LMRWD staff will work in earnest with applicants to address unexpected conditions, changes in conditions or other eventualities that affect the construction or implementation of a BMP. If necessary a modification of the cost-share agreement will

be presented to the Board of Managers for approval. The applicant must provide documentation to support the modification. Early communication with LMRWD staff is advised.

Submitted Information

All information, including, but not limited to applications, conceptual designs, contractor bids, cost estimates, final designs and specifications, copies of permits and proof of expenditures is subject to disclosure to the public when submitted to the LMRWD, except where specifically protected as non-public by state law.

Reporting Requirements

Within 30 days of completion of the project, the grant recipient must complete and submit a project summary report to the LMRWD using the work plan, timeline and budget submitted as part of the application. Grantees will be required to include original receipts of the expenses, digital or hard copy photos of events, and electronic copies of all education materials produced.

Maintenance Requirements

Maintenance of the project is the responsibility of the grant recipient. Cost share recipients must commit to maintain their project for the duration of its "expected effective life" (see table below). The LMRWD encourages landowners to maintain projects in perpetuity; but the effective life period listed below is the minimum number of years that the LMRWD requires the grant recipient to maintain a project. The LMRWD will not provide cost share funding for restoration of a project, the loss of functionality of which, in the opinion of the LMRWD, was caused by the recipient or present landowner.

BMP	Effective life (years)
Wetland restoration	10
Filter strip/buffer (vegetative)¹	5
Rain garden	5
Shoreline/streambank stabilization (vegetative)	5
Pervious hard surfaces (pavers, concrete, asphalt)	10
Infiltration basins (above and below ground)	10

¹Only the minimum required upland buffer width is eligible for funding

For More information

You can contact the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District with questions by e-mail to the LMRWD Administrator William Lytle or by phone at (906) 231-2556

Evaluation Criteria

The selection committee will determine the eligibility of an application based upon an established set of criteria using a scaled point system. Criteria considered include: Project Type, Project Location, Water Quality Improvement, Erosion Control, Commercial and Recreational Navigation, Public Outreach. An application must score at least 30 points to be considered eligible for the Cost Share Program.

Please keep the following in mind when developing your project and filling out your application:

Project Type

What type of project?	BMP (10 pts.):	Study/investigation	(5 pts.)
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Project Location

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1. Is the project tributary to an MPCA-listed impaired water (excluding mercury), trout stream or fen?
YES, direct connection (10 pts.): **YES, within subwatershed (5 pts.):** **NO (0 pts.)**
 2. If NO, is the project tributary to a lake, stream, ditch, fen, or DNR-Protected Water Wetland?
YES, direct connection (10 pts.): **YES, within subwatershed (5 pts.):** **NO (0 pts.)**

Water Quality Improvement

Improves and protects water quality through BMP implementation or potentially improves and protects water quality through investigation. **Score 0 – 10**

Unique Resources Protection and Improvement

Implements controls intended for protection of and/or improvements to fish and wildlife habitat and/or outdoor recreational opportunities of the LMRWD's Unique Resources, or for studies thereof. **Score 0 – 10**

Surface Water Rate and Volume Control

Implements controls intended for reduction and/or minimization of the rate and volume of water that drains off the property/study area; or studies thereof. **Score 0 – 10**

Erosion Control

Implements controls intended for minimization of erosion and/or sedimentation to downstream waters; or studies thereof. **Score 0 – 10**

Commercial and Recreational Navigation

Project or study enhances navigation on the Minnesota River.	Score 0 – 10
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Public Outreach

Based upon willingness of applicant to allow signage, tours and public site visits; public visibility of the site; diversity of practices; potential educational opportunities. **Score 0 – 10**