



Regional
Environmental
Management
Division

Do you have a plan for improving water quality in your watershed?

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency invites proposals for an annual U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant program focused on watershed restoration.

To be considered for nomination, proposals must be received at the MPCA by 4:30 p.m., **December 17, 2003**. Read on for more information!

State calls for federal Watershed Initiative applications

November 2003

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency is seeking proposals for the second annual round of grant awards for projects that seek to measure or gauge the effectiveness of watershed-scale methods of protecting and restoring the nation's waterways.

The Watershed Initiative is a competitive grant program designed to support studies of watershed approaches to determine if they produce short-term environmental results and have the potential for long-term use in watersheds. Last year the grants helped fund 20 watershed efforts nationwide, one of them a Minnesota proposal to fund a series of projects in the Greater Blue Earth River watershed. Awards to the winning projects range from \$300,000 to \$1.3 million, with a minimum nonfederal match of 25 percent of the project's total budget required.

For 2004, the EPA continues its focus on approaches aimed at providing quick, measurable results, partnerships, innovation, and program integration. In addition this year the agency will place more emphasis on market-based approaches to protection and restoration and also on approaches to decreasing hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico.

Nominations must be submitted to the EPA by state governors or tribal leaders. They may nominate only two projects for watersheds that are within their jurisdictions, but an unlimited number of projects that cross state, tribal, or national boundaries.

To be considered for nomination by Governor Pawlenty, proposals must first be submitted to the MPCA by **December 17, 2003**. An interagency team will review all proposals and select two for recommendation to the Governor. Minnesota's selected proposals will then compete against other state and tribal proposals at the regional (EPA Region 5) and national levels, with final award winners announced in the spring of 2004.

For complete details needed by applicants, see the *Federal Register* notice linked to the EPA's web site at www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative.



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Application overview

Requirements:

- At least 25 percent local (nonfederal) match required.
- The higher the match, the more favorably the nomination will be viewed.
- Local match may be cash or in-kind.

Eligible activities:

Those that conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of demonstrations, training, education, experiments, investigations, surveys, studies or research relating to the cause, effect, extent, prevention, reduction and elimination of water pollution.

The grants:

- Grant awards of \$300,000 to \$1.3 million each.
- Grant recipients will be announced in early 2004.
- EPA expected to complete grant award process by May 2004.

The application:

Each application narrative must clearly outline existing efforts and explain how the infusion of additional funds will result in cleaner water. The nomination package must be submitted both in electronic and hard copy formats and must:

- Be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages using a 12-point font, printed on one side only on 8½ by 11 paper, plus attachments.
- Characterize the watershed, identify the problem(s) and/or threat(s), and describe the overall watershed plan.
- Describe the proposed project.
- Describe stakeholder involvement and the roles, responsibilities and qualifications of project staff.
- Describe how the project may serve as a model for other communities and how the public will be informed and involved.

Application evaluation

Each application will be evaluated based upon the following factors, with a possible total score of 60 points:

- **Innovation** (10 points). While the EPA recognizes there can be innovative approaches that are not market-based, maximum points will be awarded to proposals that incorporate market-based approaches to water quality.
- **Environmental results** (30 points). Successful nominees must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the watershed ecology, present a sound approach for combating threats or impairments to the water system, and be likely to achieve measurable, quantifiable environmental results in a relatively short time period. For this criterion, reviewers will focus on feasibility, experience, tangible measures, and integration.
- **Broad support** (10 points). Watershed plans that incorporate a wide variety of federal, state and local participation will be favored.
- **Outreach** (5 points). Proposals will be judged on the design and breadth of their outreach program.
- **Financial integrity** (5 points). Points will be awarded based on the adequacy of the budget information provided, and whether the budget is reasonable and clearly presented. Proposals that exceed the minimum match requirement or can certify a broad range of leveraging capacity will be scored higher.

Deadline

The EPA's deadline for applications is January 15, 2004. However, in order to give the interagency selection team time to evaluate submissions, candidate proposals including both hard copy and electronic copy must be received at the MPCA by 4:30 p.m., **December 17, 2003**. Mail applications to:

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