



# **Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)**

## **Request for Proposal (RFP)**

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# MRBI Objective

Improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin by working with producers to help them voluntarily implement conservation systems which:

- Avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff
- Restore/enhance wildlife habitat
- Maintain agricultural productivity



# MRBI Funding - NRCS

- NRCS will offer this Initiative for 4 fiscal years: 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.
- NRCS will dedicate at least \$80 million in FA in each of these fiscal years.
- Funding is above regular program funding levels in these 12 States.



# Requests for Proposals (RFP)

- The MRBI will include 2 RFPs for 2010
- The first of the 2 RFPs (CCPI and WREP) was published on March 2, 2010
- The second RFP will cover the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) and will be a subpart of the national CIG RFP



# MRBI RFP Funding

## FA Funding for Proposals:

- \$50 million for Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- \$25 million for Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP)



# Submitting Proposals

- All proposals submitted to NHQ, Gregory Johnson in particular.
- Copy to State Conservationist (STC) (MN and IA for Cedar)
- STCs will gain input and feedback from State Technical Committees



# Who May Apply

- Federally recognized tribes
- State and local units of government
- Non-governmental organizations
- CCPI additionally names:
  - Farmer cooperatives
  - Producer associations
  - Institutes of higher education

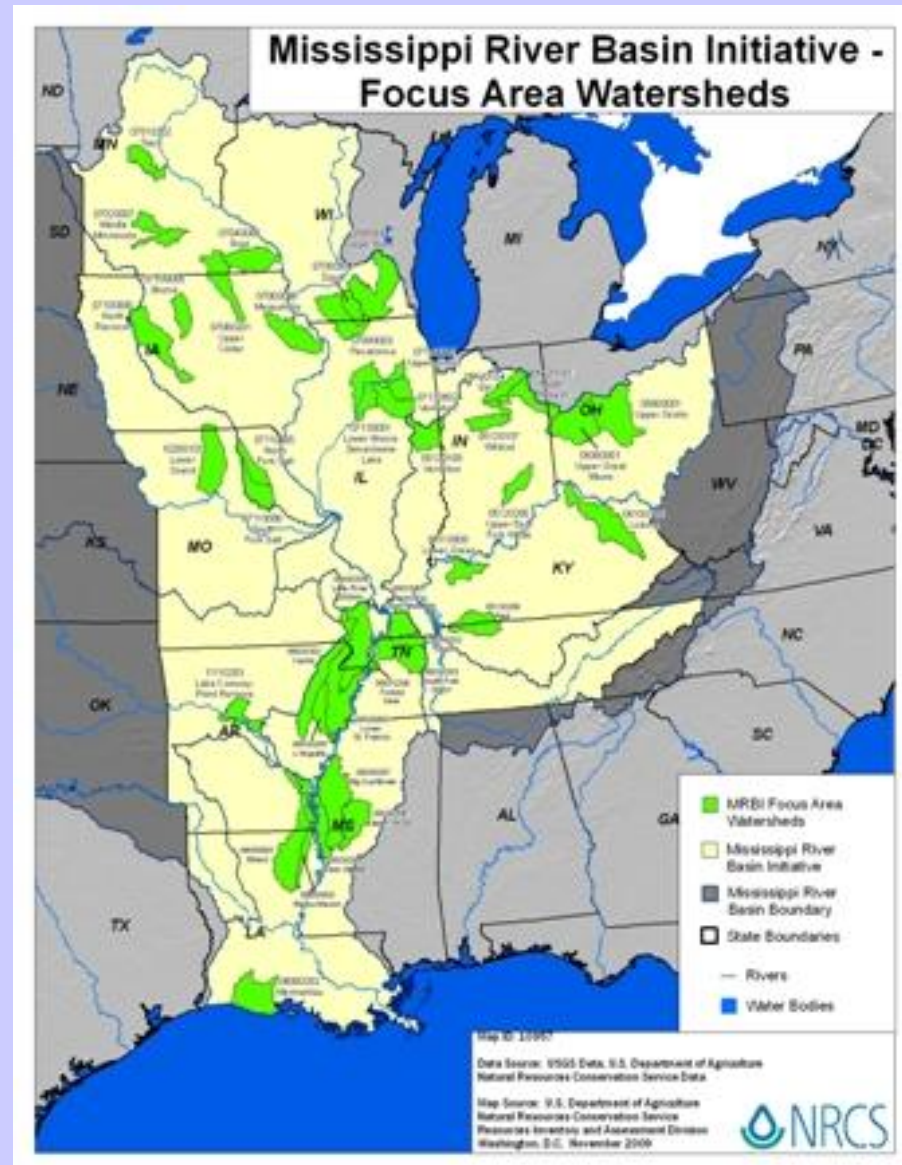
Individual landowners and agricultural producers may not submit proposals under the RFP



# Submitting Proposals

- Must submit separate proposals for CCPI and WREP
- MRBI is not a Grant Program
- No technical assistance funds will be provided to partners through the MRBI-CCPI agreement
- State Conservationist may enter into separate agreements for technical assistance through normal mechanisms

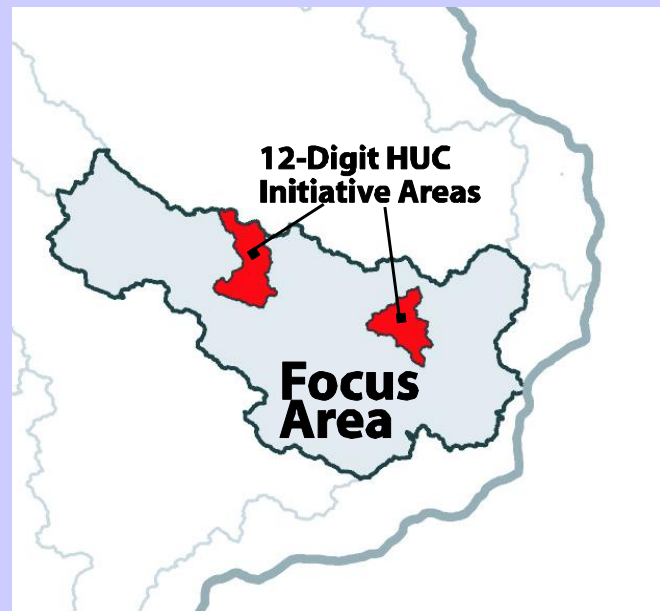
# Watersheds Focus Areas





# Watershed Selection

- Proposals must address one or more 12-digit HUC watershed within a designated 8-digit HUC focus area.
- 12-digit HUCs do not exactly match 8-digit HUCs (list available on the Website)





# Partner Activities

Partners may, through the partnership agreements:

- Facilitate the submission of program applications
- Encourage cooperation and promote innovation
- Provided additional technical and financial assistance
- Recommend tailored practice lists or wetland activities
- Recommend program flexibilities (CCPI)
- Provide other resources, including monitoring and evaluation



# CCPI

- FA Funding Availability
  - \$40 Million EQIP
  - \$ 5 Million WHIP
  - 278,000 acres in CSP
- Partners are not required to provide financial or technical assistance but will receive higher priority consideration



# CCPI

Landowners and agricultural producers must:

- Participate in a project area defined by an approved agreement
- Enroll in EQIP, WHIP, and/or CSP.
- Meet program eligibility requirements
- Be evaluated and ranked by NRCS and selected based on most likely to achieve program objectives

(Partners can recommend flexibilities needed for EQIP, WHIP and CSP through CCPI project proposals.)



# CCPI

- Financial assistance for monitoring and evaluation will be piloted
  - 10% maximum of total financial assistance funds in a proposal may be designated for edge-of-field monitoring through producer contracts.
  - New NRCS interim practice standard for monitoring and evaluation has been developed.
  - A payment schedule will be developed for cost-sharing on the monitoring and evaluation practice. (At this time the payment schedule will be unique to each proposal.)



# WREP

- FA Funding Availability: \$25 Million
- Partners are required to provide a financial match of at least 5 percent of the acquisition and/or restoration costs.
- Partners who provide additional financial or technical assistance will receive higher priority consideration



# WREP

Landowners must

- Participate in a project area defined by an approved agreement
- Meet WRP program eligibility requirements
- Protect, restore, or enhance wetlands
- Be evaluated and ranked by NRCS and selected based on most likely to achieve program objectives
- Enroll in a permanent easement; 30-year easement; or 30-year contract (on tribal land only)



# Proposal Requirements

- 1) Proposal Cover and Summary
- 2) Objectives and Actions
- 3) Proposal Criteria
  - Partner history
  - Watershed designation
  - Coordinated program
  - Partner roles and responsibilities

# Proposal Requirements (continued)

## 3) Proposal Criteria, continued

- Duration and schedule (may not exceed 5 years)
- Resources leveraged
- Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting plan
- Ranking criteria
- Estimate of participation and outreach activities

# Proposal Requirements (continued)

## 3) Proposal Criteria, continued

- Estimate of annual funds needed by program
- Conservation systems, activity plans, enhancements, and partner activities to be implemented with estimates (CCPI)
- Requested policy, procedure, or technical adjustments (CCPI)



# Selection and Review

State Conservationist will review proposals for:

- Potential cooperation or duplication of efforts
- Adherence to program requirements
- Benefits of implementation
- Local issue or concerns

Provide recommendation to the Chief



# Ranking Criteria

Higher priority will be given to proposals that:

- Demonstrate High potential to achieve water quality objectives
- Demonstrated history of success
- Provide outreach to historically underserved clients
- Facilitate landowner applications
- Significantly leverage non-Federal resources
- Coordinate with other local, State, tribal, and/or Federal programs
- Provide monitoring and evaluation



# Ranking Criteria Continued

Higher priority will be given to proposals that:

- Assist with meeting regulatory requirements
- Propose innovative implementation methods and delivery
- Coordinate both CCPI and WREP
- Demonstrate High potential to improve wildlife habitat
- Demonstrate effective watershed planning
- Accelerate implementation and restoration



# Selection Process

- Chief will make final selection based on ranking criteria
- Applicant will be notified of selection or non-selection



# Partnership Agreements

Identify roles of partner(s) and NRCS:

- Monitoring and evaluation responsibilities
- Format and frequency of reports
- Plan of work and budget
- Project schedule
- Other requirements



# RFP Timeline

March 2	Release of Requests for Proposals (CCPI & WREP)
May 3	Closure of Requests for Proposals
May 31	Selection of Project Areas (12-digit HUC's)
June 30	Enter into Agreements with Partners in Project Areas, and Conduct signup with Landowners/Producers
All funds obligated by September 1	Obligate funds through Agreements and Contracts; Begin Conservation Practice Implementation



# Questions?

Follow-up questions can be sent to

Tim Koehler or John Beckwith

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