

Non-Structural Policy: Lower St. Croix Watershed FY 2022 Soil Health Grant Funding:

Non-structural BMPs will be planned and implemented according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications found on the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (EFOTG). However, seeding dates for cover crops will follow the Midwest cover crop council seeding guide recommendations. Design standards for all practices must include specifications for operation and maintenance for the effective life of the given practice, including an inspection schedule and procedure.

Nonstructural Ag BMPs (management BMPs) must be an enhancement of existing management practices that will reduce soil erosion, improve soil health from existing levels, and have a benefit for water quality. Eligibility requirements include that planned practices are newly adopted or enhanced; not previously implemented on the acres by the current owner/operator and did not previously meet NRCS standards and specifications.

Practices may be implemented on the same acres for the 3 year duration (required for nutrient management, prescribed grazing, conservation cover, and forage and biomass planting), practices may move with the rotation but must implement the same amount or greater acres in years 2 and 3, or two or more practices may be implemented on the same acres for the 3 year period alternating years (cover crops, no-till/strip till, and crop rotation).

Contracts:

- Incentives to install or adopt land management practices must have a minimum duration of 3 years.
- Applicants are responsible to submit application forms, project plans and cost estimates as requested by the District in sufficient detail for the District to complete its review.
- The applicant is responsible for full installation of the project before the project installation deadline listed on the cost share contract. If a deadline extension is required to complete the project, the applicant must make the request no less than 30 days prior to the project installation deadline. All contract deadline extension request require approval by the District Board.
- Upon approval by the District Board, the applicant will receive a letter with copy of executed cost share contract stating details of the practice that has been approved, the funding amount, and time schedule to start and complete the project, and a copy of the Operations and Maintenance Plan.
- The landowner and applicant shall allow District staff access to property for which the installed conservation practice is located during the life of the contract. The installed practice will be subject to periodic inspections by District staff.

Reimbursement:

- The applicant must certify, by signing the Flat Rate Voucher, and Practice Certification form, that the practice was completed according to plans and specifications developed by the district.
- The technician with the proper Job Approval Authority shall verify if the practice is complete and meets standards and specifications before final payment is issued.
- The Landowner/Applicant is responsible to pay, in full, all receipts and invoices directly to the contractor or vendor.
- A one-time payment will be made after successful completion of the first year of implementation of the practice.
- A cost share reimbursement payment will be approved by the District Administrator and certified by the District Board upon certification that the project has been installed and completed to specifications.

Practice specific policies:

- **Cover Crops** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 340
 - 1-2 species \$50/acre/year
 - 3+ species \$60/acre/year
 - Implementation can occur on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively
 - Stand-alone practice
- **Nutrient Management** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 590
 - \$20/acre/year
 - Implemented on the same acres annually
 - Add on practice eligible only on acres implementing core soil health practices.
- **Prescribed Grazing** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 528
 - \$40/acre/year
 - Implemented on the same acres annually
 - Stand-alone practice
- **Residue and Tillage Management – No-Till & Strip Till** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 329 for No-Till/Strip-Till
 - \$20/acre/year
 - Implementation can occur on different acres within the three-year contract or on the same acres consecutively
 - Stand-alone practice
- **Conservation Cover** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 327
 - max 20 ac, contract duration 10 yrs, practice lifespan 10 yrs
 - Introduced species \$200/ac
 - Native species \$350/acre
 - Pollinator species \$500/ac.
 - Stand-alone practice
- **Conservation Crop Rotation** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 328
 - max 100 ac, contract duration 3 yrs, practice lifespan 1 yr,
 - \$30/ac
 - The additional crop added to the rotation must improve the SCI to be eligible. Minimum of 3 crop types in the rotation and listed in the 328 practice standard Table 2: High Residue Producing Annual Crops. Participants must demonstrate the applied for acres have a history of continuous annual crop. Fall tillage will not be allowed in the 328 year and minimal disturbance required if applying manure. Light tillage allowed if broadcasting a cover crop after small grain harvest to lightly incorporate.
 - Stand-alone practice
- **Forage and Biomass Planting** - Must follow NRCS Practice Standard 512
 - max 100 ac, contract duration 10 yrs, practice lifespan 10 yrs
 - \$150/ac
 - Requires conversion from row crop.
 - Stand-alone practice

Project Ranking Criteria:

Non-Structural program participants will be selected and prioritized based on whether the majority of the land is located in an ag priority location as identified in the Lower St. Croix comprehensive Watershed Management Plan and follow the Grants Administration Manual and the FY 2022 Clean Water Fund Competitive Grant Policy.

Approved by Isanti SWCD Board on 1/17/2023

Reference Section VII.B of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for targeting process and scoring projects.

Isanti SWCD will further prioritize based on criteria such as: 1) criteria defined in Section VII.B. of the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (targeting and scoring); 2) whether the proposed practices will be implemented on the same acres for three consecutive years and 3) proximity to surface water.

Operation and Maintenance:

Each practice will have an Operations and Maintenance Plan developed to meet the applicable practice standard that is specific to the site and practice installed.

Non-compliance:

Inspections will occur per BWSR Grants Administration Policy for nonstructural land management practices; inspection will be completed annually to ensure that the practice has been incorporated. Non-compliance with the program will follow BWSR's Grants Administration Manual guidelines with the goal of bringing the land occupier into compliance. If there is a failure to maintain compliance, the land occupier is liable to the SWCD for up to 150% of the flat-rate payment received.

Technical Expertise:

The following is a documentation of staff skills, training, credentials along with description of other means the District will use to ensure projects meet the requirements of local guidelines and are installed and maintained according to standards and specifications. This document should be reviewed and updated annually.

Matthew Remer: Was assigned Job Approval Authority to design, install, and sign off on ecological practices relating to Cover Crops (NRCS Practice340) on January 3, 2022, by John Crellin, Area Resource Conservationist with NRCS.

In a case where staff does not have existing JAA or does not have adequate experience as detailed and approved above, we will utilize staff from neighboring SWCDs and the USDA NRCS.