

Contact: Lyon Soil & Water Conservation District

**New easement option available for landowners with CRP along waterways**

A new conservation easement option is available to permanently protect land along lakes, streams and ditches that is currently enrolled, or will be enrolled, in the federal USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Reserve Clean Water Fund Riparian Buffer program offers landowners competitive payment rates to establish buffers of native vegetation along waterways, and to enroll the land in a permanent conservation easement. Establishing native vegetation in environmentally sensitive areas reduces water pollution due to soil erosion, enhances wildlife habitat and reduces potential flood damage to property.

The program is funded through the Minnesota Clean Water Fund, which was established after Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Wildlife, Cultural Heritage and Natural Areas Amendment to the constitution in 2008.

Only land in existing or new CRP contracts is eligible. Buffer widths must be a minimum of 50 feet and no more than 100 feet. Eligible land must have been owned by the landowner for at least one year prior to application, and the total project size must be three acres or more. Payment rates for the program are based on the local assessor's average tillable values for each township in the state. Rates vary based on several factors, including cropping history and current land use.

Interested landowners should contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District for more information. The program is administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, in partnership with SWCDs.

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