

EPA seeks nominations for 2004 watershed grants

The USEPA is seeking nominations from the states for up to 20 watershed projects eligible to receive federal grant awards in 2004. The awards are given to projects that show promising watershed-based approaches to improving water quality and are ready to start implementing on-the-ground restoration activities.

This is the second annual round of competitive grant applications under a Bush administration budget initiative to protect and restore waterways across the country. Last year Minnesota secured one of the competitive grants for a series of projects in the Blue Earth River watershed.

Nominations must be submitted to the EPA by state governors or tribal leaders. Governors or tribal leaders may nominate only two projects for watersheds that are within their jurisdictions, but may nominate an unlimited number of projects that cross state, tribal, or national boundaries. Nominations are reviewed and ranked at the national level by water experts from the EPA and other federal agencies.

Awards to the 20 projects selected will range from \$300,000 to \$1.3 million, with a minimum nonfederal match of 25 percent of the project's total budget required. The president's 2004 budget, still before Congress, requests \$21 million for watershed awards.

Information on the awards program and nominating process is available on the Web at www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative. The selection process and criteria are similar to last year's awards; however, this year the EPA will place more emphasis on market-based approaches to protection and restoration and also on approaches to decreasing hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico.

If you know of deserving watershed projects that are ripe to begin implementing restoration activities, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency encourages you to contact us to discuss entering it for nomination by the governor or tribal leaders. Please contact Wayne Anderson at 651-296-7323 or wayne.anderson@pca.state.mn.us.