



State RIM money open for flood-prone ag land on waterways

With deadline nearing, CRWD seeking applicants for \$5,000/acre offer

AUSTIN, Minn. – Wednesday, Feb. 9 – Mower County suffered its fourth worst-known flood in September 2010 after a significant rainfall led to widespread flooding.

With Mower County identified as a disaster county following that flood, some of its landowners are eligible to apply for enrollment in the state's Reinvest in Minnesota program that is offering about \$5,000 per acre for them to set aside "riparian" cropland, which is property near a waterway.

Landowners, however, do not have much time remaining to get enrolled in RIM because March 4 is the signup deadline. If interested, they should call the Mower County Soil & Water Conservation District (which also runs the Cedar River Watershed District). Staff then will find that person's farm in its photo files and quickly give a proposal for the land along with full financial summary and eligible benefits.

Administered locally through the Mower SWCD, the RIM program permanently sets aside former cropland for wildlife habitat and soil protection.

Eligible land includes cropland along streams and ditches, and frequently or occasionally flooded soil types.

"This is an excellent program with many positive aspects to it for the participating landowner," said Justin Hanson, a resource specialist for the Mower SWCD and the Cedar River Watershed District.

"The public also benefits from the restoration work on that land creating a better wildlife habitat and helping to protect the nearby stream's water quality," Hanson added.

Under the RIM program, the land undergoes a permanent easement but the owner retains full access rights to the property; the layout also can be designed to fit farming operations. Land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program also is eligible for RIM funding.

Once land is set aside through RIM, crews plant seeds for quality native grass and flowers to create a rich wildlife habitat, Hanson said.

Since 1986, RIM has been the state's most popular land retirement program.

"The state has enrolled thousands of acres," Hanson said, "and Mower County landowners have taken advantage of attractive easement rates and habitat opportunities."

RIM participation in Mower County would help with the CRWD's top priorities of reducing flooding and improving water quality because RIM land helps slow down stormwater runoff as it heads to a waterway.

Who: Owners of flood-prone, cropland along streams and ditches in Mower County.

What: State's RIM program offering about \$5,000 per acre to set aside riparian cropland.

Where: Mower County.

When: Signup deadline is March 4.

Why: Mower County has had its top 4 worst-known floods all since 2000, including one in September 2010.

Contact: Justin Hanson, CRWD resource specialist, at 434-2603 or 438-1752.

Online: www.cedarriverwd.org

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