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COMMUNITY WOOD USE DEMONSTRATION AND PILOT PROGRAM GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RELEASE DATE: MAY 14, 2010

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The emerald ash borer has killed millions of ash trees in Michigan and neighboring states, creating an enormous added burden on communities already facing difficulties in managing their urban forests. Under increasingly tight budgets, both public and private tree care operations struggle with the costs of removing, handling, and disposing of wood from urban forest management activities. The Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council has been working since 2004 to help these communities and businesses to safely find economic value in EAB-affected ash and other removed urban trees. At this time, the Council is currently accepting proposals from communities or organizations interested in serving as a pilot facility for a large-scale urban wood use demonstration and training program.

The project aims to create a model for innovative wood recycling that conserves resources, reduces costs for public tree care, creates new sustainable products, and develops partnerships between the public and private sector. The program also should generate important data collection and educational opportunities that may inform future urban forest management decisions across the region. A single \$50,000 grant will be awarded to the selected community or land management organization. At least \$50,000 in matching contribution is required in the form of cash toward project expenditures or as a variety of in-kind services from cooperators such as staff support for project activities, funds used for tree removal and wood utilization activities, fees paid for wood processing services, volunteer time, and implementation of wood use projects.

Proposals should be submitted by June 21, 2010 to be considered for funding. Electronic proposal submissions, e-mailed as an MS Word attachment or PDF, are required. The grantee is expected to follow a tight timeline, with wood use planning activities to begin in the selected community shortly after the award announcement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The emerald ash borer has killed millions of ash trees in Michigan and neighboring states, creating an enormous added burden on communities already facing difficulties managing their urban forests. Under increasingly tight budgets, both public and private arboriculture operations struggle with the costs of removing, handling, and disposing of wood from tree care activities. In fact, a 2005 study of wood waste in southeastern Michigan showed that the region's private industries alone pay at least \$8.8 million to dispose of wood residues each year, a conservative estimate that did not include the high costs for municipalities and other public operations that generate wood waste. Unfortunately, one viable alternative, the higher-value use of this "waste" material, is typically overlooked by land managers and could lead to significant cost savings and other benefits for many communities.

Surprisingly, despite its largely urban composition, high-quality wood resources are in large supply in southeastern Michigan, with nearly five million board feet of marketable logs available annually from the dead and dying trees in and around developed areas (MacFarlane 2007). Forest health concerns such as the emerald ash borer only add available resources to this already huge opportunity. According to research by Sherrill and MacFarlane (2007), roughly half of the tree residues generated in the region are discarded as waste. The wood that moves into the region's 180 wood disposal

yards does not fare much better, with only 30% of the material recycled into other products (Nzokou 2009). While the area’s public and private tree care operations often practice good urban forest management strategies, their plans rarely include activities related to wood recovery and value-added utilization beyond use of these materials as mulch, firewood, or fuel. These landscape managers generally lack the necessary examples, training, and information to successfully evaluate, handle, and market the materials as higher-value products such as lumber or flooring. This standard treatment of valuable wood as a waste problem should be recognized as both a resource conservation issue and a lost economic opportunity.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

To address these issues, the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council aims to create a large-scale pilot project of successful urban wood use in one selected community. The project will create and implement a plan to recover and find more value in public trees that are removed due to death, disease, development, or other non-timber reasons. It is hoped that these wood recovery and use activities will become an ongoing component of the community’s regular tree care activities, while providing a blueprint for other communities to follow in the future.

Technical assistance will be provided to help walk the grant recipient through the steps of considering wood quality in a tree inventory, evaluating logs for product opportunities, handling and storing wood materials, communicating with wood processors, and identifying end users and market opportunities for products. As a whole, the project aims to create a model for innovative wood recycling that:

- Conserves wood resources that would otherwise be wasted or underutilized,
- Reduces costs for public tree care,
- Creates new sustainable products and economic opportunities,
- Develops mutually-beneficial partnerships between the public and private sector,
- Generates important data collection that may inform future urban forest management decisions across the region,
- Creates educational opportunities on innovative best practices, and
- Create more market potential for sustainable, local, urban wood products within the green building sector.

At this time, the Council is currently accepting proposals from county governments, cities, or other organizations who manage large volumes of ongoing tree removals in public areas. The community selected for this demonstration program will receive a \$50,000 grant award to support the successful completion of the following activities:

- *The development and implementation of a wood use plan for the site which focuses on creating value-added products from dead and dying trees.* This plan should promote the “highest and best use” of wood from ongoing tree removals by recovering millable logs for lumber and other solid wood products, while processing lower-quality wood into mulch, biomass fuel, or other products. The details of this plan (including such issues as the role of private industry partners, amount of in-house management, specific products developed, and end-users of products) should be tailored to the site’s particular individual needs and capacity. As a demonstration site, the site’s activities should include an outreach component that would allow other land managers to learn about any innovative forest management, wood processing, and/or wood use activities occurring through this project. Ideally, some products generated from the community trees should be considered for use within local government activities, educational institutions, or green building initiatives.
- *An economic analysis of the wood utilization program, contrasting the costs and benefits of the new plan to the site’s historic wood disposal activities.* This information will provide data to allow public administrators to be better informed about the financial implications of their resource management decisions and will provide answers to many pressing questions about wood recycling programs:
 - Does higher-value wood utilization lead to lowered disposal costs for communities?
 - Can a wood recovery program be run efficiently from a staffing perspective?
 - How do the economics of a wood utilization plan contrast with a more traditional wood disposal strategy?
 - Does partnering with private wood industries provide economic benefits to local governments?

- *An environmental “life-cycle” study of the final wood products created on-site.* As locally manufactured products made of materials reclaimed from the waste stream, it is important to know more about the overall sustainability of the products (regarding carbon footprint, pollution, etc.) and how they compare to other “green” materials choices (for example, Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood products from another region, bamboo, etc.). By evaluating the sustainability of these reclaimed products, community leaders can be better positioned to promote use of local products within green certification or preferred procurement programs.

In addition to the \$50,000 grant award, the selected demonstration location will be provided with the following:

- A package of training programs (worth \$8,000) tailored to meet the needs of the site. Specialized workshops will be developed in cooperation with staff from the Southeast Michigan RC&D to address the knowledge gaps that limit urban wood use and good forest stewardship in the community. These programs, which will be open to neighboring municipalities, organizations, and industries, may include such topics as:
 - Utilization-focused urban forest management, evaluation, and inventories;
 - Log harvesting, handling, and collection;
 - Wood processing and working with industry partners;
 - Creative uses for value-added urban wood products; and
 - Marketing products and educating local residents.
- Technical assistance from the Southeast Michigan RC&D and Michigan DNRE’s wood utilization specialists.
- Networking assistance that will facilitate partnership development with neighboring communities, organizations, and industries. Functional local networks have the potential to improve regional wood use efforts by:
 - Helping neighboring communities to economically share services;
 - Connecting governments to local businesses for effective public-private partnerships;
 - Fostering the use of community-generated wood products within local green building work; and
 - Creating new pathways for future economic development by promoting urban wood/green building concepts in higher education (particularly in urban planning, construction, and other related courses).

The following regional benefits are expected from this program:

- Improved urban forest stewardship for public and private wood residue generators;
- Increased viability of the urban hardwood industry through better access to recovered wood;
- Enhanced skills development for city and private arborists, land managers, and members of the primary hardwood industry;
- New economic opportunities in the green building sector for all members of the urban wood use chain;
- Access to factual economic and environmental-impact information about how using urban wood can affect community planning and development outcomes;
- New templates for cost-effective wood recovery that can be applied in other public spaces; and
- Models for partnership development among communities and wood industries.

This pilot project is expected to follow a tight timeline, with wood use planning activities to begin in the selected community shortly after the award announcement. The majority of wood use demonstration and training activities for this project are expected to come to a close by December 1, 2010, but implementation of the community’s wood use plans are expected to continue beyond this date.

Given that southeastern Michigan is heavily infested by the emerald ash borer, wood use activities conducted as a part of this program must work in compliance with ash wood quarantine restrictions of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) when applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA & SELECTION PROCEDURES

Any organization that manages tree removals on public land (county/municipal/township government, recreation area board, etc.) is eligible to submit an application to participate in this program, provided that the group can demonstrate that it could benefit from a more comprehensive urban wood management strategy. Applicants do not have to be located in the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council area, but applicants from Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties will receive priority consideration when their applications are reviewed.

This program will primarily focus on utilizing trees that are removed for reasons *other* than timber value (for example: dying street trees, right-of-way trees removed for road widening projects, hazardous park trees, etc.). More traditional forest management strategies on public-owned woodlots may be incorporated as one part of a community's overall wood-use plan, but will not be the main objective of this pilot program.

Interested parties must submit a completed application packet to be considered for selection as the demonstration site. A review committee appointed by the RC&D will evaluate each application thoroughly based on the following criteria:

- Interest in and commitment to finding higher value uses for removed urban trees;
- Technical feasibility and likely success of proposed project – adequate staffing and log harvesting/handling capability, availability of potential milling contractors, planned uses for final products, etc.;
- Visibility and potential for serving as a pilot or demonstration facility;
- Opportunity to save or create jobs and/or bring economic benefits to the area;
- Potential for reducing wood disposal costs for communities in the area;
- Potential for continuing wood-use activities at the site in the future;
- Perceived benefit for the community;
- Amount of local matching funds; and
- Background in managing grants and successfully completing grant-funded projects.

The review committee will not evaluate incomplete applications. Applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of each proposal. Applicants may also be asked to complete additional application forms or other documents, as necessary. Subsequent grant and/or contract procedures will be in accordance with all RC&D Council policies and procedures. A summary statement of the review and evaluation by the committee will be provided to applicants upon request.

GRANT PERIOD, MATCHING REQUIREMENT, & EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The community selected for this demonstration program will receive a cash grant award of \$50,000. At least a 1:1 matching contribution of \$50,000 is required. Matching funds may consist of additional cash toward the project or be provided in the form of a variety of in-kind services from cooperators such as staff/equipment/facilities support for project activities, equipment purchases, funds used for tree removal and wood utilization activities, fees paid for wood processing services, volunteer time, outreach activities, building efforts using wood products, etc. Matching funds may *not* be derived from any federal funding sources and must be directly applicable to the funded project. Items purchased and/or services rendered prior to the date on your acceptance notification letter will not qualify. All matching funds used must be documented and reported to the Southeast Michigan RC&D Council. Invoices or other forms of traceable evidence of payment must be retained and made available upon request for any items counted as match.

The grant award will be distributed in thirds, with the first payment upon the start of the project, the second at the midpoint of the project's timeline, and the third as a reimbursement upon the approval of the final report. The grantee is expected to follow a tight timeline, with wood use planning activities to begin in the selected community shortly after the award announcement. The demonstration and training activities for this project are expected to be completed by December 1, 2010. When the project is completed and all related measures implemented, the award recipient will be asked to submit a final report to the RC&D Council on the project's impact and the goals met as a result of the program.

REQUIRED MATERIALS FOR THE GRANT APPLICATION

Grant application materials can be recreated on your computer as long as they follow the exact format as the enclosed forms. Handwritten application materials *will not* be accepted. An editable, MS Word version of the application can be obtained by contacting the RC&D Office. The following materials must be submitted to the RC&D Council as a complete package for consideration under this program:

- ____ PART A – PROGRAM INFORMATION FORM
- ____ PART B – PROJECT BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES
- ____ PART C – SPECIFIC PLAN FOR UTILIZATION OF PROJECT SERVICES
- ____ PART D – REFERENCES

DEADLINES

All application materials must be received by the RC&D Council no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 21, 2010. Incomplete applications will not be evaluated. Electronic proposal submissions, e-mailed as an MS Word attachment or PDF, are required.

Applicants will be notified of the status of their applications within four weeks of the deadline.

SEND THE COMPLETED GRANT APPLICATION PACKAGE TO:

Jessica Simons
Southeast Michigan RC&D Council
E-mail: jessica.simons@semircd.org
Phone: (517) 851-2372

About us –

The Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council is a non-profit organization that helps the people of southeast Michigan care for, conserve, and protect their natural resources in a way that will improve the community's economy, environment, and quality of life. RC&D provides a framework for partnerships between local citizens, governments, and technical experts to solve resource concerns and to manage and utilize resources wisely. Although Resource Conservation and Development Councils exist nationwide, each one is organized and directed by local people to meet local needs. The Southeast Michigan RC&D Council is made up of representatives appointed by 18 sponsor organizations (including Conservation Districts, county governments, and watershed councils) within the council area of Lenawee, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties. More information about the Council's wood use projects may be found on the following websites: <http://semircd.org/ash>, <http://urbanwood.org>, <http://michiganwoodenergy.org>.

Funding for this grant program is provided by the USDA Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center (WERC). The WERC mission is to facilitate interaction and information exchange with the forest products industry to enhance opportunities for sustained forest products production in the eastern hardwood forest region of the United States. WERC's primary goals are to improve the knowledge, skills, and capacity of the forest industry management and workforce; increase communication, cooperation, and collaborative problem solving within the forest products industry; and improve efficiency in forest product manufacturing and wood utilization. For more information, please visit: <http://na.fs.fed.us/ea/werc/werc.shtm>.

Significant technical assistance for this project is also provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

PART A - PROGRAM INFORMATION FORM

FOR RC&D USE APPLICATION #

Date: _____

Name of Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ County: _____

Daytime Business Telephone #: _____ Business Fax #: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Project Title or Purpose: _____

Amount of Matching Funds from Applicant: \$ _____

Source(s) of Matching Funds: _____

Project Start Date: _____ Project Completion Date: _____

Authorized Signature: The signature below is that of the person authorized to testify as to the accuracy of this application.

Signature: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____

PART B – PROJECT BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES

Budget Item	RC&D Funds	Matching Funds	Source of Matching Funds
Salaries & Wages			
Fringe Benefits			
Consultants/contractual			
Travel			
Equipment			
Supplies/Materials			
Indirect/Overhead			
Other (specify):			
Total	\$50,000		

PART C - SPECIFIC PLAN FOR UTILIZATION OF GRANT FUNDS

In the space below, describe your wood use opportunities and indicate how your organization will use the funding and support granted through this program. Please provide as much detail as possible about the following questions:

1. What type of land do you manage and how many people does it serve? What kind of impact will this project have on the economic needs of your community? Will any wood use efforts move forward if you are not selected for this program?
2. Please describe your current wood handling operation, including general information about the following:
 - a. What is your annual tree removal load?
 - b. What are your annual costs for wood disposal?
 - c. What capacity do you have to handle and process wood (staffing, equipment, storage, etc.)?
 - d. What challenges do you experience while implementing your current strategy?
 - e. Is this project likely to help lower your wood disposal costs?
3. Tell us about your ongoing tree removal responsibilities:
 - a. Where will trees be harvested from for this project?
 - b. Why are they being removed?
 - c. Is tree removal in this area an ongoing concern?
 - d. How many logs are likely to be available each year from this source?
 - e. What do you know about the quality of this wood?
4. Has your community ever tried to find higher value uses (other than mulch or firewood) for the trees you remove? If so, how has this occurred? What benefits did you see? What obstacles did you face? If not, why?
5. Have you identified any sawmills or other wood industry members who could be partners on this project? (If not, we can assist you in this process.)
6. What end product(s) would you like to create through this project? How they will be used in your community? What benefits are you likely to see?
7. Please describe your plans for completing the data collection portions of this project. How will you undertake the cost-benefit analysis? How will you conduct the environmental assessment?
8. Please describe the demonstration potential for your site and any outreach opportunities that would make your site a good candidate for this project.
9. What training programs do you expect might be particularly useful to your staff and partners in relation to this project?
10. Is there strong institutional commitment and explicit approval from your leadership to allow for the development and implementation of a wood-use plan in your community? How are other community members likely to react to a wood utilization program using removed local trees? Are there other groups (student organizations, community networks) who may also be involved in your program? (You are welcome to include letters of support.)

Optional: Please summarize your application’s strengths, further describe key impacts that this project may have on your community, detail other unique opportunities at your site, and/or include additional supporting information that we should take into consideration when reviewing your application.

PART D – REFERENCES

Please include contact information for at least three professional references who can attest to your team’s ability to successfully complete a comprehensive wood-use project.