Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Stewardship Grant Program

The Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization (VRWJPO) Stewardship Grant program provides financial assistance for community-based best management practices (BMPs) that restore, protect, and/or enhance the Vermillion River Watershed's natural resources.

Activities funded through VRWJPO Stewardship Grants must have tangible, on-the-ground water resource benefits aligning with Goals of the 2026 – 2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan. Project examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Low input turfgrass in a city park that requires less water, chemicals, and mowing than traditional turf
- Native plant pollinator garden with water quality benefits
- Curb cut rain gardens
- Stream habitat restorations, including invasive species removal and native plantings
- Stormwater pond stabilization activities, including cleanup and native plantings, to promote resilience against heavy precipitation events

Secondarily, the VRWJPO strongly encourages applicants to include plans to engage community members about environmental stewardship as part of their proposals. This could include:

- Organizing volunteers to assist with planting
- Promoting the activity in a local publication or on social media
- Installing interpretive signage at the project site

Eligible entities

This grant program is intended for use by groups including, but not limited to:

- Community and civic organizations
- Non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations
- Neighborhood or lake associations
- Schools and school districts
- Local government units (LGUs)
- Businesses and professional associations
- Libraries

Criteria

Applications must meet the following criteria to be funded:

- The project takes place within the Vermillion River Watershed geographic area.
- The project aligns with at least one (1) of the following Goals in the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan (Plan):
    - Protect and improve surface water quality.
    - Protect and improve groundwater quality.

- Reduce stormwater runoff rate and volume.
- Protect and improve groundwater aquifer supply.
- Improve the resilience of the watershed's natural and built environments.
- Adapt stormwater infrastructure to changing precipitation patterns.
- Mitigate impacts from human-caused ecosystem disruptions.
- Protect and enhance natural environments.

- Additional consideration will be given to projects that align with the following Community Relationships Goals in the Plan:
  - Improve the awareness and understanding of the VRWJPO.
  - Increase community connection to the watershed's natural resources.
  - Increase community understanding of environmental issues.

- The work tasks and desired outcomes are clearly stated. Applicants are encouraged to provide quantifiable measures as much as possible.
- The timeline and budget are reasonable and cost-effective.
- The grant amount requested is between $2,500 and $10,000 and lists proposed matching funds between 10 and 25 percent of the total project cost.
  - In-kind contributions may be included in the match.
  - Funds from other entities, such as city-issued grants or rebates, may be used as part of the match.

Actions required to comply with permits, rules, or legal mandates are not eligible for Stewardship Grants. Maintenance of previously existing projects is also ineligible.

Eligible Expenses

Your application must list all anticipated expenses that are eligible for reimbursement. These may include:

- Contractor costs relating to site preparation, project installation, fabrication, or others as approved by the VRWJPO
- Materials and supplies that will not be used beyond the scope of the project (e.g. plants, compost)
- Project signage
- Promotional materials

How to apply

Download the application here. Email completed applications to brita.moore-kutz@co.dakota.mn.us, with the subject line "Stewardship Grant Application." You will receive an email confirmation when your application is received. Alternatively, applications may be mailed to:

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Stewardship Grant Program
4100 220th St. W #103
Farmington, MN 55024

Applications are accepted anytime until and unless funds for the calendar year are gone. If so, this will be noted on the VRWJPO website. VRWJPO staff will review each application and respond on whether it is approved or not in a timely manner.

Reimbursement of grant funds

Once an application is approved, a grant agreement will be prepared by the VRWJPO and sent to the grantee for signature by their Authorized Representative. The agreement must be signed before any expenditures can be billed to the grant. Any expenditures accrued prior to the signing of the agreement will not be eligible for reimbursement. All expenses to be covered by the Stewardship Grant must be completed within the calendar year of the application; however, there is no restriction on the timing of physical work on the project.

Funds will be reimbursed up to the agreed-upon amount for documented costs, with reimbursement requests up to monthly until project completion. Grantees must provide copies of receipts and paid invoices when requests for reimbursement are submitted. VRWJPO staff have the authority to review and approve all expenses.

Expectations

Grantees are expected to:

- Maintain regular contact with VRWJPO staff during implementation.
- Acknowledge the VRWJPO as a source of funding in publications, media coverage, and other public materials, including the VRWJPO logo and website (will be sent to grantee via email).
- Submit a final report within 30 days of completion that includes photographs, achieved project outcomes, and ways the project engaged the community.
- *Optional:* Grantees may present on their projects at a Vermillion River Watershed Community Advisory Committee meeting.

Contact

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This activity satisfies Action CMR-1 in the 2026-2035 Vermillion River Watershed Management Plan.