

Source Water Protection Grants Program

By Ken Halvorsen, Source Water Specialist

Source Water Protection Grants are available for proactive projects geared toward protecting Nebraska's drinking water supplies by addressing drinking water quality, quantity and/or education. Eligible applicants are political subdivisions in Nebraska that operate a public water system, having a population of 10,000 or less with groundwater sources, and demonstrate serious financial hardships.

Rather than providing a grant to complete one task, it is preferred that grants help establish and develop comprehensive local source water protection programs, enhance cooperation and education among citizens, local government, businesses, and agricultural producers. Grants can be used for the development of a Wellhead Protection or Drinking Water Protection Management Plans, but only in conjunction with the implementation of pollution prevention tasks.

Grants cannot be used to purchase land, complete operations and maintenance activities, or only cover personnel expenses,. In addition, activities specific to the treatment, transmission, distribution, consolidation, or storage of the drinking water system, which includes mapping of the water distribution system, are not eligible.

General Project Requirements

- A. Projects must focus on the protection of Nebraska public drinking water sources, not operation and maintenance of the system or water treatment.
- B. Projects must include activities in one or more of the three categories: water quality, water quantity, and/or water public education.
- C. Projects must have a good potential for success (i.e., tasks must yield measurable improvement in water quality, reduction of water use, increased resource reliability, citizen knowledge and/or behaviors, etc.).
- D. Commitment must be demonstrated by the public water system and local government to develop, implement, support, and sustain a local protection program after funding is received.
- E. On-the-ground activities must take place within existing wellhead protection areas, designated future wellhead protection areas, or the associated area served by the community Public Water Supply System.

- F. At least a 10% non-federal match to the total project cost is required. For example: a project totaling \$20,000 will receive \$18,000 in grant funds and would have a requirement of \$2,000 in match. Match can be in-kind and/or cash.

Funding Priority

Prioritization will be given for the following status/activities:

- A. Developing a Drinking Water Protection Management Plan.
- B. Projects where activities will be sustained beyond the term of the grant.
- C. Projects implementing on-the-ground management activities.
- D. Projects that addressing nitrate contamination/loading.
- E. Public Water Supply Systems that have a NDEQ-approved Wellhead or Watershed Protection Plan and/or designated Groundwater Guardian.
- F. Projects that focus on community education and awareness about how to protect and improve the local drinking water source.

Examples of projects that have previously been funded can be found on the NDEQ website:

<http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/SWPGMain>

The invitation for proposals will be sent out in February, for more information please contact Sam Radford at 402-471-3376 or sam.radford@nebraska.gov