River
Revitalization
Foundation

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March 1, 2014

Lavane Hessler
WDNR
101 S. Webster
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

RE: WDNR Capacity Grant

Dear Lavane,

Enclosed please find our final reporting materials covering the period April 2013 through March 2014 (year 2 of 2 of the contract, and supplemental to our interim report dated March 2013) per the deliverables outlined in our original proposal:

Executive Summary of the Proposal (from narrative)

Building on the activities, partnerships and accomplishments of the previous 2-year grant period, participating in and advising fellow members of the Milwaukee River Greenway Coalition (MRGC) and Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (SWWT), the River Revitalization Foundation will continue to provide assistance to our urban partners through educational opportunities, training and technical assistance.

Particular emphasis will be on the implementation of our Milwaukee and Menomonee River Land Protection Plans, focusing on projects (i.e. Wheelhouse, Arboretum, Granville) within those watersheds that further the goals and objectives of the Stewardship Program including acquisition, restoration, outdoor recreation (Take a Hike!), and education: engaging urban youth in the river valley (Quest).

Our successful models and strategies will be presented to other partnerships (Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance, for example), at trainings and conferences for widespread delivery of these collaborations at the regional, state and national level, providing other communities involved in urban conservation with these tools and methods to enhance protection of the natural resources special to their respective geographic area of the state.

YR 2: **Indicators of Project Success: Outcomes and Progress Tracking (since YR 1 interim)**

1. **Continue Partnership in SWWT and MRGC**
   - Participation in/ Advisory to Watershed Action Teams: *Because of Theresa Morgan's departure from RRF in May 2013 and reduced funding received from SWWT (through the Joyce Foundation) year two of this activity continued but in a diminished role (did not continue as co-chair of the Menomonee River WAT) but did support the goals set forth in the strategic plan as well as place additional emphasis on the Milwaukee River projects we are so heavily involved in – *see supplemental report at the end of this section.*
   - Project implementation based on Plans. *The Milwaukee River Greenway Master Plan, transferred to and adopted by RRF to oversee and continue implementation, is now under our umbrella, including staff and funding for Greenway projects, among them trails and signs. Based on this plan, RRF successfully obtained an easement from the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) to construct one mile of riverfront trail from Capitol Drive north to Estabrook Drive. Grants were secured from WDNR Recreational Trails Act, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the Lux Foundation. Student Conservation Association was hired to build the trail with assistance from volunteers and our Earn & Learn crew, based on a trail design by Tim Malzhan of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Now complete, this spring we will install way-finding signs at this location as part of the Greenway signage program.*
   - Land trust partner deliverables accomplished. *~MRGC involvement consists mostly of real estate/easement advisor for trail projects.* ***Since interim*** *– much progress has been made with the Glendale Corporate Park business owners for easements upstream from the MATC site. In conjunction with Milwaukee County Parks and their study of the repair/removal of the Estabrook Dam, access easements will be required for fixing and maintaining the dam or removing it. RRF can include a recreational clause within that easement to continue the trail northward. Support from the Corporate Park and the City of Glendale is strong. RRF will take the lead on securing these easements.*

2. **Implementation of Milwaukee River Basin-wide Land Protection Plan(s)**
   - Rotary Arboretum real estate deliverables completed. *~All 3 project parcels purchased, building demolished, earth moving underway, paths outlined, some trees planted.* ***Since interim*** *– The grand opening of the Arboretum held in September 2013! (see attached Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article). Of the three acquired parcels, one now houses our new offices. Having a physical presence in the neighborhood, on the river and at the trail head of the Beerline Loop strengthens our mission and programming as we are a destination in the river valley, the southern entrance to the 800 acre greenway!*
   - Granville Dog Park work begins. *~stakeholder meetings and site plan completed (funded by the Fund for Lake Michigan, match to this grant).* ***Since interim****: Completed site plan delivered to Milwaukee County Parks with the urging for implementation. RRF sought funding for implementation without success; donors are hesitant to fund a project on County land when the applicant is not the landowner. RRF is hopeful that streambank restoration will occur especially given it is a priority project within the SWWT foundation action list. Time will tell…*

- Critical habitat protected, improved. *~ongoing and continuous restoration in the river valley.* ***Since interim*** *– invasive species removal and planting of native trees and plants by students and volunteers has occurred throughout the river valley. Funding received from the Dutton Foundation allowed us to plant a rain garden at our new office location, and the Bock Foundation helped us increase the urban tree canopy through the purchase of mature native trees, including two gorgeous white pines. All of these small projects have a positive cumulative impact on biodiversity and water quality.*

3. **Establish New Partnerships**
   - WAT committee work accomplished (habitat/aesthetics). *~continued advisory role on priority riparian projects in the Menomonee River valley.* ***Since interim*** *- involvement with the WATs to ensure the land use, habitat, and aesthetics message is heard and incorporated into the SWWT strategic planning process, especially to highlight the link between land use and the science and policy committee work to address water quality improvements in the Milwaukee River watershed.*
   - Landowner education and outreach increased. *~Milwaukee County Parks primary landowner, continued liaison between SWWT and Parks Department staff.* ***Since interim*** *Another opportunity for establishing new partnerships and have local and regional influence, was through the participation by Kimberly Gleffe on the City of Milwaukee Green Team. Chaired by Matt Howard, Director, Office of Environmental Sustainability with the City of Milwaukee, all team members were engaged in public outreach efforts through public meetings, town hall settings, surveys, neighborhood canvassing and media tools to get ideas and feedback for a Sustainability Plan for the City. This 1 ½ year process was concluded in July of 2013 and* ***ReFresh MKE*** *was released and adopted by Common Council in September 2013. Implementation is now underway. RRF will continue to be engaged and focus especially on the Land/Urban Ecosystems, Water, and Land and Buildings chapters (www.refreshmke.org).*
   - Connections where gaps exist in adjacent municipalities. *~ongoing relationship building with the City of Wauwatosa and the City of Glendale.* ***Since interim*** *– one of the recommendations in* ***ReFresh MKE*** *is to pass protective zoning like the Greenway Overlay on the Milwaukee River, on the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic Rivers as well. This strengthens City of Milwaukee ties with the adjacent municipalities as the rivers flow through many communities within MMSD service area.*

4. **River Quest / Take a Hike**
   - Urban youth engaged in River Quest and ecological restoration. *~summer of 2012, 6 earn & learn students and 3 crew leaders hired on crew, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, hike leaders.* ***Since interim*** *– Between forty and fifty fall 2012 and spring 2013 semester service learning students from UW-Milwaukee devoted ten hours each toward habitat restoration and hikes. Summer crew of 2013 engaged ten youth in the field, using our new office as headquarters. This made a huge difference in programming as tools were readily available on site and there was a bathroom! A Menomonee River Quest was developed for a spur of the Hank Aaron State Trail, again created entirely by the students.*

- Dissemination – expansion of program to include CRAFT Adventures. *~New School of Community Service and Gaenslen School participate in CRAFT, 3 boats constructed.* ***Since interim*** *– culminating activity during Global Youth Service Day (April 2013) resulted in boat launching at the Kiwanis Landing with nearly 100 students participating! All boats floated! We will partner with All Hands Boatworks (the new name for CRAFT) again this spring during GYSD in April.*
- Take a Hike increases participation in annual national events and promotes recreation in the river valley. *~ongoing events and hikes throughout the year, highlight with Congress Elementary School – 30 students participated in a field trip RiverQuest.* ***Since interim*** *– hikes took place during National Public Lands Day (September 2013) and at our 3rd annual Woolly Bear Winter Festival (February 2014). Volunteer days also include an orientation hike to establish a sense of place for them and the work they are doing. Among the most recent corporate partner events were US Bank with nearly 50 volunteers planting at the wheelhouse, and MillerCoors, with over 100 volunteers doing river clean up and trail maintenance.*

5. **Wheelhouse Property Fundraising and Site Plan Implementation**
   - 2.8 acres under conservation; nearly 650 feet of shoreline protected; extensive habitat restoration; major entrance to river valley and its trail loop established. *~transformation of blighted site to riverfront park ongoing!* ***Since interim*** *- Wheelhouse acquisition and restoration campaign completed! Many donors contributed to a "10 at 10" campaign to finish this appeal, highlighted in our biennial report (also attached). The investment made in just a 2 mile loop of parks and trails (over $3,000,000) is an indication of how important these projects are in the most densely populated region of the state. Shoreline restoration nearly complete – see attached report to the Fund for Lake Michigan, and RRF fall newsletter feature of the nearly half a million in grant awards for shoreline restoration at this and the Riverboat Road sites!*
   - Kiwanis Landing recognized as critical campaign partner project. *~Landing completed, several events held highlighting the project and improved public access.* ***Since interim*** *– A connection of the Riverwalk from downtown to Kiwanis Landing will be completed this summer, providing public access to the river and adjacent parks and trails which was formerly in private ownership, bridging a gap in access. Matching funds from Sustain Our Great Lakes will be leveraged with City of Milwaukee Riverwalk District TIF (tax incremental financing) during that shoreline restoration project.*
   - Site planning completed – vision for new park expressed. *~now being implemented.* ***Since interim*** *– Completion of all projects will be celebrated during our 20th anniversary, holding events in the park to bring more people to the river valley and creating a presence in the community we serve. We have received a grant from Patagonia so will again host the* ***Wild & Scenic Film Festival*** *at the wheelhouse park, utilizing the space to attract more people to our new location (August 1, 2014). Our 20th anniversary is also scheduled as a* ***"Picnic in the Park"*** *on Thursday, September 4, 2014 which will build on the success of RRFs urban conservation efforts and bring people to the park, the river and the trails. All donors, including WDNR, will be recognized and thanked for contributing to this success!*

6. **Regional, State, and National Presentations**
   - Two presentations annually at scheduled land and water conservation and environmental education conferences. *~LTA Rally national conference, Clean Rivers Clean Lake. In addition to presentations, RRF has been featured on Milwaukee Public Radio (Lake Effect) and in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel articles on the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum. Most recently, we were visited by a reporter from OnEarth magazine, a publication of the Natural Resources Defense Council who is writing a story about Biophilic cities and the City's Sustainability Plan, focusing on conservation and people. A proposal to River Network to present at River Rally in May has been accepted so RRF will participate on the Greenway panel at that national conference.*
   - Membership in Gathering Waters Conservancy and LMSA strengthens urban conservation message. *~ongoing.* ***Note*** *– RRF executive director now serves as Chair of the Land Trust Council, advisory to the Gathering Waters board on issues relevant to land trusts around the state. This is another forum that provides opportunity to communicate our urban land trust strategy within the sector.*

Kimberly A Geffe March 2014

***WDNR Capacity Grant-Year 2 report – Detail on #1 Continue Partnership in SWWT**

Major Activities
May 2013 – April 2014

The following activities support SWWT's Strategic Planning **Goal #2** (*Provide leadership for water resources improvement in the Greater Milwaukee watersheds*), **Objectives 2.2**-Continue implementation of the KK and MN Watershed Restoration Plans and initiate implementation of the Root River Watershed Restoration;
2.5—Initiate the development of a Milwaukee Watershed Action Team(s), linking to the TMDL implementation rather than a Watershed Restoration Plan.

1. Support the establishment of a Milwaukee River WAT/ project team; integrate RRFs Land Protection Plans for the Milwaukee River within identified scope.

a. Identify and implement additional priority projects identified in RRF's Milwaukee River Land Protection Plans, including:
b. Greenway Gateway shoreline and habitat restoration
c. Southbranch Creek streambank stabilization and upland habitat restoration
d. Blue Hole easement/restoration

2. Support the development of a riparian overlay ordinance*

a. Support the development of municipal and/or county ordinances to facilitate riparian buffer protection on the Menomonee and Kinnickinnic Rivers
b. Outreach to landowners including municipal and county departments and staff to address zoning as a conservation tool based on the City of Milwaukee model

*Note: This recommendation has been incorporated into *ReFresh MKE* as a priority strategy to protect urban greenspace, river corridors.

3. Increase on-the-ground Green Infrastructure projects in the Milwaukee and Menomonee River watersheds

a. Continue support of Granville streambank restoration project with Milwaukee County Parks, other habitat restoration projects on county park land
b. Provide outreach, education, and information on tools for conservation and restoration to all riparian landowners where priority project areas have been identified for installation of BMPs

Fund for Lake Michigan Report – Wheelhouse Shoreline Restoration / January 2014

Goals:

The primary goal was to restore and protect native riparian habitat on the shoreline on the Wheelhouse property. This included streambank and bluff stabilization to reduce pollutant loading, decrease invasive species, improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, restore natural coastal and hydrological processes, and increase public access.

Progress toward goals:

The site was first prepared by removing the invasive vegetation on the streambank. Once the invasive species were treated biodegradable compost filled socks were installed, working downstream to upstream. This was completed first to prevent sediment runoff from entering the river.

Non-native trees, hazardous trees and invasive trees and shrubs were cut and treated with herbicide. All woody debris was chipped and used on site for plant protection and habitat. We removed approximately two thirds of the current tree cover.

Bank stabilization was performed with a system of fabric encapsulated soil lifts that included all biodegradable materials, native seed, native shrubs, and compost based engineered soils.

2 fishing access points were constructed with and wholly integrated into the bank stabilization efforts. They consist of limestone slabs laid onto the existing FES sections so as to create steps down to the water's edge, just above the 2 year flood line. A third one will be installed in spring 2014.

Slope stabilization was implemented with a similar pallet of materials as the FES lifts and a common approach; Use all biodegradable materials, low impact construction methods, and the best compost, and aggregate materials available to ensure a weed free, quickly established native plant cover that will offer exceptional resistance to erosion and the best ecosystem support available.

Along the more stable section of the project that is north of the dam, approximately 80% of undesirable species were cut and treated. Once the slope was cleared, several mature shrub species were planted. The existing trail was in the flood plain so the trail was moved back to the toe of the slope.

Of the proposed steps in this project, a few things remain incomplete until spring 2014. This is because we have coordinated our efforts with the DNR as they will need access through our project site to implement the construction of their fish shoal. 4 out of 8 large replacement trees were installed on the top of the slope. The remaining 4 will be planted in spring 2014 once the DNR completes their project on an adjacent parcel. Additionally, 1,200 native emergent and riparian plants will also be installed after the completion of the DNR project. The rest of the project was completed.

Project Impact:

Protected 3 acres of habitat
Restored 650 feet of river bank at the upstream juncture of the Milwaukee River estuary (AOC) and the

Milwaukee River
Reduced soil sediment loss to Lake Michigan
Graded slopes to minimize runoff and increase habitat for state protected species
Enhanced pool and spawning riffle habitat for migratory fish in Lake Michigan
Improved fish habitat adjacent to WNDR installed rock shoal for walleye and northern pike
Improved stream habitat from shore edge plantings
Planted native trees, shrubs, and wet prairie mix

This project will be monitored and maintained for many years to come. Quantitatively, a floristic quality assessment will be conducted each year, once in the spring and once again in the late summer. This will allow both warm season species and cool season species to be accounted for. The first of these surveys will be done in late spring 2014. Fish surveys will be conducted by the DNR to help document the benefit of this project for aquatic life. Due to the expansion of the fish shoal, surveys will resume summer 2014 and will be continuous from there on. Additionally, visual surveys of wildlife species will be continual as well. A plan to implement an amphibian survey program will commence spring 2015 once all of the streambank restoration projects are not only completed but also established.

Funds Leveraged:

In addition to the $1,400,000 investment to acquire this parcel, this project leverages major funding made in this "loop" of the river valley since 1995:
Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum project $500,000
Beerline Trail $400,000
East Bank Trail $225,000
Beerline right-of-way acquisition $400,000
North Avenue dam pedestrian bridge $1,300,000
Kiwanis Club of Milwaukee donation of $100,000 to name the boat landing at the site
Dutton Foundation Rain Garden and Savannah Restoration $5000
Bock Foundation Urban Canopy $5000 ($3000 went directly to installing additional LARGE mature trees to slope)
Green Tree Garden Club Stairway $3000 (went directly to improving staircase to the river/fish access points)
USFWS Partners Mesic Prairie Restoration at Wheelhouse $2400
Sustain Our Great Lakes Streambank stabilization of adjacent parcel $247,489

Challenges:

The main challenge with this project was coordinating our efforts with the DNR fish shoal project which is why there are some items that are not yet completed. In addition to that collaboration, there were some other factors that made brought on a few challenges such as weather. Unfortunately, weather is the most unpredictable factor in implementing any restoration plan and winter hit hard, quick, and early this year. Luckily, our contractor was prepared for such an event and the project was only temporarily

delayed and was able to be completed as planned in regards to what could be completed before the DNR project.

Future Plans:

We were awarded a grant from Sustain Our Great Lakes this year to implement extensive restoration to the parcel immediately downstream from this project. This work will supplement that which we were able to complete with the Fund for Lake Michigan. We will be removing all impervious surfaces on the parcel and restoring 150 feet of shoreline. This additional parcel will be able to connect the downtown riverwalk to over 800 acres of protected land and the trail connection will provide public access right to the Wheelhouse Streambank restoration via the Kiwanis Boat Landing. With RRF's increased presence at our new location we also plan on hosting many more public educational/outreach events beginning in February of this year.