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**Land Conservation Programs: What's RIM? RIM Reserve? CREP?
How to Tell Them Apart.
January 25, 2000**

Land conservation programs have been in place in Minnesota since 1975. They use acquisition, permanent and temporary easements as tools for land conservation, and incorporate the development of these lands to improve critical fish, wildlife and native plant habitat as well as improve water quality.

Land conservation programs are managed by both the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Generally, the major difference between the DNR and BWSR programs is that the DNR works with acquisition and development of public lands, whereas BWSR works with easements and development projects on privately held lands.

Department of Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources manages programs under the *Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)* umbrella, each program with a slightly different focus. Three RIM programs are included in the Governor's 2000 capital budget requests: RIM - Critical Habitat Match, RIM - Fisheries Improvement, and RIM - Wildlife Development/Habitat Improvement.

RIM - Critical Habitat Match

This program uses state funds to match private donations of land and money. Fund sources include the General Fund, LCMR, bonding, and proceeds from critical habitat license plates. The pool of funds is then used to either *acquire property* or develop existing state property in order to improve habitat or increase environmental benefits. The majority of lands acquired become wildlife management areas (WMA), scientific natural areas (SNA), state parks, aquatic management areas (AMA) and state forests.

The Critical Habitat Match program began in 1986, but its predecessor, the Resource 2000 initiative, began in 1975. It used bonding funds to acquire land for WMAs, state parks and state forests.

Previous one-time appropriations include:

1994	Bonding	\$2,700,000
1995	LCMR	\$ 900,000
1996	Bonding	\$3,750,000
1997	LCMR	\$1,730,000
1998	Bonding	\$7,000,000

RIM - Fisheries Improvement

The RIM Fisheries Improvement funds are directly appropriated to the DNR. Funds are used to *improve fisheries habitat* by reducing sedimentation, stabilizing stream banks and restoring aquatic plants.

Previous one-time appropriations include:

1995	LCMR	\$519,000
1996	Bonding	\$250,000
1998	Bonding	\$500,000
1999	LCMR	\$350,000

RIM - Wildlife Development/Habitat Improvement

The RIM - Wildlife Development/Habitat Improvement program is also comprised of funds which have been directly appropriated to the DNR. The program's activities are strictly *development* of existing state owned property. They include posting and surveying new acquisitions, removing old building sites, upgrading access roads, upgrading water accesses, upgrading walking trails, developing and protecting forest and brush land habitat, restoring wetlands and native prairie habitat on WMAs.

Previous one-time appropriations include:

1994	Bonding	\$1,315,000
1996	Bonding	\$ 660,000
1998	Bonding	\$3,000,000

Board of Water and Soil Resources

The Board of Water and Soil Resources manages three programs under the RIM umbrella. BWSR works strictly with RIM Reserve, which is described as the easement of privately held lands. The programs are: RIM Reserve - Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), RIM Reserve - Permanent Wetland Preserve Program (PWP), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

RIM Reserve- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

This is a partnership between BWSR and the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It splits the cost of wetland restoration easements between the RIM and the WRP federal program. The NRCS provides a 30 year easement followed by a BWSR *permanent easement*. The partnership saves the state 30 years of payments on any particular property.

RIM Reserve - Permanent Wetland Preserve Program (PWP)

This program is strictly a state program which came out of the State Wetland Conservation Act. No federal money is leveraged with this program. The program enters wetlands statewide into *permanent easements* for the protection of existing, at-risk wetlands and water quality improvement.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) under the Farm Service Agency (USDA) was established by Congress in 1985. The CRP program encourages farmers to manage land where it would be beneficial to water quality or wildlife habitat. Farmers must enter into a contractual agreement lasting from 10 to 15 years. In return, they receive annual rent payments, incentives for certain activities and assistance with planting vegetation. The CRP program is implemented statewide.

In 1996 Congress funded the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enhance the existing CRP program. BWSR has designed the program to take flood prone land in the Minnesota River Watershed out of production. These lands also have a water quality and wildlife habitat benefit. BWSR uses the CREP dollars to continue the easements on CRP lands as a *permanent easement*.

Previous one-time appropriations (for all three programs) include:

1994	Bonding	\$ 9,000,000
1996	Bonding	\$11,500,000
1998	Bonding	\$15,000,000

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