



**MONROE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MONROE COUNTY AWARDED RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

**25 APRIL 2024**

The Monroe County Highway Department has been notified by the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), that Monroe County has been awarded a \$506,000.00 project through the “*Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT)*” program to complete an assessment of the town roads and county highways in the Little La Crosse River Watershed and identify strategies to make roadway / stream crossings more resilient to the increasingly frequent and damaging flood events that have plagued Southwestern Wisconsin over the past decade.

A proposal for the Little La Crosse Watershed Infrastructure Resiliency Initiative was developed and submitted to the FHWA by Monroe County’s Land Conservation and Highway departments along with the towns of Portland, Jefferson, Leon, Wells and Sparta to complete an inventory and assessment of all stream crossing structures in the watershed and to identify opportunities throughout each stream corridor to reduce the impacts of flood events.

“This unique project is centered around the Little La Crosse River Watershed and will focus on addressing infrastructure failures by looking upstream in the watershed to manage the symptoms versus the results of past flood events. If we can improve infiltration through land stewardship and implement conservation practices to mitigate the flood flows we can protect infrastructure and build resiliency”, stated Bob Micheel, Monroe County Land Conservation Department Director.

The Monroe County project was the only one awarded in the State of Wisconsin through the new PROTECT program. The award noted “The Monroe County Highway Department will receive \$506,000 to assess the vulnerability of bridges, culverts, dams and roadways in southwestern Monroe County and prioritize their repair or removal. The project also will identify strategies for improving the resiliency of these road crossings during extreme weather events such as flash flooding, and to develop cost-effective actions to reduce potential impacts.”

County Administrator Tina Osterberg notes that “the Little La Crosse Watershed Infrastructure Resiliency Initiative is another example of Monroe County’s pro-active approach to managing the effects of the extreme weather events that have been witnessed over the past few years”. “The county and all of our local partners and other stakeholders have introduced several initiatives over the past few years, including the Monroe County Climate Change Taskforce, all designed to improve public and private infrastructure, protect residents and their property, benefit our environment, and to save taxpayers money along the way.”

The PROTECT program, as with most federal and state offerings, are extremely competitive, notes Highway Commissioner David Ohnstad. “The FHWA reports that 80 projects were awarded nationwide, with California, Texas, Florida and New York accounting for 21 of those awards. 13 states did not receive any.” “We believed our project has substantial merit and is unique in many ways”, Ohnstad said. “We are pleased the FHWA agreed and will work closely with our partners to make this project a success and to create a model that others can follow.”

For further information please contact the Highway Department at (608) 269 - 8740 or via e-mail at [highways@co.monroe.wi.us](mailto:highways@co.monroe.wi.us), or the Land Conservation Department at (608) 269 - 8975 or via e-mail at [BMicheel@co.monroe.wi.us](mailto:BMicheel@co.monroe.wi.us).

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