

# Community Blue: Grant Application



Please submit completed form and any corresponding application materials to Angela Hugunin at [angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org](mailto:angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org)

*The Community Blue grant program reimburses projects that increase clean water knowledge and actions in the Vadnais Lake Area watershed. The most interdisciplinary of VLAWMO’s grant programs, Community Blue seeks to engage watershed residents in experiences that deepen understanding of water issues and encourage implementation of stewardship behaviors.*

## Project Background

Proposed project name	Water Stewards in Action—Pollinator-Friendly and Rain Garden Restorations
Project address	4880 Hodgson Road
City and zip code	North Oaks, MN 55126
Primary contact person	Ron Dykstra
Organization	Incarnation Lutheran Church
Phone	612-723-6401
Email address	Rldykstra50@gmail.com
Funding amount requested (up to \$10,000)	\$10,000
Funding amount you are prepared to match	\$1,000 (10%)

# Narrative Responses

## 1. Describe your organization’s mission and goals and how these relate to water resources.



Incarnation Lutheran Church's mission is to serve our community through faith, stewardship, and education while caring for God's creation. As a congregation committed to environmental stewardship, we recognize our responsibility to protect and preserve the water resources in our watershed. Our goals include educating our community about environmental issues, demonstrating sustainable practices on church property, and engaging both our congregation and broader community in actions that protect local water quality. We believe that caring for our water resources is an integral part of our call to be good stewards of creation and to love our neighbors by protecting the shared environment that sustains us all.

We have two rain gardens that have not been maintained for many years. The water from the east side of our building and much of our parking lot drains into one rain garden. The other rain garden takes runoff from the parking lot. Our goal is to enhance the current configuration's effectiveness and make it more ecologically viable. This means we will need to clean out sediment from both rain gardens and replant them with native, pollinator-friendly plants.

## 2. Provide a short (3-4 sentences) overview of your proposed project. What will the project entail? Where will the project take place? Who is your intended audience?

Our "Water Stewards in Action" project will revitalize two existing rain gardens on Incarnation Lutheran Church property in North Oaks, install permanent educational signage, and engage our congregation and community through hands-on water education activities. The project will take place on our church grounds and extend into the surrounding neighborhood through storm drain stenciling activities. Our primary audience includes our congregation members of all ages, neighboring residents, and community members who visit our church property. We will specifically engage families and children through interactive "Water Hero" puppet shows that teach about stormwater management and water conservation.

## 3. Describe water stewardship behaviors or actions that will be encouraged through the project, including any anticipated outreach on water quality that may occur with the project.

This project will encourage multiple water stewardship behaviors including: installation and maintenance of rain gardens and other green infrastructure; reducing use of fertilizers and pesticides near water sources; participating in neighborhood clean-up activities to prevent debris from entering storm drains; and implementing water conservation practices at home. Our educational outreach will include information about how stormwater runoff carries pollutants into local waterways, the importance of groundwater infiltration, and practical steps individuals can take to protect water quality. The storm drain stenciling component will provide ongoing community education by reminding residents that storm drains connect directly to local water bodies.

## 4. List any project partners. Describe their role in the project and any qualifications. Please provide specifics as possible including name, title, and contact information. A separate confirmation letter may be requested.

**Incarnation’s Creation Care Team Members and Contact Information**

Ron Dykstra—co-project leader  
[rdykstra@gmail.com](mailto:rdykstra@gmail.com), 612-723-6401

Nancy Stutzman—co-project manager  
[nancystutzman@comcast.net](mailto:nancystutzman@comcast.net)

Mike Vant—co-project manager  
[mjvant@gmail.com](mailto:mjvant@gmail.com)

Dawn Pape—co-project manager, Ramsey County Master Gardener, former RCWD Outreach and Education Specialist, founder of Blue Thumb—Planting for Clean Water®  
[dawn@weallneedfoodandwater.org](mailto:dawn@weallneedfoodandwater.org), 651-485-5171

Heather Tibbles-Vassilev—gardener  
[heather@htvcoaching.com](mailto:heather@htvcoaching.com)

Rick Gravley—facilities manager at Incarnation  
[rgravley@incarnaion.org](mailto:rgravley@incarnaion.org), 612-236-7907

Craig and Kari Ratz—planting helpers  
[craigratz20@gmail.com](mailto:craigratz20@gmail.com), 651-925-6825

Katy Gibbs—Scouts leader

Jim Fruehling—woodworking  
[jcfruehling@icloud.com](mailto:jcfruehling@icloud.com)

Lydia Holden— Children’s Faith Formation lead  
[lholden@incarnationmn.org](mailto:lholden@incarnationmn.org)

5. **Project activities.** In the space below, please **list up to five primary activities for your project** and give a brief description. These may range from preparation to action to follow-up.



**1. Rain Garden Renovation and Enhancement**

Remove invasive species and excess sediment, assess soil and potentially improve soil composition, replant with native plants, and enhance drainage systems in both existing rain gardens to maximize their water filtration capacity.

**2. Educational Signage Installation**

Design, produce, and install permanent, weather-resistant educational signs near the rain gardens that explain their function, the water cycle, and how individuals can protect local water resources.

**3. Water Hero Puppet Show Educational Program**

Present four interactive puppet shows for children and families, teaching about stormwater runoff problems, the importance of water infiltration, and keeping streets clean to protect water quality.

**4. Congregation Water Stewardship Workshop**

Promote local educational workshops for congregation members covering rain garden maintenance, household practices that protect water quality, and ways to implement water conservation at home.

**5. Storm Drain Stenciling Community Outreach**

Organize volunteer teams to stencil storm drains in the surrounding neighborhood with messages such as “drains to lake” to educate residents about the connections between stormwater and local water bodies (~~Contingent upon coordination with RCWD, since the neighborhoods near the church are in RCWD and much of North Oaks doesn't have curb and gutter.~~) \*

**\*VLAWMO staff and the applicant group discussed the possibility of exploring partnership with NOHOA to instead focus "street to stream" outreach efforts within the VLAWMO watershed as possible.**

6. Provide your project's target **timeline or any key dates.**

**Phase 1** (March-June): Partner recruitment, material procurement, rain garden assessment and planning  
**Phase 2** (June-July): Rain garden renovation work (sediment and invasives removal), signage design and production  
**Phase 3** (August): Signage installation, storm drain stenciling activities  
**Phase 4** (September): Water Hero puppet shows and Adopt-a-Storm drain pledges  
**Phase 5** (October-November): Congregation workshop, final puppet show presentations, project evaluation

**Key Dates**

**Project kick-off:**

May 31st, Scouts help with clean up  
June 17th, work with Vacation Bible students to learn and plant.  
June 22nd, blessing of the rain garden on pollinator Sunday

**Rain garden work completion:**

mid-September

**First puppet show presentation:**

September

**Final project completion**

October

7. **What are your desired project outcomes?** Provide anticipated measurable achievements if possible.

**Primary Outcomes:**

1. Two fully renovated rain gardens filtering stormwater more effectively
2. Increased congregation and community knowledge about water stewardship (measured through informal surveys at puppet shows)
3. Increased use of the Peace Garden (that includes the main rain garden, benches, a meditation labyrinth) for Bible studies, small group meetings, and the community
4. Engage 10+ volunteers to mark area storm drains stenciled in the surrounding neighborhood and deliver flyers to 50+ houses. (~~Contingent upon coordination with RCWD, since the neighborhoods near the church are in RCWD.~~)\*
5. 250+ individuals reached through puppet show presentations
6. 25+ congregation members engaged in water stewardship workshop
7. Permanent educational infrastructure (signage) providing ongoing community education

**Secondary Outcomes:**

1. Strengthened partnerships between church and community environmental groups
2. Increased volunteer engagement in environmental stewardship activities
3. Model for other faith communities to implement similar water protection projects

**\*Staff and the applicant group discussed the possibility of exploring partnership with NOHOA to instead focus these efforts within the VLAWMO watershed.**





**8. What is the approximate total cost of your project?** Please list this total cost below. Please also **attach a detailed project budget estimate** with itemized materials and costs that equal this total cost. On that document, please list 1) materials and services that requested funds will go towards and 2) description of match funds that accompany those expenses. If additional costs exist independent of VLA WMO grant funding, list them as “funding from other source.”

\$10,000\*

\$12,390

\*Staff clarified the total cost with the applicant group, and after discussing and revisiting budget spreadsheet totals, confirmed that this amount should instead read \$12,390.

**9. Evaluation.** What tangible measurables or deliverables will help you determine whether your project has been successful in accomplishing your desired outcomes? (Examples may include number of participants, installations, or other specifics.)

Quantitative Measures:

1. Number of storm drains marked and households reached (target: 50+)

2. Number of individuals reached through puppet shows (target: 250+)

3. Number of workshop participants (target: 25+)

4. Pre/post survey results showing increased water stewardship knowledge from puppet show education

5. Photo documentation of rain garden improvements

Qualitative Measures:

1. Participant feedback forms from educational activities

2. Observation of behavior changes in congregation (increased environmental discussions, participation in related activities)

3. Community feedback on educational signage and stenciled storm drains

4. Documentation of ongoing rain garden maintenance and care

Deliverables:

1. Two renovated rain gardens with improved functionality

2. Permanent educational signage

3. Outreach materials to 50+ houses, mark nearby storm drains

4. 4 Water Hero puppet shows with educational materials

5. Final project report with photos, participant numbers, and evaluation results

**10. Attachments.** Please ensure you have submitted the following documents along with this completed application form.

- Required:

◦ Budget worksheet with itemized materials and costs. (Per instructions in question 8)
- Optional:

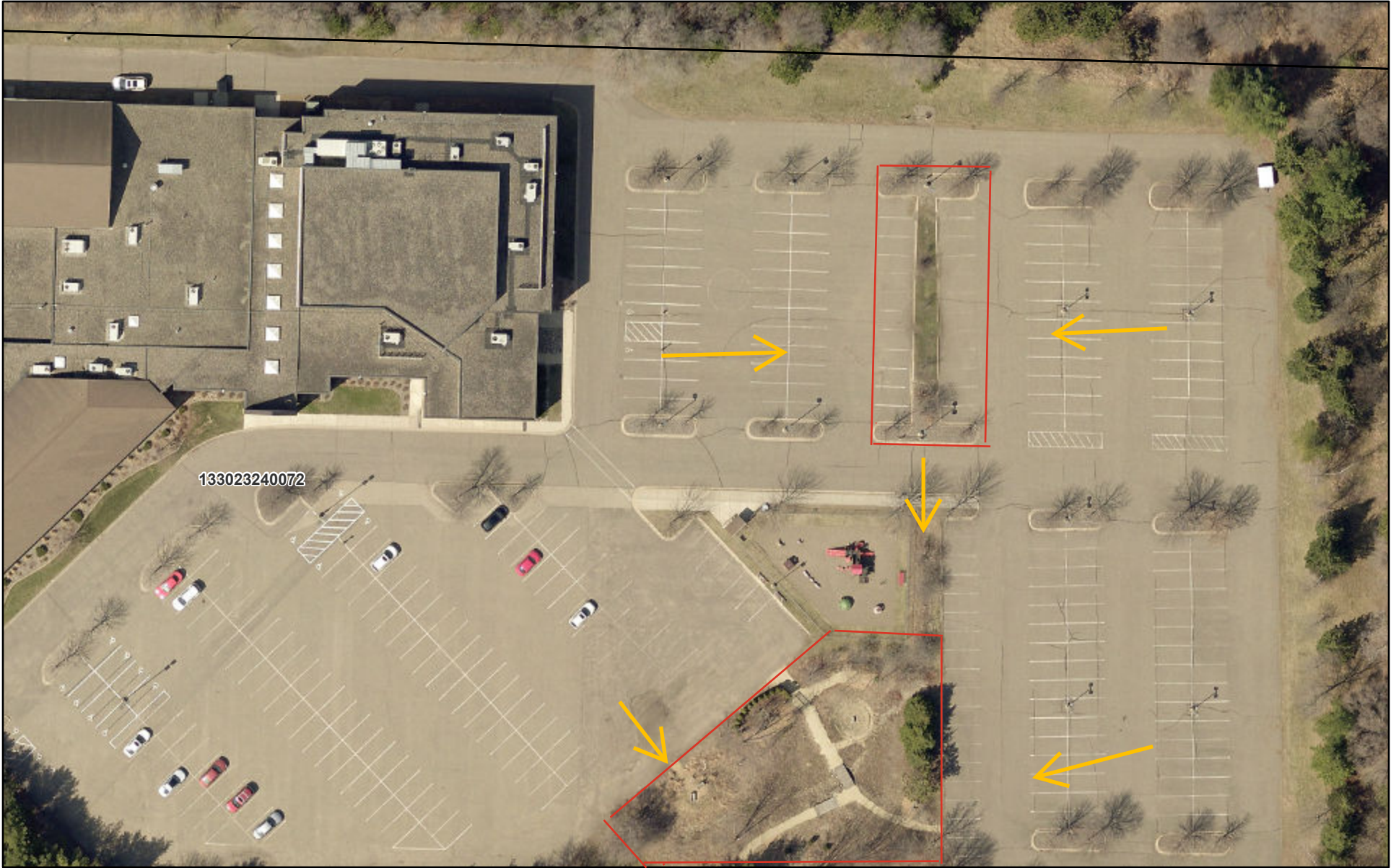
◦ Any supplementary documents you would like to be considered in tandem with your application (letters of support; visuals from project site; supporting information).
- X Letter of support from project partner We All Need Food and Water

X Photos of current rain garden conditions

X Site maps showing rain garden and storm drain locations

X Sample educational material—Puppet shows are based on Dawn Pape's [Defenders of the Future Tackle Today's Water Troubles](#) book (linked)
- Please submit all completed materials and any program questions to Angela Hugunin, VLA WMO Communication & Outreach Coordinator, at [angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org](mailto:angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org).*  
Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLA WMO)  
800 County Road E East, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127 | [www.VLA WMO.org](http://www.VLA WMO.org) | (651) 204-6070

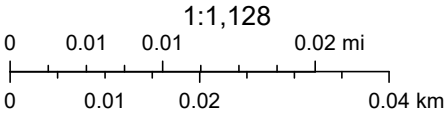
# CB 2025-01 Incarnation Lutheran Church Rain Garden Renovation & Outreach Application



**Project Location**



**Flow Arrows**



	Quantity	Cost	Total
<b>Rain Gardens</b>			
Rock boulders (16"-22") (including delivery)	5	250	\$1,250.00
Sediment removal with equipment—north raingarden only (bid from church member to do the bobcat work)	1	3000	\$3,000.00
Rain Guardian inlet (estimated price is \$500 each)	4	500	\$2,000.00
<b>Plants</b>			
Native trees, bushes, perennials			
Black chokeberry	20	25	\$500.00
Red-Osier Dogwood	10	25	\$250.00
Dwarf bush honey suckle	20	25	\$500.00
Golden Alexanders	24	2.25	\$54.00
Obedient Plant	24	2.25	\$54.00
Marsh Marigold	24	2.25	\$54.00
Wild bergamot	24	2.25	\$54.00
Southern Blue Flag Iris	24	2.25	\$54.00
wood mulch (80 bags (1.75 cu. ft.) of mulch) or 5 cubic yards of bulk mulch	80	4	\$320.00
<b>Signage</b>			
new permanent sign from Vacker RE: rain gardens	1	700	\$700.00
Repairing/replacing current signage (lumber, stain, labor)			\$210.00
<b>Education</b>			
4x water hero puppet shows	4	500	\$2,000.00

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Project cost	\$11,000.00
Incarnation will cover	
\$1,000 of project cost	
	-\$1,000.00
Grant amount	
request from	
VLAWMO	\$10,000.00

**Additional expenses beyond the proposal  
that Incarnation will pay for**

To refresh the yellow limestone 3/4" in walking  
path areas you will need 5 yards x  
\$69.99/yard=\$350

5	70	\$350.00
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To refresh the Bryan Red Rock 3/4" in sitting  
areas you will need 3 yards x \$69.99/Yard=\$200

3	70	\$210.00
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To build up the foundation for new seating area  
to the left of bridge you will need 2 yards class 5  
x \$44.99/yard=\$100

2	45	\$90.00
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plus an additional 2 yards of 3/4" yellow  
limestone for that area 2 yards x \$69.99/yard=  
\$150

2	70	\$140.00
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Add table and seating for 8 = \$600

		\$600.00
<b>Additional costs</b>		<b>\$1,390.00</b>





5901 BIRCHWOOD STREET, SHOREVIEW, MN 55126

June 3, 2025

Angela Hugunin  
VLAWMO Communication & Outreach Coordinator  
Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization  
[angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org](mailto:angela.hugunin@vlawmo.org)

**RE: Letter of Support for Incarnation Lutheran Church Community Blue Grant Application**

Dear Ms. Hugunin and VLAWMO Tech Advisory Committee,

I am writing to provide my strongest endorsement for Incarnation Lutheran Church's Community Blue Grant application for their "Water Stewards in Action" project. As Executive Director of We All Need Food and Water and creator of the "Water Hero" puppet show curriculum that will be utilized in this project, I am excited to support this innovative community-based water education initiative.

Having founded the Blue Thumb—Planting for Clean Water program in 2006, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of combining hands-on environmental stewardship with engaging educational programming. Incarnation Lutheran's comprehensive approach—integrating rain garden restoration, permanent educational signage, storm drain stenciling, and our Water Hero puppet shows—represents exactly the kind of multi-faceted community engagement that creates lasting impact for water protection.

The Water Hero puppet show curriculum was specifically developed to make complex water stewardship concepts accessible and memorable for audiences of all ages. Through interactive storytelling, the programs teach critical lessons about stormwater runoff, the importance of water infiltration, and practical steps individuals can take to keep our waterways clean. I am particularly impressed that Incarnation Lutheran plans to present a series of puppet shows, ensuring broad community reach and reinforcing key messages through repetition.

What sets this project apart is the church's commitment to permanent infrastructure improvements alongside educational programming. The renovation of their existing rain gardens will provide a lasting demonstration site where community members can see water stewardship principles in action. The combination of improved functionality and educational signage will create an ongoing teaching tool that extends the project's impact far beyond the grant period.

The storm drain stenciling component adds an important community outreach dimension that will educate residents throughout the North Oaks area. This grassroots approach to water education creates





daily reminders for residents about the connection between their actions and local water quality—precisely the kind of behavior change messaging that drives real environmental improvement.

From my extensive experience in water education programming, I know that faith communities like Incarnation Lutheran are uniquely positioned to create meaningful environmental change. Their established networks, commitment to stewardship values, and ability to engage multiple generations make them ideal partners for water protection initiatives. This congregation's enthusiasm for combining spiritual values with environmental action demonstrates the kind of leadership our communities need.

I am pleased to offer technical support and consultation as a former Rice Creek Watershed District employee, a Ramsey County Master Gardener for the last 25 years, and for the Water Hero puppet show implementation as part of this project. Our organization stands ready to provide curriculum materials, training support, and ongoing guidance to ensure the educational programming achieves maximum impact.

The Community Blue Grant program's investment in Incarnation Lutheran's project will yield significant returns through:

- Measurable improvements to local water quality through enhanced rain garden function
- Broad community education reaching 200+ individuals through multiple touchpoints
- Permanent educational infrastructure serving ongoing community needs
- A replicable model that other faith communities can adapt and implement
- Strengthened partnerships between religious institutions and environmental organizations

Projects like this demonstrate that effective water protection requires both infrastructure improvements and community education—exactly what Incarnation Lutheran is proposing to deliver. Their comprehensive approach, commitment to measurable outcomes, and integration of proven educational programming make this an exemplary Community Blue Grant proposal.

I enthusiastically recommend full funding for Incarnation Lutheran Church's "Water Stewards in Action" project and look forward to supporting their success.

Sincerely,

Dawn Pape

Executive Director

We All Need Food and Water

[dawn@weallneedfoodandwater.org](mailto:dawn@weallneedfoodandwater.org) | 651.485.5171

Founder, Blue Thumb—Planting for Clean Water Program

Creator, Water Hero Puppet Show Curriculum