

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Subd: 08b**

**Project Title:** Youth-Led Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation in West and Southwest Minnesot

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**Category:** G. Environmental Education

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**Total Project Budget: \$** 246,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 yrs, July 2011 - June 2013

**Other Non-State Funds (secured): \$** 24,000

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**Summary:**

Youth Energy Summit (YES!) teams mobilize West Central & Southwest Minnesota communities to complete over 30 renewable energy and energy conservation projects. Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and Partners.

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**Location:**

**Region:** Central, SW

**Ecological Section:** North Central Glaciated Plains (251B)

**County Name:** an, Yellow Medicine

**City / Township:**

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## 2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

**PROJECT TITLE: YES!(2.0) 30+ Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Projects**

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

**WHY:** In response to urgent concern regarding climate change and strained budgets, Youth Energy Summit (YES!) teams coordinated by Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and Prairie Ecology Bus Center in partnership with Southwest Initiative Foundation have produced dramatic returns on investment in west central and southwestern Minnesota.

With LCCMR support of \$246,000 over two years, YES! Teams will initiate youth-led renewable energy and energy conservation projects in over 30 communities in west central and southwestern Minnesota and offer the YES! program as a strong regional model which multiplies the impact of other public and private sector renewable energy and conservation programs. YES! will work jointly with Minnesota Schools Cutting Carbon (MnSCC) to pilot a model in the indicated region (see map) combining best practices from both programs. The YES! model and outcomes will be reported to environmental learning centers and environmental educators throughout the state via quarterly stakeholder updates and presentations at professional conferences.

Over the past three years, YES! Teams have accomplished ambitious renewable energy and energy conservation projects and have demonstrated an impact in the greater community beyond school walls. The New London-Spicer YES! team mobilized a \$45,000+ energy efficiency upgrade of a community theater, including an innovative solar heating system which has inspired at least three other solar heating projects to date. Other YES! teams achieved equally impressive outcomes including: a winter community greenhouse heated by solar and biomass; solar electric installations for schools; community-wide electronics recycling days; composting and waste-reduction programs in schools; and many more. YES! projects have created spin-off opportunities for local contractors and raised public awareness of renewable energy and energy conservation through dozens of media articles (print, radio, internet).

**GOALS:** To inspire widespread adoption of renewable energy technology and energy conservation practices which contribute to the environmental and economic health of rural Minnesota communities.

#### **Specific goals for YES! 2011-2013 are:**

- Implement 30+ renewable energy and energy conservation projects in west central and southwestern Minnesota and engage 15,000 school students, 45,000 community members, and 300 businesses and organizations (based on YES! 2010 results).
- Build upon the successful YES! model by adding an additional 10 to 14 teams in a broader geographic region (see map), for a total of 30-34 teams by 2013, and to prepare for statewide replication in collaboration with MnSCC and other environmental learning centers.
- Develop self-sustaining community based funding for future YES! teams from energy savings resulting from energy efficiency and conservation projects.

**HOW:** Expand existing YES! network to include 450 high school students and 40 adult advisors/coaches in 30+ YES! teams throughout west central and southwestern Minnesota. YES! staff work intensively with teams to: assess community assets and needs; identify and involve community partners; create action-plans; link with funding resources; and implement

solar, wind, biomass, recycling and composting projects which match the students' passion with a real need and opportunity in their community. YES! staff will join forces with MnSCC to implement a project in which coordinators go directly into the schools and work with teams throughout the year, along with providing grant funds and technical expertise such as energy audits. The project and its outcomes will be reported to Minnesota's statewide environmental education community through updates to environmental learning centers and a presentation at the MAEE Conference.

**II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1: Secure 30 YES! Teams for 2011-2013**

**Budget:** \$12,000

Recruit 10-14 additional teams with advisors/coaches and confirm participation of previous teams.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 450 youth and 35-45 local advisors/coaches engaged (x2 years)	Sept. 2011, Sept 2012

**Activity 2: 3 Events each year: Fall Summit, Winter Workshop, & Spring Celebration**

**Budget:** \$ 20,000 Summit: Networking, education, goal-setting, action-planning. Winter Workshop: hands-on skills training and site tours. Spring Celebration: public presentation of outcomes and awards.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. At least 250 youth and approximately 35 coaches participate	Summit: Oct. 2011 & '12; Winter Workshop: Feb. 2012 & 2013; Spring Celebration: Apr. 2012 & 2013
2. YES! teams network directly with 75+ businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs through event activities	
3. Students gain skills in renewable energy tech (hands-on workshops); awareness of sites (tours) and topics (expert presenters)	

**Activity 3: Complete 30+ Renewable energy and energy conservation projects.**

**Budget:** \$ 214,000

YES! staff, collaborating with MnSCC, provide ongoing guidance, resources, information, networks, and other assistance as teams carry out action plans, all developed by the youth based on needs of their community.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Partnerships between 30 teams and 250+ businesses and utilities, numerous community organizations, school administration teams, etc.	March 2012 & 2013.
2. 30+ Energy Action Projects completed, including: solar heating, photovoltaics, composting, recycling, energy efficiency, recycling programs, energy-efficiency upgrades, and information campaigns.	End of school year: May 2012 & 2013.
3. Energy Action Project Outcomes are reported in written reports, presentations, & displays. Combined project outcomes are reported to the public and Minnesota's environmental learning centers. Accomplishments are publicly recognized.	April 2012 & 2013

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners receiving funding from LCCMR proposal:**

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and Prairie Ecology Bus Center (PEBC) and 30 YES! communities in west central and southwestern Minnesota. YES! and MnSCC will partner to implement complementary aspects of their programs within the region indicated in this proposal (see map). 2011-2013 YES! Teams are expected to include: NewLondon-Spicer,

Willmar, Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City, Litchfield, Bird Island-Olivia-Lake Lillian, Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop, Eden Valley-Watkins, Hutchinson, Lac qui Parle, Marshall, Morris, New Ulm, Ortonville, Redwood Falls, Springfield, St. James, Tracy, Westbrook-Walnut Grove, Windom and up to fourteen additional communities.

**Partners providing support and collaboration- not receiving** funds from LCCMR include: Southwest Initiative Foundation, University of MN-Morris, MN West Community & Technical Colleges, GreenCorps, Clean Energy Resource Teams, as well as many local businesses, government units, fraternal organizations, youth organizations and private foundations.

**B. Timeline Requirements:** July 2011-June 2013, with main activities Sept.-April (school year)

**C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs:** Private industry, local governments, utilities, foundations and individuals provide funding for local YES! teams. Entities benefiting from YES! are asked to contribute a percentage of savings resulting from previous successful energy action projects.

## 2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget

*Project YES! (2.0) Submitted by Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center  
30 Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Projects in WC/SW Minnesota*

### IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET - 2 years July 2011-June 2013

<b>BUDGET ITEM</b> (See list of Eligible & Non-Eligible Costs, p. 13)	<b>AMOUNT</b>
<b>Personnel:</b> (1)FTE Project Leader & Central unit coordinator, Salary 75%, Benefits 25%(2) .5FTEs Coordinators for North and South region units 75% salary, 25% Benefits. All positions 24 months	\$166,400
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> (3) solar pathfinders - solar site analysis tools to be shared by teams.	\$1,000
<b>Travel:</b> Project Leader and unit coordinators travel- 1500 miles per month for three sites combined for approx total of 36,000 x \$.50/mile over two years (required for serving widely dispersed rural communities). \$600 lodging and meal allowance- no overnight travel expected. Additional requirements to be covered by non-ENRTF	\$18,600
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b> Team expense allowance (such as transportation and school staff expense)- (30 teams x \$500/team= \$15,000 per year) x 2 years , YES! project seed funds- \$15,000yr (30 teams x \$500/team) x 2 years,	\$60,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST</b>	<b>\$ 246,000</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS



<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Southwest Initiative Foundation \$25,000 pending (for 2011); Past award sponsors- Kandiyohi Power Co-op, Otter Tail Power Company, Lake Region Bank, Great River Energy & others- \$5,000/year x 2 yrs= \$10,000 pending; Participant fees \$30@ to cover event food, t-shirts and other expenses- 400 x \$30= \$12,000x 2 years= \$24,000	\$59,000	pending
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b> Past state funds have included CERTs grants and support from WC Sustainable Development Partnership awarded to YES! teams and Schools Cutting Carbon grants awards to YES! projects (pending- no amount listed at this time).	\$ -	Pending
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period:</b> Donated consultant time for team projects- based on average of previous years \$2-3000 per team x 30 teams= \$60-90,000; In-kind travel donated \$4000; Other volunteer and student time additional.	\$ 90,000	based on history
<b>Funding History:</b> Southwest Initiative Foundation provided \$60,000 in 2007-09 to establish YES! in SWIF service area (Does not include SWIF staff time and expenses) . MNREM grant allowed one year expansion w/ Prairie Ecology Bus Center during 2009-10 (\$202,000 grant administered by Southwest Initiative Foundation + over \$92,000 leveraged/in-kind match).	\$350,000	

## Area served by YES! and Project Examples.



**New London – Spicer, MN**  
The NLS YES! team raised funds and worked with area contractors to construct solar panels for a community theatre.



 Counties with YES! teams, 2007-2010  
 Counties for proposed YES! expansion, 2011-2012



### Willmar, MN

Willmar's YES! team renovated an old green house and installed a solar and biomass heating system. Greens and vegetables grown by students are distributed throughout the community through food-shares, the area Food Shelf and the Farm-to-School program.

## **2011-2012 ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

**PROJECT TITLE:** YES!(2.0) 30 Renewable Energy & Energy Conservation Projects

### **Organization Description:**

Prairie Woods ELC is a regional center for environmental education and outdoor recreation located 11 miles north of Willmar, MN in Kandiyohi County. The mission of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center is to promote an individual and shared commitment to the responsible use, management and preservation of our natural resources. The center began offering programs in 1995 and now annually serves over 20,000 people from throughout west central and southwestern Minnesota. Prairie Woods enjoys strong connections with local and state government agencies, school districts, camps, youth service agencies, conservation groups, initiative foundations and private businesses from throughout the region. Prairie Woods is a 501c3 non-profit organization with an annual budget of approximately \$ 430,000 and operates on-site and outreach programs from a beautiful 500-acre facility owned by Kandiyohi County. Prairie Woods has been recognized by CERTs as a leader in renewable energy in west central Minnesota and the facility is on track to operate entirely with renewable energy by the close of 2010. The center serves as a model of renewable energy and energy conservation for west central and southwestern Minnesota and has served as the catalyst for a number of renewable energy and conservation projects in the region.

Since 2007, Prairie Woods has expanded its outreach capacity through Project EcoVoyageur and the Youth Energy Summit (YES!) program. Prairie Woods' outreach programs provide unique learning and service experiences to students within their own communities. EcoVoyageur, focusing on water quality and conservation, introduces students to local lakes or rivers from the seats of a 34-foot, 20-passenger voyageur canoe. The YES! program has developed into a regional resource which far exceeds expectations of a typical environmental education or service learning experience. YES! empowers young people to achieve meaningful renewable energy and energy conservation projects in their communities. YES! is presently a finalist for a 2010 Minnesota Environmental Initiative Award.

### **Project Manager Qualifications:**

Anne Dybsetter serves as Coordinator of the YES! program. Dybsetter has 10 years experience in environmental education. She has a bachelor's degree, a graduate certificate in Social Science, and is currently completing a masters-level teaching licensure specializing in science. Her coursework and experience includes program evaluation, communications, and extensive education methods. In 5 years at PWELC, Dybsetter has served as Environmental Education Coordinator and YES! Coordinator. In these roles, Dybsetter has overseen the evaluation, update, and implementation of environmental education programs that serve sixty schools and the general public. She has coordinated the Youth Energy Summit since its inception in 2007, including mentoring new staff for the 2009-2010 expansion to an additional 9 teams. Anne works closely with YES! teams, organizes YES! events, and communicates regularly with coaches and students to ensure they have the resources needed for success in their projects. Anne, other PWELC staff, and partners at Southwest Initiative Foundation are integral to an active regional network of businesses, organizations, and communities in the renewable energy field.

