



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2016 Work Plan

**Date of Report:** January 5, 2016

**Date of Next Status Update Report:** January 2017

**Date of Work Plan Approval:**

**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2019

**Does this submission include an amendment request?** No

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**PROJECT TITLE:** Improving Outdoor Classrooms for Education and Recreation

**Project Manager:** Amy Kay Kerber

**Organization:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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**Location:** Statewide. A map of the current School Forest locations is attached.

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**Total ENRTF Project Budget:**

**ENRTF Appropriation:** \$440,000

**Amount Spent:** \$0

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**Balance:** \$440,000

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**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2016, Chp. xx, Sec. xx, Subd. xx

**Appropriation Language:**

## **I. PROJECT TITLE:** Improving Outdoor Classrooms for Education and Recreation

### **II. PROJECT STATEMENT:**

The School Forest Program supports 130 outdoor classrooms across Minnesota ranging in size from .25 to over 300 acres. These outdoor classrooms serve schools and communities with high cultural and socio-economic diversity in rural and urban locations. Each School Forest is unique, with physical features ranging from pine plantations to prairies to small manicured wood lots. The DNR supports these sites by providing teacher training in outdoor education practices and activities, assisting with site issues, developing land management plans, and providing educational materials and help to meet academic standards while teaching outside.

To inspire learning and connect with the natural world, students need outdoor classrooms that are easily accessible and located in healthy, safe environments. DNR foresters create free, site-specific School Forest management plans. These plans are modeled after DNR stewardship plans and incorporate each school's unique educational goals and land management needs. The plans include priority land management projects to create safe and healthy outdoor classrooms. Recent School Forest focus groups and program evaluations show that teachers don't always have the necessary resources to complete the land management projects and activities recommended in their site management plans. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CCM) have the expertise needed to do the heavy lifting on projects such as building boardwalks, removing invasive species, and creating accessible trails and entrances. Together, the DNR and CCM will provide new resources not currently available to schools.

This project will:

- Renovate a minimum of 60 School Forests to improve quality and increase frequency of outdoor education.
- Advance knowledge and skills in sustainable outdoor classroom management through:
  - Hands-on, site-specific training for 200 facility managers, teachers, and community members in conjunction with CCM management projects to maximize long-term site maintenance and sustainability.
  - Four regional trainings for 160 school staff and community members focused on local land management issues including specific management skills and activities.
- Engage 3,000 students in hands-on service learning with CCM management projects.
- Evaluate project outcomes and determine future support needs.

A new .5 FTE temporary DNR School Forest specialist will be funded to maximize project impact and schools served. In conjunction with DNR foresters and School Forest staff, the new specialist will determine 60 sites that have the biggest need for CCM assistance on management projects. CCM crews will jumpstart these projects such as developing new trails, removing hazards (poison ivy, dead tree limbs, etc.), and adding structures (amphitheaters, benches, shelters, etc.). The School Forest specialist and CCM will engage students at each site in service-learning activities. CCM will also train volunteers and school staff at sites to handle future site-specific management needs. Four regionally based land management summits that target district facility managers and lead teachers will be delivered. These summits will elevate land management knowledge and skills to better support long-term outdoor classroom maintenance through hands-on sessions in tree care, trail design, invasive species treatment, tree planting, and land management. The School Forest specialist will use various evaluation techniques to determine the outcomes of the project and future support needs.

This project will provide schools with the boost needed to bring their outdoor classrooms into more manageable, safe, and healthy environments for learning. The training and skill building of teachers and facility managers will initiate sustainable, long-term management of sites and is an important component to the long-term use of outdoor classrooms. By training school staff on-site and offering local natural resource management summits we'll be able to reach a greater number of staff and volunteers and provide higher quality, more relevant information compared to just one statewide training. By engaging students in projects, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills will increase and students will be more connected to their natural surroundings.

### III. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of *January 2017*:

Project Status as of *July 2017*:

Project Status as of *January 2018*:

Project Status as of *July 2018*:

Project Status as of *January 2019*:

**Overall Project Outcomes and Results:**

### IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

**ACTIVITY 1:** Renovate 60 School Forest sites and train long-term site stewards.

**Description:**

The School Forest specialist will use surveys, teacher feedback, DNR forester assessments, and individual site management plans to determine sites that need land management assistance. Sites will be prioritized based on:

- School demonstrated need for land management project assistance.
- Priority projects identified by DNR foresters within the site’s School Forest management plan.
- CCM’s ability to complete the type of project needed.

CCM crews will work with site leaders to complete sustainable forest management projects including: removing invasive species, treating poison ivy, building educational structures, developing trails, etc.

During these projects the School Forest specialist will connect with lead teachers, facility managers, and School Forest committee members to coordinate on-site land management training. CCM and DNR will instruct school staff and community members on site-specific natural resources skills so they can continue land management work on their own to maintain the site. DNR staff will work with CCM crews to ensure that proper techniques, resources, and connections are in place for each training. In addition, school staff (facility managers, teachers, and administrators) and volunteers will further their knowledge and skills at four regional land management summits (northeast, northwest, south, and Twin Cities metro). The summits will be organized by the School Forest specialist and provide hands-on skills, detailed information, and resources on land management practices. Topics will include invasive species treatment and monitoring, trail maintenance, tree care (pruning, mulching, etc.), and risk assessment. Professionals such as arborists, DNR foresters, U of M Extension staff, and forest health specialists will be invited to lead sessions on specific topics related to School Forests in that region. Summits will be full day events held at School Forest sites or nature centers depending on site availability and outdoor features.

The DNR will use multiple techniques to evaluate the project outcomes and look at what future support and resources are needed. Techniques may include surveys, focus groups, or interviews. It is important to evaluate project success and identify the most helpful project components to assess future options and continued assistance.

**Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:**

**ENRTF Budget:** \$ 311,240  
**Amount Spent:** \$ 0  
**Balance:** \$ 311,240

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Coordinate (DNR) and complete (CCM) management projects at a minimum of 60 School Forests. 5 projects by June 2017 40 projects by June 2018 60 projects by June 2019	<i>June 2019</i>
2. Train 200 teachers and community members on land management practices during CCM management projects using hands-on, site-specific skills. CCM/DNR 18 people by June 2017 120 people by June 2018 200 people by June 2019	<i>June 2019</i>
3. Provide four regional land management summits to 160 school staff and volunteers offering area specific information, proper land management practices, and hands-on skill building. DNR 2 summits by June 2018 2 summits by June 2019	<i>June 2019</i>
4. Evaluate project outcomes and determine future support and resource needs. DNR	June 2019

**Activity Status as of January 2017:**

**Activity Status as of July 2017:**

**Activity Status as of January 2018:**

**Activity Status as of July 2018:**

**Activity Status as of January 2019:**

**Final Report Summary:**

**ACTIVITY 2:** Engage students in land management service-learning experiences at School Forest sites.

**Description:**

Site improvement projects will engage 3,000 students in hands-on, service learning activities with CCM crews and DNR staff. The School Forest specialist will work with CCM crews on the educational aspects of the overall grant. This will be done as part of the initial new CCM crew training each fall and as work is progressing at School Forest sites to help ensure crew member comfort using best practices for service-learning in school settings. The School Forest specialist will engage teachers in using the CCM management projects as an opportunity to further student land management knowledge and hands-on experiences outside. CCM will work with students to do service-learning activities related to site-specific management projects. Projects and activities will vary depending on the type of management project being completed and the age and ability of students. This will further the connection that students have with their site and increase their knowledge of land management best practices.

**Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:**

**ENRTF Budget:** \$ 128,760  
**Amount Spent:** \$ 0  
**Balance:** \$ 128,760

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
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1. Engage 3,000 students in hands-on service learning experiences with CCM management projects at School Forest sites. CCM/DNR 150 students by June 2017 1950 students by June 2018 3000 students by June 2019	June 2019
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**Activity Status as of January 2017:**

**Activity Status as of July 2017:**

**Activity Status as of January 2018:**

**Activity Status as of July 2018:**

**Activity Status as of January 2019:**

**Final Report Summary:**

**V. DISSEMINATION:**

**Description:**

Results will be promoted to the public through news releases, Facebook posts, and the School Forest e-newsletter. Some schools will be featured in the monthly school highlight on the School Forest website ([www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest](http://www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest)).

**Status as of January 2017:**

**Status as of July 2017:**

**Status as of January 2018:**

**Status as of July 2018:**

**Status as of January 2019:**

**Final Report Summary:**

**VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:**

**A. ENRTF Budget Overview:**

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Overview Explanation
Personnel:	\$ 128,000	DNR, Division of Forestry, new School Forest specialist, .5 FTE, three years.
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$308,000	Two years of Conservation Corps Minnesota for completing management activities at sites, leading school staff and volunteer trainings, and providing student service-learning activities.
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$4,000	Four regional land management summits, (educational materials, workshop supplies, room rental fees, etc.) 4 summits with 20-60 participants at each, 2 summits x \$1200 & 2 summits x \$800 = \$4000
<b>TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$440,000</b>	

**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** N/A

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:** N/A

**Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:** .5 FTE for three years.

**Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF**

**Appropriation:** 7 total FTEs from CCM across duration of the grant.

**B. Other Funds:**

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
<b>Non-state</b>			
School districts local on-site support from schools, parents, businesses and community organizations.	\$120,000	\$	Assistance with management steps, training, and education time (varies by school district and community), estimated \$30/hour x 4000 hours = \$120,000
School District supplies	\$20,000	\$	Match provided by supplying tools, building materials, planting materials, etc. for management projects.
<b>State</b>			
DNR Forestry education staff	\$26,000	\$	.15 FTE/year for 2 years
Direct & Necessary for .5FTE School Forest Specialist	\$10,884		
DNR forester time	\$120,000	\$	Approximately .5 FTE/3 years
Travel in-state costs	\$6,000	\$	School Forest specialist, forestry education staff, and forester travel cost: fleet, lodging, and meals.
Mileage or sub-stipend reimbursement	\$15,000	\$	Substitute teacher stipends or mileage reimbursement provided for participants to attend summits and on-site trainings, who would be otherwise unable to attend.
Regional Land Management Summits	\$1,600	\$	Photocopies of handouts, food, and speaker fees for 4 regional land management summits.
<b>TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:</b>	<b>\$319,484</b>	<b>\$</b>	

**VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:**

**A. Project Partners:**

1. MN DNR:

- A new part-time, temporary DNR School Forest specialist will be funded to coordinate schools, enhance student participation, create four new regional land management summits, complete an evaluation of grant outcomes, and manage the overall grant. .5FTE, three years, \$128,000.
- Existing DNR Forestry education staff, DNR foresters, and other DNR natural resource staff will provide in-kind education assistance, natural resource expertise, and guidance.

2. CCM crews will complete site management projects, lead students in service-learning activities, and instruct school staff and community volunteers in land management trainings. Three years, \$308,000.
3. About 130 schools and their School Forest committee volunteers will partake in activities and trainings through on-site management projects, regional land management summits, or student service-learning activities providing in-kind match hours. School districts will also provide in-kind match through supplies and materials purchased for management projects.
4. County, city, and other local and state natural resource staff will provide in-kind support on projects.

**B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:**

The DNR School Forest Program has been in existence for over 60 years. A 2010 ENRTF grant expanded the program by establishing new School Forests, improving outdoor education quality, and improving program efficiencies. Focus groups conducted during the 2010 ENRTF grant and recent program evaluations show that a lack of site management knowledge and resources are inhibiting outdoor student experiences. This project will complete major site maintenance tasks and equip schools to more easily maintain their outdoor classrooms in the future. This will increase the quality and frequency of student experiences outdoors, as many teachers have called out trail safety and site access as major barriers to outdoor education. In the long-term, more environmentally literate citizens will be created through School Forest and CCM experiences. DNR will continue to provide forestry education staff to support general program needs during this grant and into the future.

**C. Funding History:**

Funding Source and Use of Funds	Funding Timeframe	\$ Amount
2010, Project 180-F, Expanding Outdoor Classrooms at Minnesota Schools, provided funding to establish and enhance outdoor classrooms through improved educational resources (teacher workshops, curriculum, and website development) and increased capacity to serve schools (additional staff to meet demand).	FY11-13	\$300,000

**VIII. FEE TITLE ACQUISITION/CONSERVATION EASEMENT/RESTORATION REQUIREMENTS:**

**A. Parcel List:** N/A

**B. Acquisition/Restoration Information:** N/A

**IX. VISUAL COMPONENT or MAP(S):** See attached graphic.

**X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM:** N/A

**XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted no later than January 2017, July 2017, January 2018, July 2018, and January 2019. A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2019.

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
M.L. 2016 Project Budget**

**Project Title:** 91-C Improving Outdoor Classrooms for Education and Recreation

**Legal Citation:**

**Project Manager:** Amy Kay Kerber

**Organization:** MN DNR

**M.L. 2016 ENRTF Appropriation:** \$440,000

**Project Length and Completion Date:** 3 Years, June 30, 2019

**Date of Report:** January 5, 2016



ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 1 Balance	Activity 2 Budget	Amount Spent	Activity 2 Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>	<i>Renovate 60 School Forest sites and train long-term stewards.</i>			<i>Engage students in land management experiences at School Forest sites.</i>				
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>								
<i>1 new School Forest specialist, .5 FTE, \$128,000 total, 75.47% salary 24.53% benefits, three years</i>	\$94,720	\$0	\$94,720	\$33,280	\$0	\$33,280	\$128,000	\$128,000
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>								
<i>Two years of Conservation Corps Minnesota</i>	\$212,520	\$0	\$212,520	\$95,480	\$0	\$95,480	\$308,000	\$308,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>								
<i>Four regional Land Management Summits, \$1,200 x 2 summits, \$800 x 2 summits = \$4,000</i>	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,000	\$4,000
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>\$311,240</b>			<b>\$128,760</b>			<b>\$440,000</b>	<b>\$440,000</b>



# Improving Outdoor Classrooms for Education and Recreation

Photos below include: Edgewood School Forest, Mounds View; Lakewood School Forest, Duluth; Como Woodlands School Forest, Saint Paul; Lake of the Woods School Forest, Baudette.



