



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2020-038

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: August 13, 2021

Project Title: Mentoring the Next Generation of Conservation Professionals

Project Budget: \$500,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Deborah Loon

Organization: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Inc

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: August 13, 2021

Reporting Schedule: April 1 / October 1 of each year.

Project Completion: June 30, 2024

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2024

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d

Appropriation Language: \$500,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc., to provide paid internships and apprenticeships for diverse young people to learn about careers in the conservation field from United States Fish and Wildlife Service professionals while working at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Internships and apprenticeships on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District will introduce 40 diverse young people over two years to careers in the conservation field.

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

As one of just 14 urban wildlife refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District is charged with engaging the next generation of youth who, for a variety of reasons, are not connected to outdoors and nature. This is critical to ensuring a future constituency passionate about protecting our public lands, as well as encouraging a diversity of youth to consider conservation careers.

The Refuge offers vast opportunities for Twin Cities residents to connect with wildlife, learn about their habitats and enjoy nature-based recreation. Given its location and varied habitats, the Refuge and District is able to serve as a learning laboratory and training site for future conservationists, natural resource biologists and environmental educators. Currently, this is done through a handful of unpaid internships every year. However, with the rising costs of a college education and intransigent economic disparities, many students cannot afford unpaid internships. This is especially true for young people of color and low-income. Students often must take jobs outside of their chosen field to pay for college or help support their families. Without good internships, they do not gain experience and connections needed to compete for quality jobs.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

We will build an extensive program of summer internships and full-time apprenticeship opportunities on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District. This grant program will attract students with diverse backgrounds, introduce them to the conservation field and provide mentorship and job skills to these future resource professionals. The participants will be given paid positions and the opportunity to work side-by-side with and learn from USFWS professionals and other conservation partners. They will design and deliver environmental education programs, plan and co-lead wildlife interpretive and nature-based activities, assist USFWS personnel with habitat restoration and enhancement projects, conduct biological surveys, develop and maintain visitor use amenities, and explore conservation-related career options. Some of the participants will experience outdoor activities like fishing, paddling, orienteering, birding and hunting for the first time.

The ENRTF grant will fund 7 full-time positions -- 3 two-year apprenticeships (Refuge Biology, Community Outreach and Visitor Services) and 4 one-year Teaching Internships (8 over 2 years).

Other non-ENRTF sources will fund a two-year apprenticeship in Wetland Management District Operations, 12 high school internships on the Refuge's two-year SEAK Green Team, 5 summer internships in Biology, Maintenance and Visitor Services, and a full-time Intern Coordinator.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

This internship and apprenticeship program will introduce 40 young people over 2 years to careers in the conservation field (11 with grant funds and 29 with other funds). They will explore conservation career options, then be able to compete for post-secondary education and employment opportunities. Through mentorship, we will build a diverse pool of conservationists who will contribute to protecting, restoring and enhancing Minnesota's natural resources. Their 50,000 hours of service will enhance over 600 acres of prairie, wetland and forest, and introduce thousands of children to the wonders of the natural world through environmental education and nature-based recreation.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Statewide

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: 3 Full-Time Apprentices will work alongside USFWS personnel and gain hands-on experience in Biology, Community Outreach and Visitor Services

Activity Budget: \$225,000

Activity Description:

3 recent college graduates will have full-time paid apprenticeships with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for 2 years each. They will work with and be mentored by USFWS professionals. The Refuge Biology Apprentice will build skills in biological monitoring, habitat restoration and enhancement planning and implementation, visitor engagement, and balancing needs of wildlife and visitors. The Community Outreach Apprentice will develop and present engaging outreach programs to urban and suburban youth and families on the Refuge and in the community, develop new partnerships to reach urban youth, and attend community events and festivals to engage urban audiences in nature-based activities. The Visitor Services Apprentice will increase visitor trips to and experiences on the Refuge through strategic communications and marketing, improved visitor experience tools (e.g., interpretation, education, equipment) and enhanced signage.

Other funds will support a District Operations Apprentice who will do biological monitoring, plan and implement habitat restoration and enhancement projects, and develop, construct and maintain visitor use amenities on the Wetland Management District.

As full-time employees of the Minnesota Valley Trust, apprentices will be paid \$15.50/hour (wage will increase \$0.50/hour/year), covered by workers compensation insurance and eligible for benefits.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
3 Apprentices complete 12 months	August 31, 2022
3 Apprentices complete 12 months	August 31, 2023

Activity 2: 4 Full-Time Environmental Education Teaching Interns will broaden their understanding of environmental education and build their teaching skills

Activity Budget: \$275,000

Activity Description:

4 recent college graduates at a time will have one-year paid Environmental Education Teaching experiences on the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (8 total interns over 2 years). They will learn from and be mentored by USFWS professionals, design and deliver quality environmental educational programs to over 4,000 children, teachers and families who visit the Refuge from schools throughout the Twin Cities metro area, and lead interpretive programs for the public on the Refuge. The interns will be paid \$15.50/hour as full-time employees of the Minnesota Valley Trust (wage will increase \$0.50/hour/year). They will be covered by workers compensation insurance and provided employment benefits.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
4 Teaching Practicum Interns complete year 1	August 31, 2022
4 Teaching Practicum Interns complete year 2	August 31, 2023

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Sarena Selbo	Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District	Supervise, support and engage the interns and apprentices as they design and deliver environmental education programs, plan and co-lead wildlife interpretive and nature-based activities, assist USFWS personnel with habitat restoration and enhancement projects, conduct biological surveys, improve visitor facilities, and explore conservation-related career options.	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

Minnesota Valley Trust and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge will share information about our Internship and Apprenticeship Program and the ENRTF grant through our websites, social media and news releases.

Postings about the new positions will be broadly disseminated for recruitment of youth participants, including through secondary and post-secondary schools with highly diverse student populations, local culturally-specific media outlets, community partners, job boards, websites and social media.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust and Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge & Wetland Management District are committed to maintaining this robust internship and apprenticeship program for the long-term. Future funding will be sought through philanthropic efforts with foundations, corporations, civic organizations and individuals by the Trust and Minnesota Valley Refuge Friends, as well as through other state and federal sources of funds (e.g., workforce grant programs).

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Priority Expansion of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$500,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Refuge Visitor Services Apprentice		1 Apprentice will work with the Refuge Visitor Services team for 2 years to increase public use and enjoyment of the Refuge through strategic communications and marketing, enhanced public use materials and tools, and improved signage. The grant will fund wages and payroll taxes, while workers compensation and benefits will be covered by other funds.			0%	2		\$75,000
Refuge Biology Apprentice		1 Apprentice will work with the Refuge Biologist for 2 years to conduct biological monitoring, assist with designing and implementing habitat restoration and enhancement activities, and engage with volunteers. The grant will fund wages and payroll taxes, while workers compensation and benefits will be covered by other private funds.			0%	2		\$75,000
Community Outreach Apprentice		1 Apprentice will work with the Community Outreach team to develop and present engaging outreach programs to urban and suburban youth and families on the Refuge and in the community, develop new partnerships to reach urban youth, and attend community events and festivals to engage urban audiences in nature-based activities. The grant will fund wages and payroll taxes, while workers compensation and benefits will be covered by other funds.			0%	2		\$75,000
Environmental Education Teaching Interns		4 Interns per year for 2 years will work with the Refuge Environmental Education team to design and deliver environmental education programming to 8,000 students, teachers and parents each year, as well as interpretive programming to the public. The grant will fund wages and payroll taxes for the interns. Other private funds will pay for workers compensation and benefits.			0%	8		\$275,000
							Sub Total	\$500,000

Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$500,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.	Minnesota Valley Trust will fully fund the District Operations Apprentice and 2 Summer Biology Intern positions, as well as 30% of the Intern Coordinator position (70% is funded by USFWS through cooperative agreement). The Trust also will fund the workers compensation insurance and benefits for the 7 positions funded by the ENRTF grant (Refuge Biology Apprentice, Community Outreach Apprentice, Visitor Services Apprentice and 4 Environmental Education Teaching Interns).	Secured	\$200,000
Cash	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	USFWS will fund the SEAK Green Team Interns and 3 Summer Interns through cooperative agreements with the American Conservation Experience and Hispanic Access Foundation respectively. USFWS also will fund 70% of the Intern Coordinator position through a cooperative agreement with the Minnesota Valley Trust.	Pending	\$300,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$500,000
			Funds Total	\$500,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [1a0aef3f-e92.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The attachment is a map showing the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District boundaries and units....

Financial Capacity

File: [c84b0ee9-bdd.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	676f48ad-2bc.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Background Check Certification Form	dceb8b70-60f.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

We shortened the length from 3 years to 2 years. We also reduced the number of participants.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

