

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

# M.L. 2021 Approved Work Plan

## **General Information**

**ID Number:** 2021-186

**Staff Lead:** Rory Anderson

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** July 21, 2021

**Project Title:** The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative

**Project Budget:** $348,000

## **Project Manager Information**

**Name:** Christina Hausman Rhode

**Organization:** Voyageurs Conservancy

**Office Telephone:** (612) 333-5424

**Email:** vnpa@voyageurs.org

**Web Address:** https://www.voyageurs.org/

## **Project Reporting**

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** July 20, 2021

**Reporting Schedule:** December 1 / June 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. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e

**Appropriation Language:** $348,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Voyageurs Conservancy to launch a new initiative to connect Minnesota youth, young adults, and their families to Voyageurs National Park by learning about the park's waters, wildlife, and forests and by engaging in the park's preservation.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2024

## **Narrative**

**Project Summary:** The Voyageurs Classroom will connect 5,000 Minnesota youth to Voyageurs National Park over three years to learn about its waters, wildlife, forests and skies, and engage in its preservation.

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

This project will connect Minnesota youth to Voyageurs - their National Park.   
  
To protect our park for generations to come, we must create meaningful contexts for youth to become Voyageurs’ stewards and champions—this begins with environmental education, for all ages.  
  
Voyageurs is both a state treasure and an exceptional outdoor classroom encompassing ecological, cultural, and geologic wonders. However, its public programming is extremely limited. Voyageurs is 40% water which creates barriers for many to experience the park’s waterways.   
  
The park’s current environmental education program serves only 1,200 youth annually. Opportunities for high school/college youth are particularly limited. Internships lack stipends and structured partnerships which limits diverse representation and access to career pathways.   
  
Community surveys and exploratory meetings tell us families, teachers, and partners are eager for increased education opportunities in the park. A life-long International Falls resident remarked, “I didn’t step foot in the park until I was 18 years old. I’m trying to change that for my kids.”  
  
Currently, Voyageurs National Park has no sustainable programming for environmental education beyond K-6, internships, distance learning, or neighboring families. VNPA will address this need and remove barriers for more youth to experience the park.

**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.**

With support from LCCMR and private philanthropy, VNPA will grow its public-private partnership with the National Park Service and drastically expand public engagement by implementing a Voyageurs Classroom suite of programs for children, college students, and families. VNPA and the Park Service will collaboratively launch a joint education initiative - the Voyageurs Classroom - to grow the number of youth and young adults we serve from 1,200 to over 3,000 annually by the end of phase one.  
  
By establishing new partnerships with schools and colleges, growing volunteerism, and leveraging existing resources, VNPA will deliver bolstered environmental education programs for a wider and more diverse audience, including:  
  
- Additional programs for K-6 students including floating classroom experiences and virtual learning  
- An expanded Teen Ambassador initiative  
- Field Fellows program for undergraduate and graduate students  
- In-park event and program opportunities for families  
  
VNPA is the only dedicated 501c3 program partner of the park. Since 2012, VNPA has engaged 200 high schoolers in the award-winning National Park Teen Ambassador program, and piloted ‘Love Your Park’ events reaching over 2,500 people in 2019. VNPA recently hired an education manager to support growth innovation in park programs alongside NPS staff.

**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?**

Voyageurs National Park’s 218,000 acres comprise lakes and wetlands designated as Outstanding Resource Value Waters, rare geology, diverse species and ecosystems, and 655 miles of undeveloped shoreline. The park provides for current and potential land management, research, education, and preservation opportunities. Yet without the means to reinforce personal connections to Voyageurs, public support for its ongoing stewardship will wane. Established programming that provides meaningful and reliable opportunities in the park and in the classroom will ensure increased access for younger and more diverse audiences, and an ongoing partnership with park neighbors empowering them to care for the park.

## **Project Location**

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?** Region(s): NE

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

**When will the work impact occur?** During the Project

## **Activities and Milestones**

### **Activity 1: Engage 5,000 K-12 youth in Voyageurs Classroom programs in the park and in the classroom.**

**Activity Budget:** $250,375

**Activity Description:**Activity 1 focuses on expanding K-12 learning opportunities through the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative. Program capacity will expand by adding staff, training volunteer educators, providing teacher stipends, and collaborating with University of Minnesota-Duluth’s environmental education program. VNPA will also adapt current curriculum for classroom and virtual learning and host collaborative workshops with teachers and students to innovate current programs with new subject matter that is relevant to diverse audiences and aligns with school standards. Activity 1 has three main components:  
- VNPA will increase programs for K-6 students to experience park trails, field days, and floating classroom opportunities that get children in the park via its waterways. Activities will provides hands-on enrichment on ecology, history, and geology.  
- The successful Teen Ambassador program will expand to serve 300 high school youth, especially from local, urban, and tribal areas. Students will participate in single and multi-day park excursions centered on our changing lakes and forests, and environmental careers. In turn, future Voyageurs stewards will be more representative of diverse communities.  
- Current park programs will be adapted to include virtual and classroom components, broadening the reach of VNPA’s environmental education programs to those beyond the park’s neighboring communities.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Train 8 volunteer and teacher educators. | October 31, 2022 |
| Engage 1,500 K-6 youth in education programs at park and virtually/in the classroom. | October 31, 2022 |
| Adapt two existing K-6 programs for virtual/classroom learning and pilot to 15 classes. | October 31, 2022 |
| Engage 3,500 K-6 youth in education programs in education programs at park and virtually/in the classroom. | October 31, 2023 |
| Develop and implement program evaluation and create project report. | June 30, 2024 |
| Engage 300 high school students in 1-day and multi-day Teen Ambassador program experiences. | June 30, 2024 |

### **Activity 2: Deliver Love Your Park series to connect regional families to the National Park in their backyard.**

**Activity Budget:** $37,325

**Activity Description:**By establishing the park as a truly accessible resource that provides real experiential value for local kids and families, we can further develop a local conservation ethic and love of the park. Tension that existed between Voyageurs National Park and its neighboring communities in the park’s early formation lingers today. VNPA will expand its Love Your Park program series piloted in 2019 with an education and recreation series for families to further reinforce lessons kids experience in K12 programs. Love Your Park aims to get people of all ages, abilities, and skill levels recreating in and connecting to Voyageurs National Park. Programming will be year-round and include guided hikes and winter snowshoe walks, volunteer work days, ‘how to’ workshops, and special speakers and performances. VNPA will work with current partners and programmatic leaders, such as the Boreal Observatory, to bring learning opportunities to the park. Through this effort, local families and community members will gain a greater understanding of the park's resources, how they can recreate safely, and an increased sense of responsibility for their public lands.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Pilot monthly series to engage families in learning and recreation in Voyageurs National Park. | June 30, 2022 |
| Deliver year-round monthly series to engage families in learning and recreation in the park. | December 31, 2023 |
| Evaluate program effectiveness and impact. | May 31, 2024 |

### **Activity 3: Establish Field Fellows program to empower young adults with environmental career experience at Voyageurs National Park.**

**Activity Budget:** $60,300

**Activity Description:**Voyageurs National Park offers an exceptional outdoor classroom for future conservation professionals to gain hands-on experience. However, the park currently lacks a structured internship program and established college/university partnerships. VNPA will launch a Field Fellows program to ensure the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative creates professional opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.  
  
In phase one, VNPA will support a minimum of 15 Field Fellows (undergraduate or graduate students) over a 3-year period in coordination with National Park Service staff. Fellows will perform project and research activities involving water quality, invasive species, wildlife science, environmental education, and historic preservation, among other areas. Paid internships for undergraduate and graduate students will help increase accessibility and diversity. Projects will be designed with both university and park priorities in mind. Under the Voyageurs Classroom, Field Fellows will contribute to educational programs, field work, and conservation efforts in VNP, while representing a new and diverse generation of public land professionals.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Sponsor 6 Field Fellows in park positions engaging in hands-on career experience. | September 30, 2022 |
| Sponsor 9 Field Fellows in park positions engaging in hands-on career experience. | May 31, 2024 |
| Evaluate program effectiveness and impact. | June 30, 2024 |

## **Project Partners and Collaborators**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Organization** | **Role** | **Receiving Funds** |
| Joel Halvorson | Boreal Observatory | Joel Halvorson is a Science Communications Consultant and a designated External Service Provider, supporting the University of Minnesota-Duluth’s public engagement efforts. VNPA will partner with the Boreal Observatory and its collaborators to expand learning opportunities in the park for children and families. | No |
| Brian Meyer | Southwest High School & AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) | Brian Meyer partners with VNPA to connect Teen Ambassador program opportunities to students he works with. | No |
| Brian Harmon | National Park Service | Brian C. Harmon, Chief of Cultural and Natural Resource Management at Voyageurs National Park, will help oversee internship program development and supervision for the Field Fellows program. | No |
| Laurie A. Bitter | Indus School | Laurie Bitter, principal, will collaborate with VNPA and NPS to connect her K-12 students to our environmental education programs in the park. | No |
| Bob DeGross | National Park Service | Bob DeGross, Superintendent of Voyageurs National Park, will oversee and advise on the growth and development of the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative and help support outreach to partners and communities. | No |
| Julie Athman Ernst | Center for Environmental Education, Department of Applied Human Sciences, University of Minnesota - Duluth | Julie Athman Ernst, Ph.D., Director of Master of Environmental Education Program, will advise on education program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program. | No |
| Ingrid Schneider | Forest Resources, University of Minnesota | Ingrid Schneider, Ph.D. will advise on program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program. | No |
| Joseph K. Bump | Conservation Sciences Graduate Program, University of Minnesota, Institute on the Environment | Joseph K. Bump, Ph.D. will advise on program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program. | No |
| Suzanne Huggett | Wilderness Inquiry | Suzanne serves as our partner on trip coordination for multi-day aspects of the National Park Teen Ambassador program. VNPA contracts with Wilderness Inquiry to lead these trips. | Yes |
| Tawnya Schoewe | National Park Service | Tawnya Schoewe is Chief of Interpretation at Voyageurs National Park and will serve as the lead National Park Service liaison on all joint education program planning. | 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.**Voyageurs National Park Association will share Voyageurs Classroom Initiative resources with teachers, students, and partners throughout with Minnesota with a particular focus on St. Louis and Koochiching Counties as well as the Twin Cities metro area. Each year, the education and outreach manager, in conjunction with the environmental educator, will collect quantitative and qualitative data, including the number of program participants, location and demographic data for participating schools and students, and evaluation forms submitted by educators, students and volunteers.  
  
In addition to LCCMR reporting, information and updates regarding the Voyageurs Classroom project will be made available the Voyageurs National Park Association's website (www.voyageurs.org), e- newsletter, print newsletter, social media, and press releases to local media and public presentations at relevant community events.  
  
The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines.

## **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?**Voyageurs National Park Association is completely supported through philanthropy and is fortunate to receive funding from a wide variety of sources including individuals, businesses neighboring the park, Minnesota corporate partners, and local and national foundations. VNPA is committed to including the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative as a key component of our programming and our diverse sources of support will ensure continuity. VNPA will leverage the LCCMR grant to scale up environmental education and to attract additional private donations.

## **Budget Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category / Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Gen. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified Staff?** | **$ Amount** |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Environmental Educator |  | Deliver K-12 and Love Your Park programming and train others to deliver programming. 1.5 FTE = 3 yrs .5 FTE +10% benefits 3 yrs |  |  | 10% | 1.5 |  | $70,500 |
| Education and Outreach Director/Project Manager |  | Oversee implementation of Voyageurs Classroom programming, develop partnerships, coordinate volunteers, oversee program evaluation and expansion. 2.5 FTE = 1 yr .5 FTE + 2 yrs 1.0 FTE ; 10% Benefits 1 yr, 20% benefits 2 yrs 153000 |  |  | 20% | 2.5 |  | $156,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$226,500** |
| **Contracts and Services** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wilderness Inquiry | Sub award | Transportation, equipment, guides, food, gear for 150 students on multi-day excursions in Voyageurs |  |  |  | 0 |  | $47,200 |
| TBD | Professional or Technical Service Contract | Making program materials 508 compliant |  |  |  | 0 |  | $1,600 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$48,800** |
| **Equipment, Tools, and Supplies** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Equipment | Education Trunks | Materials for educators to use in roving or classroom formats ($480 x 5) (Education trunks typically contain, a binder with lesson plans, "show and tell" props such as animal pelts, period items, or content related tools, supporting books and other multimedia materials, and lesson pouches with activity supplies such as laminated cards and posters.) |  |  |  |  | $2,400 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$2,400** |
| **Capital Expenditures** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Acquisitions and Stewardship** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel In Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | Mileage ($0.58 per mile) and lodging (1 trip x 3 years) VNPA headquarters to park | For education program planning, volunteer training, partnership development |  |  |  |  | $3,450 |
|  | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | Mileage ($0.58 per mile) or car rental | For program manager and educator travel to deliver education programs throughout park and regionally |  |  |  |  | $1,500 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$4,950** |
| **Travel Outside Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Printing and Publication** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Printing | Outreach and dissemination materials | Flyers, brochures and postcards to promote environmental education learning opportunities ($.30 x 5000) |  |  |  |  | $1,500 |
|  | Printing | Classroom kits | Materials for classroom and virtual learning ($.80 x 2000) |  |  |  |  | $1,600 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$3,100** |
| **Other Expenses** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Environmental education graduate student stipend ($7,500 x 2 years) | To support the adaption and expansion of current curriculum for classroom and virtual learning and improve relevancy for diverse audiences. |  |  |  |  | $15,000 |
|  |  | Field Fellowship stipends ($3000 x 15) | To remove financial barriers for students to be able to engage in hands-on environmental career experience. |  |  |  |  | $45,000 |
|  |  | Facility rental and permit fees | To secure locations for programming. |  |  |  |  | $750 |
|  |  | Zoom web based platform | For virtual classroom learning opportunities. |  |  |  |  | $1,500 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$62,250** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Grand Total** | **$348,000** |

### **Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category/Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request** |

### **Non ENRTF Funds**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific Source** | **Use** | **Status** | **Amount** |
| **State** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **State Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Non-State** |  |  |  |  |
| In-Kind | National Park Service | Staff time, boat transportation, housing, curriculum and program materials | Pending | $115,000 |
| In-Kind | Voyageurs National Park Association individual, business, and foundation donors | Additional staff support from the Voyageurs National Park Association Executive Director and Operations Coordinator ($10,822 x 3 years) | Secured | $32,466 |
|  |  |  | **Non State Sub Total** | **$147,466** |
|  |  |  | **Funds Total** | **$147,466** |

## **Attachments**

### **Required Attachments**

#### ***Visual Component***

File: [fb7ef8d9-c53.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/fb7ef8d9-c53.pdf)

#### ***Alternate Text for Visual Component***

Three photos depict:  
1) A young adult taking a water quality sample with text "Launch Field Fellows program giving young adults National Park Service and environmental  
career experience"  
2) An adult and two children in a canoe with the text "Deliver Love Your Park family program series  
3) Two high school students swimming in a Voyageurs lake with the text "Connect 5,000+ K-6 students, 300 Teen Ambassadors to Voyageurs on the water and in the classroom"...

#### ***Financial Capacity***

File: [fb5ce8be-062.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/financial_capacity/fb5ce8be-062.pdf)

#### ***Board Resolution or Letter***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| VNPA Board Resolution | [276abf8d-df8.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/276abf8d-df8.pdf) |

### **Optional Attachments**

#### ***Support Letter or Other***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Letter of support from National Park Service | [ccb08967-096.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/ccb08967-096.pdf) |
| Background Check Signed Doc | [2dc4a70d-970.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/2dc4a70d-970.pdf) |

## **Difference between Proposal and Work Plan**

#### ***Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage***

We reduced the number of youth served through the program and removed items from the budget where we can seek funding from other philanthropic sources.  
I removed the potentially ineligible virtual classroom equipment set up expense and added more detail to the school education travel trunks budget item.

## **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?**   
 Yes, I agree to the Commissioner's Plan.

**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