

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on September 30, 2025

M.L. 2021 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2025

Project Title: Increasing Outdoor Learning for Young Minnesotans

Project Manager: Peter Smerud

Affiliation: Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

Mailing Address: 6282 Cranberry Road

City/State/Zip: Finland, MN 55603

Phone: (218) 353-7414

E-mail: development@wolf-ridge.org

Website: <https://wolf-ridge.org/>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

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

Appropriation Amount: \$383,000

Amount Spent: \$383,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

The Increasing Outdoor Learning For Young Minnesotans project provided scholarship support that enabled 5,857 Minnesota students to attend a week of outdoor school at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center, expanding the understanding of Minnesota's future generations in areas of water, outdoor recreation, wildlife, plants, climate change, and habitat.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children now spend 7 hours/day on screens but only 10 minutes/day in outdoor activities. Childhood has become a mostly indoor experience. Increasing Outdoor Learning For Young Minnesotans enabled a 3-5 day learning experience for 5,857 students who attended outdoor school at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center, from a total of 83 Minnesota schools, serving metro, suburban, rural and tribal communities. The \$383,000 grant was used to diminish the financial barriers for outdoor school attendance by provision of scholarships to qualifying schools and students in grades 4-12. All outdoor school experiences took place on the 2000-acre campus at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in Finland, MN. The average scholarship planned for the project was \$55/student, whereas the actual award was a 15% increase or \$65/student. The average expense to attend

outdoor school is approximately \$450/student, the impact of this grant shows that \$385/student, or a total of \$2,635,650 in private funds were provided as a match to the ENRTF \$383,000 grant award. With a focus on underserved audiences where financial barriers would preclude them from these outdoor opportunities, students served included an average of 45% that qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch programs.

As Outdoor School is a multi-day experience that occurs overnight and away from home, with 9 hours/day of instructional time taking place outdoors, the cumulative instructional time for students totaled 169,853 hours. Outdoor learning experiences were facilitated in all areas of LCCMR ENRTF Strategic Plan goal subjects including the following outcomes in hours of instruction by subject: 10,216 on Water, 61,782 on Outdoor Recreation, 15,748 on Wildlife, 4,478 on Plants, 4,628 on Climate Change, and 6,315 on Habitat Management.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

The project and opportunities it provided were disseminated in written communication four times over four years to more than 150 Minnesota schools. The LCCMR and ENRTF were also acknowledged, three times, in Wolf Ridge ELC's newsletter with a distribution of 26,000+ people. Two stories, or case studies, of impact were published in Wolf Ridge ELC's newsletter, where the experience of the students and/or schools were highlighted. These disseminations have already been uploaded in the final status report.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: November 12, 2025

ID Number: 2021-042

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Project Title: Increasing Outdoor Learning for Young Minnesotans

Project Budget: \$383,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Peter Smerud

Organization: Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

Office Telephone: (218) 353-7414

Email: development@wolf-ridge.org

Web Address: <https://wolf-ridge.org/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 30, 2025

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: September 30, 2025

Project Completion: June 30, 2025

Legal Information

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

Appropriation Language: \$383,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center to provide scholarships for equitable access to hands-on learning experiences in the outdoors related to outdoor recreation, air and energy, water, habitat, and fish and wildlife. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2025, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2025

Narrative

Project Summary: Wolf Ridge seeks scholarships for equitable access to authentic, hands on learning experiences in the outdoors that supports our Minnesota schools and achievement of the ENRTF strategic plan priority goals.

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

Wolf Ridge is seeking funds to provide scholarships that enable student learning outcomes that achieve the LCCMR's ENRTF Strategic Plan goals and support the environmental learning happening in classrooms throughout MN .

Scholarship funds are necessary to sustain and enhance outdoor based teaching of thousands of Minnesotan school children from all economic backgrounds. Before the pandemic induced recession, WR was already seeing 40+% of our youth coming from low income homes. Even more children are now experiencing economic insecurity.

No public schools use operating budget funds for the Wolf Ridge tuition. The cost to attend Wolf Ridge is \$73 per day, with most schools attending for 3 -5 days, enabled through community based fundraising. Given that more than 1 in 10 Minnesotans applied for unemployment assistance due to COVID19, the ENRTF funds will ensure that students can attend on scholarships and Wolf Ridge can recover more strongly from COVID19 impacts.

In addition, online learning is increasing the achievement gap in our student population due to access to resources such as internet and computers as well as learning support at home. We will help close that gap by creating customized learning support that can be done online or in the school communities.

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

Each year Wolf Ridge serves approximately 12,000 students, teachers and adult chaperones. Due to the 2020 COVID19 outbreak, Wolf Ridge had to close its campus from mid March through December 2020. This means that 1000's of Minnesota youth missed the chance for outdoor learning experiences, a highlight of their school career. We are seeking funds to ensure a minimum of 2300 students/year are provided scholarship that enables a minimum of 3 days of outdoor learning at the center. Every student learning experience will include content on ENRTF Strategic Plan goals. This grant will increase access to Wolf Ridge programming onsite for the 2021-2024 school years. Scholarships would ensure that schools are able to provide all students the ability to participate in our unique hands-on learning experiences. Research from Stanford University shows that experiences at residential EE centers increases classroom learning.

Scholarship funds may also provide tutoring naturalists who support students at most risk from falling behind. We will work closely with the teachers from the schools we serve to identify students in need of extra support. Our schools are our valued partners and this funding will help both Wolf Ridge and Minnesota schools as we recover from COVID19.

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?

Providing over 30,000 students over the course of the grant period, throughout Minnesota, with immersive outdoor learning experiences rooted in our mission, Wolf Ridge outcomes align perfectly with the goals of public protection, conservation, preservation and enhancement of the state's natural resources. A minimum of 6900 students will be provided scholarships for a 3 day learning experience at the center. Scholarships will only be provided to students who take coursework that directly aligns with LCCMR's ENRTF strategic goals for developing skills and knowledge in Outdoor Recreation and Open Space; Air and Energy, Water; or, Habitat, Fish, and Wildlife.

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: Locate Schools, Award Scholarships

Activity Budget: \$383,000

Activity Description:

We will communicate to school representatives via email, website, and phone to announce the ENRTF funded scholarship opportunities. For tutoring support we will work closely with the lead teachers to identify the students in need and connect them with Wolf Ridge tutoring support.

We maintain a database of dozens of schools that have interest in such experiences but lack the funding to enable such a trip. Wolf Ridge maintains a relationship with 180+ schools and will reach out to those districts to reach underserved populations.

Wolf Ridge will provide scholarships to school students based on need, as determined by Free/Reduced % of the attending students, identified through an application process. An average of \$55/student will be awarded yet the exact amount will vary dependent upon need and other sources of financial support held by the school. Provision of scholarships will leverage an entire group of students to attend, not just those of financial means.

The award, both the quantity of scholarship students and financial amounts, will be documented with the invoicing of the school. This documentation will also note the leveraged number of total attending students, thereby the equity provided in the accessibility for all.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Send scholarship information and application to schools that we serve and new audiences.	October 31, 2021
Work with schools to identify students who need extra learning support to pair tutors	December 31, 2023
Receive application materials from schools annually ending in 2023	December 31, 2023
A minimum of 6900 students experience 3-5 days of outdoor learning at Wolf Ridge.	July 31, 2024

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.

Wolf Ridge ELC will acknowledge the support provided by the ENTRF for outdoor learning in achievement of ENTRF Strategic Plan Goals to the more than 150 Minnesota schools that attend Wolf Ridge ELC each year. This school attendance represents attendance from approximately 100 Minnesota communities. Each school will learn of the ENTRF goals and the coursework opportunities at Wolf Ridge ELC that will address the goals.

Wolf Ridge ELC will publicize the award of the ENTRF funds on our social media channels and in our newsletter. Wolf Ridge ELC will publish two stories in our newsletter, the Almanac.

All such acknowledgements will be per the ENTRF Guidelines and with use of the Trust Fund logo and language attributed in publications, signage, print and electronic 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 work be funded?

Over the course of our nearly 50 year history, Wolf Ridge has served over 700,000 students, teachers and parents from more than 120 communities in MN. Accessibility has always been a core value when providing our environmental education experiences. These grant funds will allow us to increase our accessibility over the course of our project and aligns well with our goal of increasing available scholarship dollars for the long term. Wolf Ridge will use the success and stories that arise from this grant to establish a scholarship endowment fund that secures long term, sustainable funding.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Bene fits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Contracts and Services										
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
Capital Expenditures										
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
Travel In Minnesota										
Travel Outside Minnesota										
Printing and Publication										
Other Expenses										

		Educational Program Scholarships for 6900 students	Provision of scholarship funding, averaging \$55/student, to underserved youth for a multi-day environmental learning experience.					\$383,000	\$383,000	-
							Sub Total	\$383,000	\$383,000	-
							Grand Total	\$383,000	\$383,000	-

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	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
			State Sub Total	-	-	-
Non-State						
Cash	Schulze Foundation	Scholarships for Catholic Schools to attend Wolf Ridge	Secured	\$24,000	\$24,000	-
Cash	Weesner Yellow Bus Funds	Scholarships for travel to Wolf Ridge	Secured	\$20,000	\$14,854	\$5,146
			Non State Sub Total	\$44,000	\$38,854	\$5,146
			Funds Total	\$44,000	\$38,854	\$5,146

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [ec2379eb-be4.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The visual we have provided includes highlights from our Wolf Ridge school brochure, including what does a day look like at Wolf Ridge, sample daily schedule & examples of focused curriculum tracks, including Science, Team Building & Personal Growth, Sustainability, & Outdoor Skills. Also included in this visual is Wolf Ridge by the Numbers, which are some interesting stats that represent the Wolf Ridge school program....

Financial Capacity

File: [a48b7516-621.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Wolf Ridge Board ByLaws	cf9b235f-c2a.pdf
Authorization Letter	3ecc5b7e-626.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
2019 Financial Audit	c56f51c5-ed8.pdf
Background Check Form, Signed 7-29-2021	fde9d145-5d4.pdf
Wolf Ridge Almanac Dissemination	65bfeb8f-6a3.jpe
Wolf Ridge Almanac Newsletter, Oct 2023 Dissemination, pg 3	9da99c48-795.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Adjustments were made to the amount of students served as the funding award recommendation was lower than the application amount. Clarity was provided to Activity 1 as to how scholarships would be funded and distributed.

Adjustments were made to the budget in reflection of the lower amount recommended for funding. Dates of completion for some tasks were edited. The Board Authorization Letter was added as an attachment. Dissemination language and outcomes were added.

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 understand that travel expenses are only approved if they 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, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

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

Work Plan Amendments

No Amendments Entered

Status Update Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 30, 2025

Project Status: Project Completed

Final Status Update August 14, 2025

Date Submitted: September 30, 2025

Date Approved: September 30, 2025

Overall Update

All funds have been disbursed and awarded in scholarships to Minnesota schools. Outdoor learning experiences were facilitated in all areas of LCCMR ENRTF Strategic Plan goal subjects. Wolf Ridge has been able to serve student populations that average 45% that qualify for Free/Reduced Lunch programs, evidence of service to underserved audiences where financial barriers would preclude them from these outdoor school opportunities. The scope of support has entailed the entire state of Minnesota, with students from the metro area and dozens of outstate communities, including multiple tribal communities and schools. In the achievement of educating Minnesotans in the areas of the LCCMR Strategic Plan goals, the following outcomes of cumulative hours of instruction were facilitated for students with the following subjects: 10,216 hours on Water, 61,782 hours on Outdoor Recreation, 15,748 hours on Wildlife, 4,478 hours on Plants, 4,628 hours on Climate Change, and 6,315 hours on Habitat Management. Thank you to the LCCMR staff as one year into the grant period the definition of student became inclusive of undergraduate and graduate college students, in turn radically increasing the instructional contact hours in all subject areas.

Activity 1

Through outreaches to over 150 communities in Minnesota, the cumulative result has been the provision of a 3-5 day Outdoor School learning experience to 5,857 Minnesota students. As this is a multi-day experience, the cumulative instructional time for the 5,875 students totaled 169,853 hours. The \$383,000 has been awarded to a total of 83 schools serving metro, suburban, rural and tribal communities. As noted in previous status updates it was learned early in this grant that the need, coming out of the pandemic, was higher than data had shown from years preceding this grant. The planned average award was \$55/student, whereas the actual award was an approximately 15% increase or \$65/student. In turn, the goal of serving 6900 students was not met, But, with the addition of college students, the total instructional hours greatly exceeded planned goals. Few schools fund any expense from operating budgets, with 90+% of schools conducting fundraisers to match the scholarship awards. The average expense to attend Outdoor School at Wolf Ridge is approximately \$450/student, the impact of this grant shows that \$385/student, or a total of \$2,635,650 was matched to the \$383,000 grant award.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

The LCCMR and ENRTF were acknowledged in outreach to more than 150 schools through letter and email distributions, every year of the grant period, alerting those Minnesota schools to the opportunity for support to enable an experience of outdoor school at Wolf Ridge. In turn that outreach was to more than 100 Minnesota communities. The LCCMR and ENRTF funds supplying the grant were acknowledged in our newsletter The Almanac three times through the years. May 2023 Almanac: <https://wolf-ridge.org/blog/wolf-ridge-almanac-may-2023/> (the graphic uploaded in Attachments Tab 7, this is link to the entire newsletter.

October 2023 Almanac: <https://wolf-ridge.org/blog/almanac-october-2023/> (already uploaded in the Attachments Tab 7).

February 2025 e-Almanac: <https://mailchi.mp/wolf-ridge.org/february-25>

Two stories or case studies of impact were published in our newsletter The Almanac, highlighting the experience of scholarship recipient schools. One link is below, from May of 2024, the other is a scan of a printed newsletter from May of 2022, which is uploaded in the Attachments tab

International Spanish Language Academy, May 2024: <https://wolf-ridge.org/blog/school-spotlight-the-international-spanish-language-academy/>

Status Update Reporting

Status Update January 1, 2025

Date Submitted: February 11, 2025

Date Approved: March 28, 2025

Overall Update

As this project nears its end, tremendous progress has been made and the overall project is on pace to meet all financial disbursement objectives by June 30, 2025, and very nearly meet the original goal for students served. The final two years of this project have demonstrated that lessons learned in year 1 and 2, have made years 3 & 4 (school years) consistently successful. As noted in previous updates, a major lesson learned has been the size of financial need to enable outdoor school programming for a school, in turn forecasting a greater amount awarded per person than originally planned. This greater per person financial support was previously reported as a challenge and in turn projected to result in lower overall numbers of people served. Yet, successful tactics have resulted in a forecast to now come quite close to the original numbers served goal.

Activity 1

By December 31, 2024, we have provided \$300,351.00 in scholarships awarded to 5,826 MN students who have averaged 45,680 hours of student instruction. In this recent July 1 - January 1 period we served 920 students with financial aid scholarships of \$79,495.00. The remaining budget of 82,650.00 for use January 1 - June 30, 2025 is now committed with contracts established with schools. With these committments we will achieve complete use of funds, \$383,000.00, by June 30. 2025. A review of the project to date by way of year over year usage of funds is: \$14,990, \$47,606, \$158,260, and a total of \$162,145 either disbursed or committed for this final school year. In students served, while we forecast lower achievement in this area due to higher financial need per student, we have regained pacing and are now forecast to nearly meet our original goal of 6900 students served, with a forecast of 6,741 are June 30. Clearly we have rose above the challenges of the first years of this project, with consistent success in the final two years.

Dissemination

No dissemination has occurred in this reporting period, but is scheduled for the next period.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update July 1, 2024

Date Submitted: July 3, 2024

Date Approved: July 12, 2024

Overall Update

Tremendous progress has been made in the past year. While the first year was a struggle and many challenges caused slow progress, the past year

we've distributed more funding support to schools than the first two years combined. While certain aspects have gone well and greatly improved, we've encountered a new and very challenging problem. As we use these funds to enable communities, cultural groups, and schools to get a Minnesota outdoor school experience, many of these are schools and groups are new to the concept of outdoor school, have never had these experiences, and come from socioeconomic and cultural groups that struggle to fulfill commitments of attendance.

Activity 1

To date we have provided \$197,395 in financial support to 4,906 MN students. In this recent school year: \$134,799 to 1,670 students; the previous school year: \$47,606; and the 2021-22 school year: \$14,990. Clearly we've met the challenges and solved the problems of the first couple school years.

Regarding the aforementioned challenge, we held space in programs for over 500 children that never arrived, in turn approximately \$150,000 of planned scholarship distribution didn't occur that we planned on. We held space, turned away other schools, ordered food that went unused, etc. We had planned to have \$30-40,000 left over to go into our final year of this grant project. We didn't anticipate it would be \$185,000, the amount we now have. While we've now executed plans to use that \$185,000 next year, I would like to discuss this vulnerability and ways we might mitigate it such that we assure we fulfill our outcomes by June 30, 2025.

Dissemination

Over 600 schools in MN have been made aware of ENRTF funding and this scholarship opportunity, through targeted mailings. Three times we have posted an article or graphic in our newsletter, The Almanac, highlighting the ENRTF support, most recently in October 2023, a copy uploaded in a previous status report.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update January 1, 2024

Date Submitted: February 7, 2024

Date Approved: February 8, 2024

Overall Update

This project has faced challenges relating to the conditions that teachers are confronted with in student academic, social, and emotional setbacks caused by the pandemic. The first year achievements for this project did not meet expected service numbers. Through brainstorming with LCCMR staff on ways to make adjustments and still achieve outcomes, we created new plans that are now showing major improvements, and in turn creates high optimism for a successful project. We opened up the student audience, now to include any Minnesota student, any age, participating any month of the year. We also increased the scholarship amounts available to a school, offering greater financial support where need exists. These changes have been very effective, with more schools and students applying for scholarships. While we may not meet the 6900 student goal we will have tremendous achievement in student instructional hours.

From June 15 - December 31, 2023

Twelve school groups were served, totalling 778 Minnesota students served.

27,482 hours of student instruction and field based facilitated learning in LCCMR strategic plan goal areas.

Cumulatively through December 31, 2023

37 Minnesota school groups served

3,236 Minnesota students

99,015 hours of student instruction in LCCMR strategic plan areas

Activity 1

All students are provided a minimum of a 3 day total immersion learning experience. With changes noted above and now implemented, we are able to serve students that may be taking classes over longer periods of time, in some cases months. This change is significantly increasing student instructional contact and hours, but with commensurately fewer student numbers. Changes made also now enable college students to be trained, who in turn will have an exponential impact via their careers in education.

June 15 - December 2023, Student Hours and Subject Area

1,185 student hours, water (stream and/or lake)

10,008 student hours, outdoor recreation

2,883 student hours, wildlife

528 student hours, plants

864 student hours, climate change

1,239 student hours, habitat management

10,755 student hours in training for preservice environmental education students in all of the above listed subject areas.

Total: 27,482 hours of student instruction and field based facilitated learning in LCCMR strategic plan goal areas.

Cumulatively

37 Minnesota school groups were served

3,236 Minnesota students

99,015 hours of student instruction and field based facilitated learning in LCCMR strategic plan goal areas

Dissemination

Cumulatively since onset of the project more than 450 MN schools have been informed via email, and hard copy letters of the scholarship opportunity provided by the ENRTF funds. Hundreds of Minnesota family households have been contacted via email and informed of the scholarship opportunities for summer educational youth programs at Wolf Ridge. 40 preservice graduate students have been made aware of the scholarship opportunities.

Three times, most recently in October 2023, we have published the ENRTF support and scholarship opportunity in our Wolf Ridge Almanac, a newsletter with a distribution to approximately 680 Minnesotans, please see the uploaded attachment with the most recent publication in October of 2023.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update July 1, 2023

Date Submitted: June 22, 2023

Date Approved: June 26, 2023

Overall Update

Through June 15, 2023 funding has been awarded to 22 MN schools, based on their described need in combination with the Free/Reduced Lunch qualifying students in their school as marker of the level of scholarship provided. A total of 30,143 K-12 student hours of field based learning has been facilitated and documented in achievement of LCCMR Strategic Plan goals, in subject areas of water, outdoor recreation, wildlife, plants, climate change, and habitat management. These learning experiences have been supported by a total of \$66,481 scholarship dollars awarded to the 22 schools. Additionally, 12 graduate students were awarded scholarships based upon documented need. They received training at Wolf Ridge in the subject areas of the LCCMR strategic plan.

To date Wolf Ridge attendance remains 30% below anticipated and preCOVID levels and in turn was not on pace to meet our students served with this funding.

Following my meeting with Corrie Layfield in late March 2023, it was agreed that Wolf Ridge was able to extend scholarships to a wider range of MN students of all ages. As such our success is increasing and we will be able to "catch up" on our disbursement pace.

Activity 1

As most student experiences are a total immersion multi-day experience, yet with some students taking classes over an entire school year, these are the totals of student hours of instruction in the respective subject areas:

Subject Area, Total Student Hours

3,899 hours of water based coursework

18,488 hours of outdoor recreation coursework

3,740 hours of wildlife based coursework

1,544 hours of plants based coursework

1,311 hours of climate change coursework

1,161 hours of habitat management coursework

17,210 hours of coursework in environmental education training in the above listed subject areas.

Total: 47,353 of student instruction and field based facilitated learning in LCCMR strategic plan goal areas.

Dissemination

Over the past two years more than 300 MN schools have been informed via email and hard copy letters of the scholarship opportunity provided by the ENRTF funds. Also hundreds of family households have been contacted and informed of the scholarship opportunities for summer educational youth programs at Wolf Ridge.

Twice, most recently in May 2023, we have featured the scholarship opportunity in our Wolf Ridge Almanac, a newsletter with a distribution to approximately 680 Minnesotans, please see the uploaded attachment.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update January 1, 2023

Date Submitted: March 9, 2023

Date Approved: March 30, 2023

Overall Update

Funding has been awarded to 19 schools, based on their described need in combination with the Free/Reduced Lunch qualifying students in their school as marker of the level of scholarship provided. A total of 24,180 student hours of field based learning has been facilitated and documented in achievement of LCCMR Strategic Plan goals, in subject areas of water, outdoor recreation, wildlife, plants, climate change, and habitat management. These learning experiences have been supported by a total of \$27,691 scholarship dollars awarded to the 19 schools.

The impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt in Minnesota schools and at Wolf Ridge, to date attendance remains 30% below anticipated and preCOVID levels. We communicate regularly with teachers and the rationale described for postponing attendance to Wolf Ridge is commonly referenced as being due to so much demand on teachers to increase student learning to "catch up" for the two years of missed learning. Consequently Wolf Ridge is not on pace to achieve the outcomes of this project and requests a one year extension. Achievement of the goals set forth for this project are very achievable yet due to impacts of the pandemic more time will be needed.

Activity 1

Thus far 19 Minnesota schools have been awarded scholarships, enabling 1,390 students to attend outdoor school experiences in Wolf Ridge's accredited program. Of the 19 schools awarded, 18 have attended and one will attend this spring. Of the 1,390 students supported by scholarship, 1,370 have attended and documented totals of academic hours of student instruction and field based facilitated learning:

3,516 hours of water based coursework.

14,976 hours of outdoor recreation coursework.

2,811 hours of wildlife based coursework

1,365 hours of plants based coursework.

1,311 hours of climate change coursework.

201 hours of habitat management coursework.

24,180 hours of student instruction and field based facilitated learning in LCCMR strategic plan goal areas.

As noted above, many schools have been forced to postpone their environmental education trip to Wolf Ridge, since September 2022 more than 2000 students in field trips have cancelled field trips due to the challenges ensuing from pandemic effects.

Dissemination

Over 250 Minnesota schools have been informed of the scholarship and/or tutoring support available through the financial support of the MN ENRTF as coordinated through the LCCMR. The support of funds from the ENRTF have been publicly acknowledged once thus far in our newsletter and an article is planned for a second newsletter publishing to occur in May 2023.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update July 1, 2022

Date Submitted: June 29, 2022

Date Approved: July 1, 2022

Overall Update

Wolf Ridge has made progress on the achievements of the grant yet the COVID pandemic has caused lower levels of performance from expected outcomes. Wolf Ridge has contacted 250 schools in Minnesota, alerting them to scholarship support available from the ENRTF via recommendation of the LCCMR. To date Wolf Ridge has reviewed applications from and served seven MN schools with scholarship funding. A total of \$14,990 has been awarded, enabling 442 students to attend. The communities from which the students attended were: Crystal, Bena, Duluth, Ely, Hutchinson, Pequot Lakes, Brooklyn Center.

The pandemic and challenges of gathering unrelated people together in a space, which is precisely how educational programs at Wolf Ridge are conducted, has caused a significantly decreased enrollment through all of the Wolf Ridge programs. Approximately 50% of schools planning to attend this past year cancelled due to the pandemic. Because of the pandemic the provision of scholarships fell well below expected levels. Wolf Ridge remains optimistic that within the next two years we can pick up the pace of distribution as reservations for next year are strong, yet it is possible we may need to ask for an extension.

Activity 1

We only have one activity. The overall update provides an accurate description.

Dissemination

Wolf Ridge has publicly acknowledged the support of the ENRTF via the recommendation of the LCCMR, as noted in our newsletter the Almanac. In our outreach to 250 schools in Minnesota, dissemination has also occurred in a letter to these schools.