

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on September 25, 2025

M.L. 2022 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2025

Project Title: Engaging a Diverse Public in Environmental Stewardship

Project Manager: Brennan Blue

Affiliation: Great River Greening

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Website: <https://www.greatrivergreening.org/>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2022, Chp. 94, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d

Appropriation Amount: \$300,000

Amount Spent: \$290,070

Amount Remaining: \$9,930

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Great River Greening's "Engaging a Diverse Public in Environmental Stewardship" project engaged a diverse group of Minnesotans to deepen their connection with the conservation movement through targeted outreach, hands-on restoration events, internships, and a wide variety youth educational offerings.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Minnesota's conservation movement thrives when all can access, enjoy, and care for the lands and waters that enrich our lives. This project increased diverse participation in Minnesota's conservation movement by developing relationships, internships, educational opportunities, and hands-on restoration projects that engaged traditionally underrepresented Minnesotans in conservation work, all while strengthening a collective conservation ethic amongst participants. Hands-on restoration events were developed across the state, with a special focus on bringing restoration events to Greater Minnesota. Great River Greening engaged 1,975 people across 34 hands-on restoration events and an additional 682 through tabling/outreach/education events in Greater Minnesota. Additionally, Great River Greening formed partnerships and hosted environmental education offerings with Minnesota youth in majority BIPOC communities. Partnerships with schools were particularly effective with this initiative. Great River Greening engaged

3,155 participants across 50 educational events, many of which involved hands-on restoration work. Over the life of the project, Great River Greening also hosted 12 interns, who assisted with targeted outreach efforts while shadowing a variety of conservation career opportunities.

Our efforts and learnings throughout the project suggest that Minnesotans of diverse backgrounds and geographies are interested in participating in and strengthening Minnesota's conservation movement. Targeted outreach, partnership and trust development, and steady communication and follow-through were strategies that partners consistently reported as contributing toward positive program outcomes. Great River Greening will build on the success of this project by leveraging partnerships and learnings to further engage Minnesota's diverse and inspiring public in conserving Minnesota's lands and water.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources was included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. A representative sample of events photos, flyers, and social media posts are included in the Attachments tab (Tab 7) of the full report.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2022 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: December 22, 2025

ID Number: 2022-107

Staff Lead: Tom Dietrich

Project Title: Engaging a Diverse Public in Environmental Stewardship

Project Budget: \$300,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Brennan Blue

Organization: Great River Greening

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Web Address: <https://www.greatrivergreening.org/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 25, 2025

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: September 25, 2025

Project Completion: June 30, 2025

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2022, Chp. 94, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d

Appropriation Language: \$300,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Great River Greening to increase participation in natural resources restoration efforts through volunteer, internship, and youth engagement activities that target diverse audiences more accurately reflecting local demographic and socioeconomic conditions in Minnesota.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2025

Narrative

Project Summary: We will increase community awareness of natural resources through directed outreach and engagement targeting a diverse audience that more accurately reflects the community in which we are restoring natural areas.

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

Great River Greening will engage 1,200 volunteers and 400 youth through strategic outreach and multiple engagement levels, targeting diverse audiences that reflect local demographics and socioeconomic statistics in Minnesota.

Our overarching goals include introducing underrepresented communities to the amenities public lands offer, reducing barriers and demystifying stigma associated with access while cultivating stewardship experiences in a way that provides sustained connections through relationship building, hands-on events, and environmental education. Through geographic focus, local partnerships, and community outreach, we will work together to educate on the benefits of time in nature and provide hands-on experience restoring public lands. These experiences will connect participants with the land and one another while working toward a common goal. Studies have shown time in nature improves overall wellbeing, psychologically and physiologically. Benefits include stress reduction, lower blood pressure, improved immune systems, and more.

We recognize the need to include all marginalized and underrepresented communities in our work. In 2018, poverty rates were highest for American Indian (34%), Black (27%), and Hispanic communities (19%), three to four times higher than the rates of Non-Hispanic White Minnesotans (7%). 529,000 Minnesotans, including 150,000 children, had family incomes below the poverty threshold. (US Census Bureau)

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.

Great River Greening will focus community outreach and relationship building on engaging underrepresented communities local to our habitat restoration and conservation work throughout Minnesota. We have been actively growing our focus beyond the Twin Cities metro to include greater Minnesota, specifically communities in the Anoka Sand Plain region, Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape, Nicollet County, and the Cannon River Watershed. Additional focus will also be made engaging youth and young adults, primarily from BIPOC communities, in our youth engagement work centered in the Twin Cities metro.

To assist with these increased outreach and engagement priorities, we will host a suite of paid internships supporting the next generation of environmental professionals focused on reaching these geographies and underrepresented communities, introducing environmental stewardship topics and health benefits provided by nature exposure. Great River Greening will host hands-on restoration events and educational opportunities on public lands connecting community members to the natural areas in their backyard. All events will be open to all, free of charge, and provide any necessary tools, training, and PPE.

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?

Engaging a broader diverse base of the population in environmental stewardship and habitat restoration will provide a tangible outcome, and lasting impact as volunteers and interns are engaged in significant restoration, conservation, and enhancement work on natural areas throughout Minnesota. After participating, these stewards will be more connected to their local environment and carry these experiences with them.

Project Location

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, SE, SW,

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

Region(s): Central, Metro, SE, SW,

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Engage 1,200 local volunteers through community outreach, public education and habitat restoration events.

Activity Budget: \$161,000

Activity Description:

A total of 1,200 volunteers will be fitted with necessary protective equipment, tools, and training to participate in hands-on restoration activities successfully. Community outreach will be tailored to better reach a more diverse or historically underrepresented audience. Outreach material will be translated into multiple languages to reflect the community (ex: Spanish, Somali, and Hmong languages) and mailed to target geographies.

Great River Greening will distribute educational handouts on restoration techniques and natural history before the event. Day-of training includes a 'roving presentation and Q&A' with an ecologist on the importance of the work they are doing, the ecology of the site, and the restoration plan. Restoration events will be family-friendly. Participants will take home a boot brush/pick tool to raise the level of invasive species prevention protocol and be provided a healthy snack or meal option to further reduce barriers to participation.

Great River Greening will create and implement an interactive survey display to collect important feedback on barriers to outdoor engagement and recreation.

Demographic data on all volunteers will be collected and documented. At least 90% of the volunteers will be engaged in our outstate programs: a) Nicollet County; b) Anoka Sand Plain ecoregion, c) CRSL

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Interactive Survey Tool Created	December 31, 2022
2023 Restoration Events Planning Begins (Spring and Fall events will be held)	January 31, 2023
400 individuals engaged	June 30, 2023
2024 Restoration Events Planning Begins (Spring and Fall events will be held)	January 31, 2024
800 individuals engaged	June 30, 2024
2025 Spring Restoration Events Planned	January 31, 2025
1200 individuals engaged	June 30, 2025

Activity 2: Great River Greening will provide three paid internships during 2023 and 2024.

Activity Budget: \$74,000

Activity Description:

Great River Greening will hire six interns who will focus on community outreach and partnerships. One metro-based intern per summer and two outstate interns during the school year in 2023 and 2024. Staff will work with local education facilities to identify students interested in an internship and who would benefit from the experience. Supported by Great River Greening's experienced staff, the interns will each have a geographic focus. They will be exposed to natural resources management and stewardship and increased community engagement reflecting the local demographic and economic trends.

Central Minnesota - Economically disadvantaged communities

Twin Cities Metro - Youth/young adult engagement focused on BIPOC communities

Southern Minnesota - Economically disadvantaged communities

Additionally, the intern(s) will receive career development resources, experience hands-on restoration work, event planning, volunteer training or workshops, and more to gain a big picture understanding of all aspects involved in natural resources restoration and community outreach strategies. We will share internship position announcements throughout a variety of channels across the state as well as through Great River Greening's extensive network of partners. Concluding the internship, each intern will be tasked with sharing a personal testimonial reflecting on the experience.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Research communities and key contacts, networking with outstate and BIPOC community groups	November 30, 2022
2023 Internship Announcements Created	April 30, 2023
Volunteer base has grown 15%, 3 new community or outreach partnerships secured (intern lead)	November 30, 2023
2024 Internship Announcements Created	April 30, 2024
Volunteer base has grown 20%, 10% return volunteers, 5 new outreach partnerships secured (intern lead)	November 30, 2024
Geographic and demographic analysis, volunteer feedback and survey analysis	January 31, 2025

Activity 3: Youth Engagement

Activity Budget: \$65,000

Activity Description:

Great River Greening will engage 400 youth and young adults in hands-on restoration, and monitoring activities. Engagement will include classroom introduction lessons; on-site restoration and monitoring; technology; exposure to environmental professionals and their careers, and a no-cost outstate field trip to Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge for metro-based students. Great River Greening will partner with other youth education programs designed to introduce youth (primarily from the BIPOC community) to the importance of environmental stewardship and how they can be involved in caring for our shared natural spaces - now and as future professionals.

This program will raise our demographic service in the Twin Cities metro to reach >20% people of color.

Testimonials and documentation will be collected following each event reflecting on the participants' experiences to ensure we meet their needs and provide a quality experience for all.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop strategic partnerships with youth focused organizations and schools	November 30, 2022
Host 2 youth specific engagement events, BIPOC focused	November 30, 2023
Host 2 youth specific engagement events, BIPOC focused	November 30, 2024
Host 1 youth specific engagement event (spring)	June 30, 2025
Demographic analysis, participant feedback analysis, and dissemination	June 30, 2025

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.

Funding acknowledgements will be included in all outreach efforts, social media posts, and reporting on these projects. Acknowledgement will also be provided verbally at in person restoration events. Great River Greening will share information about each event with restoration volunteers and youth engagement on our social media platforms, newsletter, and communications efforts. Feedback and demographic information will be tracked and reported on. This feedback will help us ensure we are meeting the needs of Minnesotans and adjusting as the project moves forward. We will continue to document our successes and lessons learned as we move forward. This project will provide Great River Greening with the foundation needed to continue engaging Minnesotans in environmental restoration.

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?

Ecological and habitat restoration activities are a profound, meaningful, deeply engaging, and rewarding way to interact with the outdoors while gaining an active, working knowledge of habitat and ecology to the point of participation and action. This program will help create an engaged, active, informed community better able to steward Minnesota's legacy. Our post-program surveys show that 95% of volunteers increased their knowledge of restoration and, for youth, 87% are interested in a natural resource-related job. We anticipate returning in ML 2024 and every three years thereafter to support this program if successful.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Upland and Shoreline Restoration in Greater Metropolitan Area	M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 06g	\$300,000
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Enhancing Restoration Techniques for Improved Climate Resilience and Pollinator Conservation	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 08f	\$400,000
Upland, Wetland, and Shoreline Restoration in Greater Metropolitan Area	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g	\$509,000
Community Stewardship to Restore Urban Natural Resources - Phase Ten	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 08i	\$524,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Outreach Program Manager		Responsible for volunteer recruitment, partner planning, internship oversight and youth engagement.			21%	0.9		\$88,000	-	-
Ecologist		Provide ecological oversight at events			21%	0.18		\$12,000	-	-
Field Coordinator		On site coordination of restoration activities with volunteers and youth			21%	0.18		\$10,000	-	-
Field Technician		Restoration support			21%	0.24		\$10,000	-	-
Grant Administer		Mange grant reporting and grant finances			21%	0.12		\$6,000	-	-
Intern		Interns to assist with community engagement and restoration			20%	1		\$34,000	-	-
							Sub Total	\$160,000	\$159,990	\$10
Contracts and Services										
Youth Engagment - Lincoln International High School speaker, Nienow Cultural Consultants, Renewing the Countryside, Nate Galloway	Service Contract	Youth engagement and education consultation, curriculum analysis				0.24		\$8,634	\$8,190	\$444
Propio Language Services - Activity 1	Service Contract	Translation Services				0.24		\$10,000	\$7,133	\$2,867
Transportation TBD	Service Contract	Bus service, youth transportation				0.16		\$598	-	\$598

Speakers - Huellas Latinas, Tara Perron, Travis Bush	Service Contract	Youth engagement speaker stipend - Native Elder or culturally appropriate representative				0.04		\$4,025	\$3,850	\$175
Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi	Service Contract	Native consultation and student educator				0.03		\$1,000	\$1,000	-
Kottkes Bus Service	Service Contract	Bus service, youth transportation				0.03		\$751	\$751	-
Monarch Bus Service	Service Contract	Bus service, youth transportation				0.03		\$361	\$361	-
Bille Bus Transportation	Service Contract	Bus service, youth transportation				0.03		\$4,079	\$4,079	-
Trobec Bus Service	Service Contract	Bus service, youth transportation				0.03		\$1,212	\$1,211	\$1
Luisana Mendez	Service Contract	Prepare and conduct presentation for Future Stewards program				0.03		\$500	\$500	-
							Sub Total	\$31,160	\$27,075	\$4,085
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
	Tools and Supplies	Restoration supplies (native plants, seed, erosion matting, etc.)	Habitat enhancement					\$72,000	\$71,790	\$210
	Tools and Supplies	Restoration event supplies (sanitation unit rental, gloves, safety glasses, healthy snack)	Event supplies	X				\$16,000	\$10,739	\$5,261
	Tools and Supplies	Youth Engagement Events Supplies (tools, kids gloves, resource books, binoculars, healthy snacks)	Event Supplies	X				\$11,000	\$10,956	\$44
	Tools and Supplies	Interactive Survey Tools for volunteer and community engagement events	Event Participant Feedback					\$1,000	\$680	\$320
							Sub Total	\$100,000	\$94,165	\$5,835
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										

							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging		Vehicle mileage to restoration events and to engage with interns					\$8,000	\$8,000	-
							Sub Total	\$8,000	\$8,000	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
		Registration and Event Fees	Registration and event fees: career fair tabling, outreach, Native education					\$840	\$840	-
							Sub Total	\$840	\$840	-
							Grand Total	\$300,000	\$290,070	\$9,930

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies		Restoration event supplies (sanitation unit rental, gloves, safety glasses, healthy snack)	Healthy snack option (granola bar, fruit) at volunteer events. Volunteers will be at events in remote areas.
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies		Youth Engagement Events Supplies (tools, kids gloves, resource books, binoculars, healthy snacks)	Healthy snacks for youth participants while we are in remote areas or missing classroom snacks.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
Cash	ML 2021 1st Special Session, Chp 1, Art 1, Sec 2, Subd. 2(n), Anoka Sand Plain Habitat Conservation - Phase 7	Site prep ahead of Sand Prairie WMA volunteer event	Secured	\$2,984	\$2,984	-
Cash	Minnesota Laws 2020, Regular Session, Chapter 104, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 5(r), and Minnesota Statute §84.026 John Peter Hoffman WMA	Volunteer event prep and hosting	Secured	\$1,175	\$1,175	-
			State Sub Total	\$4,159	\$4,159	-
Non-State						
Cash	Great River Greening administrative match	GRG overhead costs covered by general operating support	Secured	\$45,000	\$45,000	-
Cash	City of St. Paul	Right Track internship funding	Secured	\$5,400	\$5,400	-
Cash	National Wild Turkey Federation	Volunteer event prep and hosting	Secured	\$902	\$902	-
Cash	Private Foundations and Corporations	Volunteer event support at John Peter Hoffman WMA, Nicollet County State Fair event 8/4/23, Future Stewards programming 2022-2025	Secured	\$130,620	\$130,620	-
In-Kind	Volunteers	Event volunteers John P Hoffman WMA, Sand Prairie WMA, Allemansratt Park, Quarry Park,	Secured	\$8,640	\$8,640	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$190,562	\$190,562	-
			Funds Total	\$194,721	\$194,721	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [a3329d35-964.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Summary of project proposal...

Financial Capacity

File: [3ea24531-67b.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
GRG ML2022 Board Resolution Engaging Diverse Public	666d80fa-54c.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support - Lower Phalen Creek Project	f7546244-83d.doc
Letter of Support - Spark-Y	a9396fdf-fbb.pdf
Letter of Support - Professor Ahmad, St. Cloud Technical and Community College	e950e111-f86.pdf
Background Check LCCMR Form	19435dbd-891.pdf
Mesabi Tribune 6.13.25	7a6ae66c-dbd.pdf
Sample Recruitment Flyer	a39ab54a-a1b.pdf
Photo - Tree Planting Event	5daa3f17-bbd.jpe
Photo - Seeding Event	3dc7e8bf-427.jpe
Photo - Red Pine Planting	805be265-35f.jpe
Sample Social Media Post	9aa263b9-4e0.png
Sample Social Media Post Seeding	cf1ade79-5cc.png

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Budgets and scope of some of the activities have increased to align with the added \$100,000 award. Additional milestones were created to reflect feedback from the LCCMR Project Analyst

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?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

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

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Amy Kilgore (akilgore@greatrivergreening.org) New Manager: Todd Rexine (trexine@greatrivergreening.org)	The current project manager is leaving the organization.	September 28, 2022	Yes	September 28, 2022
2	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and Milestones • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed 	GRG requests an increase in funds for Activities 1 and 3 to support staff working with outreach engagement (Act 1) and youth engagement (Act 3). Feedback from educators indicates they would benefit from additional support and engagement opportunities. There is also considerable more interest in the Act 1 area with partners and LGUs within the regions where we are working. GRG has secured non ENRTF funding to support Metro intern positions previously funded by ENRTF.	January 5, 2023	Yes	January 10, 2023
3	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Todd Rexine (trexine@greatrivergreening.org) New Manager: Brennan Blue (bblue@greatrivergreening.org)	New Environmental Stewardship Director	December 21, 2022	Yes	December 27, 2022
4	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts 	Propio Language Services was selected as the translation services provider to provide our work. Propio will provide on-demand, live translation support for our staff in a variety of languages and contexts. Additionally, they will support Great River Greening's translation of public events offerings and common forms.	February 7, 2023	Yes	February 8, 2023
5	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Other 	Contracts updated to include vendors providing bussing services and educational services. The Budget - Other category was updated to include an	March 26, 2025	Yes	March 27, 2025

			added "registration and event fees" line for expenses incurred through outreach efforts for internship candidates, such as attendance to career fair expos for college students and campus-based internship posting platforms.			
6	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Other • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Attachments 	This amendment adds the names of specific service providers including youth engagement consultants and speakers so that they are recorded in the work plan. This amendment also adds final secured Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed amounts. In addition, a media article referencing the work carried out under this plan has been added to the attachments section.	July 31, 2025	Yes	August 18, 2025

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update August 14, 2025

Date Submitted: September 16, 2025

Date Approved: September 24, 2025

Overall Update

We continued to “lean in” in the final six months of our program, offering continued engagements, hosting additional internships, and developing new relationships and public partnerships. In the last six months, we engaged a wide variety of Minnesotans in Greater MN in restoration work and environmental stewardship; supported restoration work on public protect land; hosted four internships, and led a variety of events specifically developed with and for BIPOC youth, featuring a number of new partners. In total, our Q1 and Q2 efforts for 2025 engaged an additional 1,107 people across 26 programs and events. Our program goals have been met and exceeded in each of our core three activities.

Activity 1

We hosted a variety of restoration events in Q1/Q2 across MN, engaging 237 people across 11 restoration events and an additional 10 people through educational presentation on nature-based climate solutions in conservation (8.5% BIPOC representation across events). Restoration events included seed cleaning and biochar processing at Frontenac State Park, invasive removal and biochar production at Allemansratt Wilderness Park, seeding at Wild River State Park, garlic mustard removal at Nerstrand Big Woods State Park, planting at Pillager Point, buckthorn removal at Frontenac State Park, reforestation planting in Superior National Forest (3 events), seeding at Medford WMA, and plug planting at Sakatah WMA. The Superior National Forest events represented a new region of conservation work for this program.

Our cumulative totals for Activity 1 are 1,975 people engaged across 34 hands-on restoration events with an additional 682 people engaged in tabling/outreach/education events.

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

Activity 2

With Activity 2 funds remaining, we recruited and hosted an additional four interns for the spring/summer season of 2025 (100% BIPOC representation). At the conclusion of the grant, we have successfully hosted 12 internships, exceeding our program goal. Our interns supported community outreach and partnership development; assisted with community-based conservation events (pollinator monitoring focused, given the summer months); advanced our outreach tracking (migrating our team to a new platform for partnership tracking and development); shadowed conservation team members on site monitoring visits; and worked on their capstone projects (a conservation focused special project that they could take the lead on developing). We achieved the milestone goals of increased volunteer base (92% increase), return volunteers (37% return rate), and 15 new community partners added with their support. Interns assisted with geographic and demographic analysis of our volunteers through registration and survey feedback, allowing our team to focus on strategies best supporting current (and future) outreach efforts. Volunteers requested a diverse time/duration windows for volunteer opportunities and accessible conservation opportunities that provided education for those new to the work. Direct co-design and project development with key stakeholders and community partners proved an essential strategy for reaching new audiences and geographies.

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

Activity 3

Partnership events and engagements were shared with a variety of BIPOC-majority youth organizations and schools. Our key Q1/Q2 partners and their relative diversity statistics include Olson Middle School/MPS GISE&GEMS (88% BIPOC), Mona Moede Early Childhood Learning (85% BIPOC), FAIR School (55% BIPOC), Hmong College Prep Academy (99% BIPOC), the South HiS Minneapolis All Nations (96% BIPOC), Maxfield Elementary St Paul (99% BIPOC), Stride Academy St

Cloud (88% BIPOC), and Faribault HS (50%).

Each group was engaged in environmental education, with most receiving hands-on conservation learning, including planting and plant identification. Students were introduced to a variety of conservation careers and leaders. Culturally-specific engagements were provided for the South High All Nations program students who participated in cultural/restoration field trips to Oheyawahi and the students of Maxfield Elementary who worked on a community mini-forest in the historic Rondo neighborhood. We engaged 856 youth, children, and students across 13 events in Q1/Q2 of 2025, resulting cumulative program totals of 3,155 people across 50 events. Teachers shared appreciation of the capacity support and stability of the program. Students appreciated the outdoor learning opportunities. Demographically, we found success in leveraging schools/community groups to reach diverse, traditionally-underserved audiences.

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

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations. When we join partner or coalition-based events, we do not always have direct access to demographics on age, race/ethnicity, etc. When possible and logical, we have used public records to provide demographic benchmarks (e.g. public school demographic reports).

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2025

Date Submitted: March 14, 2025

Date Approved: March 27, 2025

Overall Update

The second half of 2024 featured continued engagements, new event offerings, and time spent developing new relationships and public partnerships. Our goals were met and exceeded in each of our core three activities: we engaged a wide variety of Minnesotans in Greater MN in restoration work, with continued growth in partnership amongst State Parks with “Friends of the Park” groups (Activity 1); we concluded hosting four interns, each of whom assisted in a wide variety of community outreach efforts while also developing a unique, personalized capstone project (Activity 2); and we hosted a variety of events specifically developed with and for BIPOC youth, featuring a number of new partners (Activity 3). In total, our Q3 and Q4 efforts for 2024 engaged an additional 567 people across 24 programs and events.

An expenditure correction was made in "Youth Engagement" under Budget (services and subawards). A service contract for \$2,000 was mistakenly entered as \$3,000. We noticed the error internally and corrected the field to reflect the actual \$2,000 contract, of which Great River Greening has encumbered \$2,000, been invoiced for \$1,000, and has been reimbursed for \$1,000, so far.

Activity 1

We hosted a variety of smaller restoration events in Q3/Q4 across MN, engaging 100 people across 6 restoration events and an additional 28 people through a native landscaping educational series in Mankato (3% BIPOC representation). Restoration events included shrub planting at Allemansrätt Wilderness Park; plug planting at Sakatah WMA; seed harvesting at Frontenac State Park; buckthorn removal and seed broadcasting at Bend in the River Park; thinning of an overgrown oak savanna at Wild River State Park; and native seed ball creating at broadcasting with youth from the Nicollet Youth Outdoors Fair.

Our two State Park events engaged the “Friends of the Park” groups. These parks and their associated groups were targeted to help amplify the capacity and mission of these existing local public stewardship groups.

Our cumulative totals for Activity 1 so far are 1,738 people engaged across 23 hands-on restoration events with an additional 672 people engaged in tabling/outreach events.

Activity 2

Our internships continued and concluded in mid-August, with all four interns staying for the full duration of their term. In this, our second year of internship hosting, we were able to provide a much more robust experience with interns receiving a broad array of opportunities to support our Stewardship department in community outreach and volunteer event hosting, as well opportunities to shadow, support and learn from our ecologists and Conservation department. Our interns supported community outreach and partnership development; assisted with community-based conservation events (pollinator monitoring focused, given the summer months); shadowed conservation team members on site monitoring visits; and worked on their capstone projects (a conservation focused special project that they could take the lead on developing). We did achieve the milestone goals of increased volunteer base, return volunteers, and new community partners added.

With match funding found through the City of St Paul Right Track program once again, we are heading into the waning

months of our program with funding capacity to recruit and host additional interns in spring/early summer of 2025, so we will continue to increase our deliverables on this activity.

Activity 3

Partnership events and engagements were shared with a variety of BIPOC-majority youth organizations and schools. Our key Q3/Q4 partners and their relative diversity statistics (based upon a combination of publicly available demographic data and direct reporting) include Hmong College Prep Academy (100% BIPOC), the South High School Minneapolis All Nations Program (96% BIPOC), Northside Residents Development Council youth (100% BIPOC), Boys and Girls Club of Stearns County (84% BIPOC), Grass & Roots Outdoors Mankato (80% BIPOC), Maxfield Elementary School St Paul (100% BIPOC), Faribault High School (50% BIPOC), Stride Academy St Cloud (88% BIPOC), and the St Paul Public Schools recovery program (89%).

Each of these groups were engaged in environmental education, with most groups including hands-on conservation learning, including planting and pollinator surveying. Students were introduced to a variety of conservation careers and leaders. Culturally-specific engagements were provided for the South High All Nations program students who participated in cultural/restoration field trips to Oheyawahi and the Division of Indian Work, while also learning from Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.

We engaged 436 youth, children, and students (and their respective teachers) across 14 events in Q3/Q4 of 2024, resulting cumulative program totals of 2,299 people across 37 events.

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations. When we join partner or coalition-based events, we do not always have direct access to demographics on age, race/ethnicity, etc. When possible and logical, we have used public records to provide demographic benchmarks (e.g. public school demographic reports).

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2024

Date Submitted: July 26, 2024

Date Approved: August 15, 2024

Overall Update

The first half of 2024 featured continued engagements, new event offerings, and time spent developing new relationships and public partnerships. Our goals were met and exceeded in each of our core three activities: we engaged a wide variety of Minnesotans in Greater MN in restoration work, with growing partnerships amongst State Parks with “Friends of the Park” groups; we hired and hosted four interns; and hosted a variety of events specifically developed with and for BIPOC youth. In total, our Q1 and Q2 efforts for 2024 engaged and additional 1,029 people across 23 programs and events.

Activity 1

The Q1/Q2 period of 2024 saw several new events, sites, and partners emerge, engaging 366 people across 9 restoration events (87% white, 13% BIPOC) and an additional 41 people through an educational outreach event. These events included invasive brush hauling and removal at Pillager Point; an outreach/educational event in Mankato; native plant seeding at Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge; a family-focused native seeding and education event at Quarry Park and Nature Reserve; invasive species removal and seeding at Frontenac State Park; native shrub planting at ruffed grouse management area south of Pillager; two seeding events at Sunktokeca WMA; invasive species removal at Belle Prairie County Park; and tree planting at Nerstrand Big Woods State Park. An additional invasive species removal event was developed for Allemansratt Wilderness Park, but our partnering school group needed to cancel late in the process.

Our two State Park events engaged the “Friends of the Park” groups. These parks and their associated groups were engaged to help amplify the capacity and mission of these existing local public stewardship groups.

Our cumulative totals for Activity 1 so far are 1,638 people engaged across 17 hands-on restoration events with an additional 644 people engaged in events.

Activity 2

Intern outreach and interviews were conducted, and we met our adjusted goal of hiring four EDP interns (making up for a 2023 intern who departed the program to move across the country). These interns support GRG’s restoration work while receiving both hands-on restoration and environmental non-profit leadership training to support their potential future in natural resource restoration related fields. In the second year of this program, we’ve been able to more strongly integrate our interns into the wider conservation work of Great River Greening. Their tasks and opportunities have included: outreach, project planning, event leadership and support, curriculum research and development, and shadowing ecologists in the field. Their schedules vary, with interns working anywhere from 20-35hrs/week based on their personal scheduling needs. These summer interns will spend 6-11 weeks working with and learning from GRG staff.

Three of our interns are young adult college students and one is a rising high school senior. This year’s cohort has 50% BIPOC representation.

Match funding from the City of St Paul Right Track program has expanded our fiscal capacity in this program and we anticipate being able to host a school year intern before the current grant concludes in June.

Activity 3

Partnership events and engagements were shared with a variety of BIPOC-majority youth organizations and schools. Our

key Q1/Q2 partners and their relative diversity statistics based upon publicly available demographic data include Hiawatha College Prep-Northrop (99% BIPOC), South High School Minneapolis (71% BIPOC), Txuj Hmong Immersion and Language Elementary (99% BIPOC), Battle Creek Middle School St Paul (94% BIPOC), and Northside Safety NET (Neighborhoods Empowering Teens) (no official demographic data provided).

Each of these groups were engaged in environmental education, hands-on conservation work, and were introduced to a variety of conservation careers and leaders. Conservation work included pollinator plantings, tree plantings, and invasive species removal. Culturally-specific engagements were provided in the forms of South High All Nations program students receiving a cultural/restoration field trip to Oheyawahi; Hiawatha College Prep Northrup students learning from Luisana Méndez, the Founder and CEO of Huellas Latinas; and South High All Nations students learning from staff of Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi.

We engaged 623 youth, children, and students (and their respective teachers) across 12 events in Q1/Q2 of 2024, resulting cumulative program totals of 1,863 people across 23 events.

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations. When we join partner or coalition-based events, we do not always have direct access to demographics on age, race/ethnicity, etc. When possible and logical, we have used public records to provide demographic benchmarks (e.g. public school demographic reports).

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2024

Date Submitted: February 9, 2024

Date Approved: February 12, 2024

Overall Update

The second half of 2023 featured continued engagements, new event offerings, and time spent developing new relationships and public partnerships. Our goals were met and exceeded in each of our core three activities: we engaged a wide variety of Minnesotans in Greater MN in restoration work; successfully launched and completed a new internship program; and hosted a variety of events specifically developed with and for BIPOC youth. In total, our Q3 and Q4 efforts for 2023 engaged and additional 1,606 people across 21 programs and events.

Activity 1

We continue to invest in a variety of approaches to engage and connect with Minnesotans in Greater MN, including tabling events for outreach, educational presentations, and on-site habitat restoration demonstrations and events. This Q3/Q4 period featured education and outreach at Nicollet County Fair, a hands-on planting volunteer event at Camp Ripley Sentinel Landscape, pollinator planting at Pierce Butler Meadow, and a seed harvest volunteer event at Prairie Creek WMA. We engaged 624 individuals across these events.

Our hands-on restoration events were fewer and smaller for Q3/Q4, with 41 individuals participating across three restoration events (93% white, 7% BIPOC). In Q1/Q2, 1,231 participants were engaged across 5 restoration events, bringing our cumulative total to 1,272 engaged across 8 events with an additional 603 engaged in tabling/outreach events. After previous staff turnover, we're heading into 2024 with increased capacity to outreach to Greater MN and anticipate more restoration events in 2024.

Our initial interactive survey efforts captured broad interest in environmental care and connection opportunities, but we'd like more granular data and are adjusting our approach for 2024 events, designing a two-stage survey to capture (1) aspects of enjoyment and (2) barriers to enjoyment.

Activity 2

Our internships continued and concluded in mid-August. As stated previously, we lined up one additional intern to fill the vacated weeks of an intern who suddenly departed. This additional internship did not wind up occurring: the slated intern received a full-time job offer in the conservation field just before starting with us. Unused funding from the 2023 vacated internship will be carried forward into the new year, with the adjusted goal of hosting four interns in 2024. This should allow for increased outreach capacity and a more focused/targeted strategy.

As an extension of our EDP internship program, we tabled at a STEM Equity event hosted by Right Track and the City of St. Paul, sharing conservation career opportunities and information with 250 attendees (majority BIPOC).

Our volunteer base grew by 56% last year: a significant increase that mirrors our organizations growth overall. Five new community partners were added: Huellas Latinas, Northside Safety NET (Neighborhoods Empowering Teens), Renewing the Countryside, Neighborhood House, Pilgrim Baptist Church, and Canopy Connectors.

Activity 3

Partnerships with South High School's All Nations program, Garlough Elementary Environmental Magnet School, and Two Rivers High School were strengthened and supported. New students of All Nations on another cultural/restoration field trip to Oheya-wahi.

We created a new summer pollinator insect monitoring offering held during Latino Conservation Week, which was developed in partnership with Luisana Méndez, Founder/CEO of Huellas Latinas. The event welcomed 17 youth and families (majority Hispanic/Latino, 82% BIPOC overall); featured guest translation services; expert pollinator insect specialists; and inspiring content from Luisana about embracing Minnesota's outdoors.

A new partnership relationship with Hiawatha College Prep-Northrop, a public charter school with a majority Hispanic/Latino student base, is underway. Additionally, we developed and led a pollinator plant survey at Theodore Wirth park with youth from the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council.

We engaged 730 youth, children, and students (and teachers) across 15 events in the second half of 2023, resulting cumulative program totals of 1,240 people across 23 events. In partnering with schools, we do not always have direct access to racial/ethnicity demographics. Public school diversity statistics place our Future Stewards sites at 99% (HCN-Northrop), 67% BIPOC (South), 64% BIPOC (Garlough), 50% (TRHS).

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations. When we join partner or coalition-based events, we do not always have direct access to demographics on age, race/ethnicity, etc. When possible and logical, we have used public records to provide demographic benchmarks (e.g. public school demographic reports). In this period GRG had social media posts highlighting the project funded internship program (7/27/23), and volunteer events in Crow Wing County (10/16/23) and Prairie Creek WMA (10/19/23).

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2023

Date Submitted: July 25, 2023

Date Approved: August 8, 2023

Overall Update

The first half of 2023 saw the successful launch of several Engaging Diverse Populations (EDP) events and offerings, each of which aim to increase and diversify participation in natural resource efforts and environmental education/stewardship. Our Activity 1 events are engaging (and even introducing) rural and “outstate” Minnesotans to the importance and impact of natural resource development and protection. Our Activity 2 internship program is engaging a diverse group of emerging future leaders as a direct investment in the future of Minnesota’s conversation efforts. Our Activity 3 events are expanding on this investment in the future by introducing a wide range to environmental education and restoration opportunities, with a particular eye for equity-based outcomes supporting the participation of BIPOC youth and communities. In total, our Q1 and Q2 EDP efforts for 2023 have engaged 1,756 people across 15 programs and events.

Activity 1

We’ve invested time in a variety of approaches to engage and connect with Minnesotans in rural and outstate communities, including tabling events for outreach, educational presentations, and on-site habitat restoration demonstrations and events. In the first half of the year, we’ve led several events and engagements with or at MSU Mankato, Allemansrätt Park, Pillager Public High School, Quarry Park and Nature Reserve, and Chisago Lakes High School. We engaged 1,251 individuals across these events. The bulk of our engagement involved our two high school events, with 100% of participants counted being youth <17yrs old and school-based racial demographics of 94% white, 6% BIPOC.

We’re excited about the early successes and connections we’ve been able to form, yet also feel that much of the relational development work needed to form new outstate/rural connections is still newly underway. We’re currently lining up new events and engagements to expand our reach in the second half of the year.

A new interactive survey tool exploring nature-based climate solution was developed in June and will now be implemented at strategic GRG events (beginning this August). This will be translated and available in multiple languages.

Activity 2

Intern outreach and interviews were conducted in winter and spring of 2023. After several rounds of interviews, met our goal of hiring three EDP interns, one for each of the three geographic regions that GRG staff focus on in developing restoration events and initiatives: Central/North MN, South MN, and Metro Area. These interns support GRG’s restoration work while receiving both hands-on restoration and environmental non-profit leadership training to support their potential future in natural resource restoration related fields. This year’s interns have joined our summer schedule, which features pollinator conservation work, insect pollinator monitoring, tree planting, and sustainable agriculture. Their schedules vary, with interns work anywhere from 25-35hrs/week based on their personal scheduling needs. These summer interns will spend 8-10 weeks working with and learning from GRG staff.

Our Central/North MN intern unfortunately had to vacate his position after three weeks due to a family event necessitating a sudden move across the country. Thankfully, we’ve already lined up a new fall Central/North intern to pickup his remaining potential weeks (and the associated funding).

Each of our EDP interns are young adult college students and 75% are BIPOC.

Activity 3

Partnerships with South High School's All Nations program, Garlough Elementary Environmental Magnet School, and Two Rivers High School were strengthened and supported, with educational and hands-on restoration events occurring at all three locations. In addition, students of South High's All Nations program were led on a cultural and restoration field trip to Oheyawahi (aka Pilot Knob) with guest Native American speakers were serve as site stewards for the area. The partnership development work begun with Northside Safety NET continued into fruition, with youth participants receiving educational training and then supported for a hands-on planting event at a new community food and pollinator garden in North Minneapolis.

We engaged 501 youth, children and students across eight distinct youth-focused events in the first half of 2023. In partnering with schools and working with minors, we do not always have direct access to racial/ethnicity demographics, but of the available known data we have a ratio of 66% BIPOC youth participants.

We are committed to deepening our partnerships at each of our core "Future Stewards" schools. New initiatives in the works include (1) targeted support for BIPOC majority schools that lack urban tree canopy equity and (1) developing youth partnerships beyond the schools.

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations. When we join partner or coalition-based events, we do not always have direct access to demographics on age, race/ethnicity, etc. When possible and logical, we have used public records to provide demographic benchmarks (e.g. public school demographic reports).

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2023

Date Submitted: January 24, 2023

Date Approved: January 30, 2023

Overall Update

This is ongoing and too early in the funding cycle to discern any relatable outcomes.

Activity 1

Due to staff turnover in our volunteer management position, the interactive tool survey was put on hold until a new staff member could be onboarded. Despite the turnover we were able to host several events working with 132 volunteers in Central and Southeastern MN. Planning and connecting with partners is on track for Spring 2023 restoration events. Connection and training with an on-call interpreter center was established as well as translation services for online and paper event descriptions.

Activity 2

Significant research and outreach has been conducted in advance of 2023 internships. All three geographies where internships will be focused have descriptions and work plans in place. The internship posting was placed on Handshake, a career and internship platform that reaches colleges in the North Central and Southern MN regions, in December. We also have partnered with Right Track, a St. Paul based internship/ career recruitment agency that serves youth with barriers. Candidates are currently being reviewed for the three intern positions.

Activity 3

Partnerships with South High School's All Nations Program, Garlough Elementary School, and Two Rivers High School were developed and realized. A total of 3 educational engagements were held with classes focused on native habitats, pollinators, and ecology concluding in pollinator habitat plantings at the respective schools or immediately adjacent. Education coordinator and staff ecologists worked with educators and students to ensure the discussion was culturally focused and the plantings reflected any culturally important plants. A total of 296 students engaged in the Future Stewards program, 185 (62%) of which identify as BIPOC. 74% of the youth surveyed report having visited an outdoor natural area after participating in the program. Work is ongoing to add another youth group, Northside Safety NET, to the program. This group works with BIPOC high school youth in North Minneapolis.

Dissemination

Acknowledgement of funding sources is included in all event postings and recognized verbally on the day of events. Due to staff turnover, a questionnaire to capture feedback was put on hold and a draft version will be implemented in Spring 2023. Demographic information is collected and tracked through our online registration system and in-person paper registrations.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update March 1, 2023

Date Submitted: January 24, 2023

Date Approved: January 30, 2023

Overall Update

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