



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2023 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2023-062

Staff Lead: Corrie Layfield

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 5, 2023

Project Title: Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers

Project Budget: \$763,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Mimi Daniel

Organization: MN DNR - Operational Services Division (OSD)

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 22, 2023

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

Project Completion: December 31, 2027

Final Report Due Date: February 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2023, Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05c

Appropriation Language: \$763,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources in cooperation with Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa to ensure a stable and prepared natural resources work force in Minnesota by encouraging a diversity of students to pursue careers in environment and natural resources through internships, mentorships, and fellowships with the Department of Natural Resources, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the Pollution Control Agency. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2028, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: This collaborative project creates a college to workforce pathway for underrepresented students interested in pursuing Natural Resources careers by reducing barriers that inhibit successful educational attainment.

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

The State's environmental agencies have been unable to attract representative numbers of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), individuals with disabilities, or women into the professional and technical STEM positions that make up nearly half of their natural resources/environmental jobs. From 2016-2026, an estimated 44 percent of DNR positions will be at risk of retirement-related turnover. During the same period, Minnesota's State Demographer predicts Minnesota's labor force growth will continue to shrink, making it harder and harder to locate, hire, and retain qualified state environmental staff.

The Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) project provides a college to workforce pathway for under-represented students (women, BIPOC, and individuals with disabilities) who are pursuing STEM degrees at state and tribal colleges and technical schools. Through a strategic partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI), this project intends to reduce and eliminate barriers that inhibit under-represented students from completing STEM degrees and obtaining environmental employment post-graduation.

This project initially received three appropriations totaling \$1,787,000 to serve four cohorts.

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.

There has been an increased demand for the program now that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been mitigated. Due to the increased demand for the program, MNDNR is seeking additional funding to serve a fifth cohort of second and third-year college students. In addition to a fifth cohort, the program seeks funds to provide one paid summer learning experience for first-year college students. This experience will assist first-year college students with identifying a major in the environmental and natural resources field and learning about the various career pathways.

The IDEC program is one strategy to develop and tap into the diverse labor market. This program goes beyond just developing a pipeline of potential employees — it is also about fostering the next generation of environment and natural resources professionals and enthusiasts. The students will gain invaluable skills and direct work experience in areas such as water resources and wildlife management, recreation, conservation practices, surveying, engineering, habitat restoration, and management.

The funds requested will be used for program staffing, fellowships, summer learning experience, training, and final project results. The state agencies will provide in-kind funding for mentors and state-sponsored internships.

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?

As a result of this work effort, students are prepared for natural resources careers within the public sector upon graduation.

This project's long-term goal is to share these students' experiences within their communities in ways that further awareness of and interest in environmental careers. As students embark on career planning, they will seek experiential opportunities within state agencies, ultimately resulting in them becoming professionals who will be more connected to the environment and bring diversity and innovation to the conservation and management of the state's natural resources.

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?

In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Fellowship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$217,930

Activity Description:

The fellowship program helps students in the IDEC program overcome barriers to academic success and equip them with professional skills and certifications that contribute to career success. IDEC student participants or “fellows” are provided with a supportive community, yearly financial award/stipend, and professional development. They work with the CCMI assistant program manager, who coordinates resources and helps them navigate challenges during the journey. Fellows attend in-person and virtual cohort sessions during the academic school year to stay connected to their peers and participate in professional development opportunities. Fellows in cohort 5 will receive a financial award/stipend of \$1,000 for each academic school year of the program. Fellows remain in the program until they graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.

CCMI’s assistant program manager, in collaboration with DNR's project coordinator, will coordinate and manage the outreach, fellowship payments, support services, cohort meetings, and professional development opportunities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
7 fellows in cohort 5 will graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.	June 30, 2026
14 fellows in cohort 5 will develop professional skills and certification for future career use	May 31, 2027
7 fellows in cohort 5 will graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.	June 30, 2027

Activity 2: CCMI Contracted Internship and Agency-Sponsored Internship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$446,090

Activity Description:

The internship program runs from June to August, allowing cohort 5 fellows to learn more about environmental and natural resources career paths through paid on-the-job experience. The internship includes a first-year summer rotational experience and second and third-year summer agency internships. After completing the first-year summer rotational experience, fellows choose one of the three agencies (MNDNR, MPCA or BWSR) to intern for their second and third summers. Through the second and third-year summer agency internships, fellows gain more work experience in their desired career fields before graduating from college.

In addition, a cohort of first-year college students will have an opportunity to complete a paid summer rotational learning experience (June - August 2024) to learn about various environmental career paths and help them to identify a major.

MNDNR and CCMI will coordinate paid summer agency-internships administration in consultation with its partners. MNDNR, MPCA, and BWSR will provide in-kind funding for these internships. In total, MNDNR and its partners will provide up to 28 full-time agency internships to fellows in cohort 5.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
13 College Freshmen will increase their knowledge of environmental majors and careers	August 31, 2024

14 College Sophomores and Juniors will increase their knowledge of environmental careers within state agencies	August 31, 2025
14 Fellows will gain work skills and accumulate 880 hours of work experience	August 31, 2027

Activity 3: Mentorship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$98,980

Activity Description:

Fellows are paired with MNDNR, PCA, or BWSR employees who serve as their mentors. The mentorship program enhances college success, encourages personal and professional development, and promotes fellows' career advancement. Through regular interactions with their mentors, fellows gain knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve academic and career success. Mentors also benefit from the mentoring relationship by building mentoring skills, translating them back to their workplace and job. The program offers a structured framework to help ensure productive conversations between mentors and fellows. The program uses one-on-one and group mentoring approaches that includes in-person meetings (while practicing social distancing), video conferencing, email, and phone communication. All mentors receive ongoing training and regular support.

MNDNR, CCMI, MNPCA, and BWSR will continue to work collaboratively to administer the overall mentorship program. The DNR project coordinator and CCMI's assistant program manager will continue to provide leadership and support services to the mentors for the program's duration.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Recruit 14 mentors for cohort 5 fellows	February 28, 2025
Provide mentor training to 14 mentors	April 30, 2025
14 fellows will develop personally and increase their ability to navigate education and career space	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Mark Murphy	Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa	Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa will receive ENRTF funding for this project via contract for program administration to include the fellowship program and on-going student support.	Yes
Katrina Kessler	MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)	MPCA provides mentors and intern supervisors funds agency internships	No
John Jaschke	MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)	BWSR provides mentors and intern supervisors funds agency internships	No
Sarah Strommen	MN Department of Natural Resources	MNDNR will receive funding through the appropriation to coordinate the inter-agency mentorships and internships and overall project administration and evaluation.	Yes

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.

The MNDNR, MPCA, BWSR and CCMI will disseminate program information and will provide links on their websites. The partners have experience recruiting STEM students through existing relationships with environmental and engineering department at several universities. CCMI has been successful at attracting student interest in similar programs, such as the Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy. MNDNR, MPCA and BWSR's websites will offer descriptions of the program and links to CCMI's website for more information. This project will also build on the foundations work and achievements of the ENRTF-funded project, Bridges to Diversifying Involvement in the Natural Resources Community. At project end, a report will be provided that summarizes the project, including its successes and challenges, so that others may benefit from any lessons learned.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines.

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

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

This project breaks down barriers that inhibit under-represented students from pursuing post-secondary STEM education and careers. The project's results and data will be used to identify how to refine our diversity recruitment efforts using the experience-based college-to-careers pathways model. In the years to come, we hope that this becomes our standard model for how we do business and not just a "program." The ultimate objective is that this program's results serve as a model that continues to attract students from under-represented communities to natural resources careers in greater numbers and provides sustainable and meaningful long-term careers.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$487,000
Increase Diversity in Environmental Careers to Serve Minnesota's Changing Demographics	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05l	\$550,000
Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d	\$250,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
1 Project Coordinator		To manage overall project including administration and evaluation			30%	2.45		\$237,000
							Sub Total	\$237,000
Contracts and Services								
Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa	Professional or Technical Service Contract	1FTE Assistant Program Manager to administer the project (\$227,500) with the following components: Recruitment, Yearly fellowship (\$42,000) ; CCMI Contracted Summer rotational internships (\$222,000), Training & Professional development (\$6,300); Outreach; Wrap-around services and Support; Travel				3.5		\$508,900
							Sub Total	\$508,900
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Direct and Necessary	Direct and Necessary for MNDNR's costs to administer the program					\$17,100
							Sub Total	\$17,100
							Grand Total	\$763,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

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

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
In-Kind	MN DNR, MPCA, BWSR	Award up to 28 summer agency-internships for 14 students. Provide mentors for program participants.	Pending	\$470,440
			State Sub Total	\$470,440
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$470,440

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [ef3d5be4-f38.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

A graphic showing a brief overview of the Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program. The graphic says “Working Together to Increase Diversity in Environmental Careers: The Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program provides a unique college-to-careers pathway for under-represented STEM college students who want to pursue careers in the environmental and natural resources field. Partnership includes: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Poll...

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Background Check Certification Form	edfe88cc-780.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

We reduced the number of participants served. College freshman that will go through the summer rotational program will be 13 instead of 15 and cohort 5 consisting of college sophomores and juniors will be 14 instead of 15.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

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

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

No

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

N/A

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

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No