



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2025 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2025-016

Staff Lead: Tiffany Schaufler

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 5, 2025

Project Title: Advancing Equity in Environmental Education

Project Budget: \$700,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Sara Lemke

Organization: Camp Fire Minnesota

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Email: giving@campfiremn.org

Web Address: www.campfiremn.org

Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 24, 2025

Reporting Schedule: March 1 / September 1 of each year.

Project Completion: June 30, 2028

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b

Appropriation Language: \$700,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Camp Fire Minnesota to provide needs-based scholarships for Minnesota youth to attend state-standards-aligned environmental and outdoor education programs.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

Project Summary: Scholarships will provide inclusive Environmental Education for 7,900 Minnesota youth, addressing gaps in both classroom and outdoor learning. Aligned with state standards, this supports ENRTF goals for equitable access.

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

Camp Fire Minnesota has connected young people to nature through camps, environmental education, and afterschool programs for over 100 years. In 2024, we served 10,780 youth, 3,441 of whom participated through scholarships. Despite increasing our scholarship budget by 35% from 2023 to 2024, our full annual capacity was met just two months into the year.

Access to nature remains inequitable. Only 5% of Minnesotans visiting state parks are people of color, and students from under-resourced communities continue to face STEM achievement gaps. Outdoor education is proven to increase student engagement and foster environmental stewardship, but many youth are still left out due to cost.

To bridge this gap, we request ENRTF funding exclusively for scholarships, supporting participation in our Environmental Education programs aligned with Minnesota State Standards. These funds will directly enable 7,900 students to access programs over two years, 1,019 more than we currently serve annually. Scholarships ensure youth experience nature-based learning that builds skills in STEM, environmental literacy, and social-emotional development, regardless of financial means.

This funding advances equity and environmental outcomes by addressing financial barriers, empowering the next generation to live sustainably, and restoring and protecting Minnesota's natural resources.

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.

To address inequities in outdoor education access, Camp Fire Minnesota will use ENRTF funding entirely for scholarships across three year-round programs: Environmental Education, Summer and School Break Camps, and Afterschool Explorers. These programs reach youth ages 5–18 in 61 Twin Cities metro zip codes, prioritizing schools with 60% or higher Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rates, where all students attend for free. For others, scholarships are awarded on a sliding scale based on FRL levels.

Camp Fire's Environmental Education curriculum includes 17 STEM and 10 Outdoor Recreation lessons aligned with Minnesota State Standards. Programs take place at our 103-acre Excelsior property, in schools, and in community spaces.

Currently, 3,441 youth receive scholarship support each year. ENRTF funding will allow us to serve 7,900 youth over two years, welcoming 1,019 additional students who would otherwise not have access to these experiences.

Scholarships will be tracked through our Camp Brain database. This investment ensures that Minnesota's youth, especially those historically excluded from nature, gain the knowledge, skills, and connections to lead sustainable lives and contribute to a healthy, biodiverse environment.

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

This project will:

1) Guarantee scholarships for 7,900 youth who will have increased knowledge and skills through Environmental Education coursework tied to Minnesota State Education standards that directly align with LCCMR's ENRTF strategic

goals of cultivating a sustainable lifestyle and support a healthy and biodiverse natural environment.

2) 80% of youth welcomed will report understanding the importance of caring for the natural world around them.

3) 95% of educators will report that the activities address the learning objectives they were hoping to address.

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Recruitment

Activity Budget: \$350,000

Activity Description:

Through long-standing partnerships, we have built strong relationships with BIPOC and low-income communities. We serve 84% of BIPOC youth through Afterschool Explorers in 10 Minneapolis Public Schools and 66% of BIPOC youth through Environmental Education programs. We also prioritize partnerships with organizations that support high Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) populations. These partnerships create a pipeline of youth to attend summer and school break camps at no cost, with transportation provided.

Opportunities funded by ENRTF will be shared with schools, partners, and individuals via email, phone, and our website to recruit new partners. We maintain a database of 536 educators and schools expressing interest in Environmental Education but lacking funding. Scholarship eligibility is based on need, determined by FRL status, and collected through an application. We prioritize awarding scholarships to organizations and youth with high percentages of BIPOC, FRL, and social-emotional learning needs.

Scholarship amounts reflect the full programming cost, including staff time for planning and facilitation, relationship-building with partners, and program delivery. Costs include STEM learning materials (e.g., magnifying glasses, guidebooks, life jackets, winter gear), food for summer campers and overnight trips, and transportation for Camp Fire staff delivering programs across the Twin Cities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Confirm scheduled 2025/2026 Environmental Education field trips, overnights, and camp scholarships with current partners.	September 30, 2025
Create waitlist of partners and families develop a plan to engage them.	September 30, 2025
Coordinate with Afterschool Explorers families and current partners to fill Fall break camp opportunities.	October 31, 2025
Conduct individual outreach to waitlist partners to understand community needs through one-on-one meetings.	October 31, 2025
Finalize program details (date, time, number of youth served) with interested waitlist partners.	December 31, 2025
Send e-blast to over 500 schools and educators highlighting Environmental Education programs and scholarship availability.	December 31, 2025
Conduct outreach to waitlist and 2024 families regarding 2026 school break and summer scholarship availability.	January 31, 2026
Collaborate with partners to identify emerging Environmental Education needs and additional learning support.	April 30, 2026
Fill Spring break camp opportunities in collaboration with Afterschool Explorers and partner organizations.	April 30, 2026
Enroll 6 new schools or community organizations in Camp Fire programs in year one.	June 30, 2026
Coordinate Summer break camp opportunities with Afterschool Explorers families and partners.	June 30, 2026
Review and refine program offerings based on feedback from partners and youth.	September 30, 2026
Support Fall break camp programming with returning and new partners.	October 31, 2026
Distribute updated program and scholarship information to partners and potential new audiences.	December 31, 2026
Conduct outreach to waitlist and 2025 families regarding 2026 school break and summer scholarship availability.	January 31, 2027
Fill Spring break camp opportunities with Afterschool Explorers and partner organizations.	April 30, 2027
Partner with a total of 50 schools and community organizations through the scholarship program.	June 30, 2027
Fill Summer camp opportunities with Afterschool Explorers, partners and families.	June 30, 2027

A minimum of 7,900 youth will participate in Environmental Education through scholarships.	June 30, 2027
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Activity 2: Scholarship Awards

Activity Budget: \$350,000

Activity Description:

We will award scholarships across three year-round programs: Environmental Education, Summer and School Break Camps, and Afterschool Explorers. These programs serve youth ages 5–18 from 61 zip codes across the Twin Cities metro.

Scholarships are determined by a school's Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate. Schools with 60% or higher FRL qualify all participating youth for free programs. For schools below 60%, scholarships are offered on a sliding scale based on FRL level.

Environmental Education engages youth through STEM and outdoor recreation lessons aligned with Minnesota education standards, delivered by trained Naturalists at our 103-acre property and in classrooms. We will serve 6,610 youth over two years.

Summer and School Break Camps include day and overnight camps, canoe trips, and leadership experiences. These trauma-informed, social-emotional programs will reach 810 youth. Camp scholarships are awarded through an application process that invites families to share their needs..

Afterschool Explorers partners with 10 Minneapolis elementary schools to deliver bi-weekly nature-based sessions and field trips led by trained Naturalists. Held in students' own communities and tied to our STEM and recreation curricula, this program will serve 480 youth.

All scholarship data will be tracked in our database.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Meeting with DNR Grants Unit.	August 31, 2025
90% of educators will report that the activities address their goal learning objectives.	January 31, 2026
80% of Participants report they value nature and understand caring for the natural world.	January 31, 2026
3,720 students welcomed through Environmental Education, Summer and School Break Camp, and Afterschool Explorers through	June 30, 2026
95% of educators will report that the activities address their goal learning objectives.	January 31, 2027
85% of Participants report they value nature and understand caring for the natural world.	January 31, 2027
4,180 young people welcomed in year two with a total of 7,900 welcomed	June 30, 2027

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.

To ensure the broad dissemination, effective presentation, and sustainable impact of the research, Camp Fire Minnesota will implement the following strategies:

Collaboration and Participation:

Camp Fire Minnesota collaborates closely with community partners, participants, families, and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for identifying program needs. Utilizing Weikart's Center for Program Quality's methodologies, we conduct ongoing assessments of our programs, incorporating weekly staff debriefs, reflections, and feedback from participant and teacher/partner surveys to continuously enhance program quality. Before program implementation, our program leaders engage with new schools and partners to understand their objectives and ensure programs are co-created and culturally relevant. With our seasoned naturalists crafting curriculum aligned with Minnesota State Education standards, we are dedicated to delivering exceptional programs. Camp Fire prioritizes youth development best practices, integrating youth perspectives into program refinement and providing trained, nurturing adult facilitators. Our programs are designed to achieve specific outcomes, fostering social and emotional skills, encouraging environmental stewardship, and instilling a deep appreciation for nature.

Dissemination of Results: To reach entities that can utilize our findings for resource management in Minnesota, we will document and share the results through a variety of digital and in-person conversations:

Surveys: We measure outcomes through teacher and youth surveys, sharing testimonials and outcomes with our current and prospective audience.

Program Quality: We measure program quality with the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) observation tool. Throughout the program year, Camp Fire managers use the YPQA tool to observe programs for 1) a safe environment, 2) a supportive environment, 3) interaction, and 4) engagement. By continually assessing program quality, we hope to provide insights to partners who can have the highest impact on the young people we welcome.

Youth Reflection: We incorporate youth voice and youth choice in our programs. Our Naturalists are trained to check in regularly with youth to see how their interests evolve throughout the program and maintain flexibility. As those interests grow, we will share with partners relevant conservation issues and curiosities Minnesota youth would like to explore.

Promoting Behavioral Change: Our programs are designed to foster environmental stewardship and a deep appreciation for nature among participants. To encourage behavioral changes that protect, conserve, or enhance Minnesota's environment, our outcomes will be:

80% of youth welcomed will report understanding the importance of caring for the natural world around them.

95% of educators will report that the activities address the learning objectives they hoped to address.

Public Awareness and Acknowledgment: To share the accomplishments supported by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) with Minnesotans:

Outreach and Communication: We will create informative content, including blog posts, newsletters, and social media updates, highlighting the progress and impact of our work. These communications will be crafted to be easily understandable and engaging for a broad audience.

Attribution and Recognition: In all project-related print and electronic media, publications, signage, and outreach, we will prominently acknowledge the ENRTF using the trust fund logo and attribution language as specified in the ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines. Social media posts will include the relevant tags to ensure appropriate recognition.

By following these strategies, Camp Fire Minnesota is committed to ensuring that our research benefits those directly involved and contributes to the broader conservation efforts across Minnesota.

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?

Advancing Equity in Environmental Education is implemented in partnership with educators and youth to build upon our catalog of 17 STEM courses tied to Minnesota State Education Standards and 10 Outdoor Education courses. ENRTF funds will provide strategic scholarship support with current and new partners serving under-resourced populations. With support from ENRTF, this project builds the network of partnerships for Camp Fire to reach diverse school districts and provides environmental education and hands-on learning experiences for 7,900 Minnesota youth. Camp Fire Minnesota is committed to enhancing and expanding our scholarship fund over time with public and private long-term funding

Budget Summary

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

		<p>Scholarships - Environmental Education Y1:\$37,200 in scholarships to serve 3,100 youth [$\\$12 \times 3,100$ youth = \$37,200] Y2: \$114,750 in scholarships to serve 3,510 youth; EE: [$\\$13 \times 3,300$ = \$41,250]; EE/Partner Overnights (Summer): [$\\$350 \times 140$ youth = \$49,000]; EE/Partner Overnights: [$\\$350 \times 70$ youth = 24,500]</p> <p>*Scholarship calculations are determined by the cost that goes into serving each participant for the given program. Expenses factored into costs of serving each youth include but are not limited to staff time, food, camp site supplies, curriculum consumables, first aid/emergency response, mental health support, weather appropriate gear, and transportation to and from base camp. Scholarships are determined by a school's Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate. Schools with 60% or higher FRL qualify all participating youth for free programs. For schools below 60%, scholarships are offered on a sliding scale based on FRL level. Camp scholarships are awarded through an application process that invites families to share their needs.</p>	<p>Provision of scholarship funding to underserved environmental education learning experiences. Scholarships will enable Camp Fire Minnesota to serve 6,610 youth (ages 5-18 across the Twin Cities Metro) with trauma-informed, social emotional, and culturally affirming environmental education programs over the two-year grant period. These scholarships will help close the gap in access to our programs for youth with the highest need.</p>					\$151,950
		<p>Scholarships - Out of School Time/Afterschool Explorers Y1: \$96,000 in scholarships to serve 240 youth [$\\$400 \times 240$ youth = \$96,000] Y2: \$96,000 in scholarships to serve 240 youth [$\\$400 \times 240$ youth = \$96,000] *Scholarship calculations are determined by the cost that goes into serving each participant for the given program. Expenses factored into costs of serving each youth include but are not limited to staff time, food, camp site supplies, curriculum consumables, first aid/emergency response, mental health support, weather appropriate gear, and transportation to and from base camp. Scholarships are determined by a school's Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate. Schools with 60% or higher FRL qualify all participating youth for free programs. For schools below 60%, scholarships are offered on a sliding scale based on FRL level. Camp scholarships are awarded through an application process that invites families to share their needs.</p>	<p>Scholarships will enable Camp Fire Minnesota to serve 480 youth (ages 5-18 across the Twin Cities Metro) with trauma-informed, social emotional, and culturally affirming Out of School Time/Afterschool Explorers programs over the two-year grant period. These scholarships will help close the gap in access to our programs for youth with the highest need.</p>					\$192,000
		<p>Scholarships - Summer & School Break Camp Y1: \$169,760 in scholarships to serve 380 youth [$\\$604 \times$</p>	<p>Scholarships will enable Camp Fire Minnesota to serve 810 youth (ages 5-</p>					\$356,050

		260 youth = \$157,040] [\$106 x 120 youth = \$12,720] Y2: \$186,290 in scholarships to serve 430 youth [\$60 x 280 youth = \$170,240] [\$107 x 150 youth = \$16,050] *Scholarship calculations are determined by the cost that goes into serving each participant for the given program. Expenses factored into costs of serving each youth include but are not limited to staff time, food, camp site supplies, curriculum consumables, first aid/emergency response, mental health support, weather appropriate gear, and transportation to and from base camp. Camp scholarships are awarded through an application process that invites families to share their needs.	18 across the Twin Cities Metro) with trauma-informed, social emotional, and culturally affirming Summer and School Break Camp programs over the two-year grant period. These scholarships will help close the gap in access to our programs for youth with the highest need.					
							Sub Total	\$700,000
							Grand Total	\$700,000

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				
Cash	Community Crime Intervention & Prevention Grant, OJP	Support of program staff to operate programs and program supplies.	Secured	\$525,000
			State Sub Total	\$525,000
Non-State				
Cash	Opus Foundation	Support for program staff to operate programs and supplies.	Pending	\$200,000
Cash	Otto Bemer Foundation	Support for program staff to operate programs and supplies.	Pending	\$150,000
Cash	Program Fees	Fess of summer camp programs.	Pending	\$3,000,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$3,350,000
			Funds Total	\$3,875,000

Total Project Cost: \$4,575,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [bd57a8ec-5b0.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Last fall, as part of our 2023 Youth Storytelling Contest, young people submitted artwork, stop motion videos, stories, and poems sharing how being in nature sparks joy, magic, or growth in their world. The creativity of these young people beautifully expresses the importance of Camp Fire Minnesota programs....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
990 Camp Fire Minnesota	f87da6a6-03f.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution & Letter	8c7c33c4-09a.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Stories, Annual Report, and Environmental Education in Action!	b3dd6ae5-9db.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Updated appropriation end date per request in comments and revisions.

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

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this project:

Kori Redepenning, Camp Fire Minnesota

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

N/A