

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2010 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 166-F

Project Title:

Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:

F. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ \$368,500

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 years, 2010 - 2012

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$0

Summary:

The Conservation Apprenticeship Program will train and mentor Minnesotas future conservationists by providing apprenticeship service to SWCDs during construction season and increase quality on-the-ground conservation projects.

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Sponsoring Organization: Board of Water and Soil Resources

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Location:

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

_____ Knowledge Base	_____ Broad App.	_____ Innovation
_____ Leverage	_____ Outcomes	
_____ Partnerships	_____ Urgency	_____ TOTAL

MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The two primary goals of the Conservation Apprenticeship program are to: 1) train and mentor Minnesota's future conservationists, transferring knowledge from experienced professionals to the next generation of conservation managers and 2) to bring much needed apprenticeship service to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) during their busy construction season to increase the number and quality of on-the-ground conservation projects.

Why is the Conservation Mentor Program and Academy important?

1. Many of our most experienced conservation professionals and practitioners are nearing retirement age, but due to budget/hiring constraints will not be replaced until they have left employment. Consequently, we are missing a great opportunity to transfer knowledge and experience to the next generation responsible for Minnesota's conservation.
2. While college graduates with conservation-related degrees are expected to be knowledgeable in technology, theory and research methods, their practical, on-the-ground skills need development. Communicating with landowners and adjusting designs for field nuances are vital to the success of conservation projects and best learned from seasoned professionals. In turn, apprentices will bring knowledge of emerging technologies and other innovations to improve the quality and productivity of current conservation efforts. This allows for a cross-pollination of ideas and solutions for natural resource challenges.
3. Conservation funding from LCCMR, Bonding and General Fund sources, along with Federal Farm Bill Conservation programs (EQIP, WRP, CRP), would be accelerated with this cost-effective workforce dedicated to designing, installing, and maintaining conservation projects.

What are some of the benefits?

1. Familiarizing future conservation leaders with Minnesota's various land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns.
2. Showcasing the benefits of living and working in rural Minnesota, especially for college graduates who may not have considered a career in Greater Minnesota.
3. Promoting greater diversity among young people interested in conservation careers.
4. Educating future employees for upcoming jobs in federal, state, local and private sector conservation and green economy jobs with real-world experience in design and construction.
5. Guaranteeing college students at least two years of environmental study to affirm their career choice and bring this passion to their remaining studies.
6. Proving participants with access to (federal) AmeriCorps service and education award opportunities.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: Develop academy structure, recruit participating SWCDs, and develop 30 employment agreements.

Budget: \$50,000

Deliverable	Completion Date
Academy structure and participant list (year 1)	March 2011
Result 2: Recruit, select and train academy participants	
Budget: \$318,000	
Deliverable	Completion Date
Recruiting materials for use at U of M, MnSCU, and private institutions, with professional and technical environmental curriculums	September 2010
Select candidates and develop individual workplans and mentor commitments; place persons at SCWD offices	April - May 2011
Conduct training/academy; MCC lead, others assist	May - June 2011
Hold close-out session, evaluate progress and contributions	September 2011
Repeat for year two, with adjustments	October 2012

III. PROJECT STRATEGY AND TIMELINE

A. Project Partners

MN Conservation Corps – recruit, select, employ and train
 SWCDs – workplace, daily assignments, and mentor
 BWSR – grants and training
 NRCS – train and mentor
 MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts – recruiting

B. Project Impact

- *Re-establishes a crucial link in the project delivery chain by developing the future technical workforce.
- * Accelerate and enhance conservation project delivery (Clean Water Legacy, RIM/WRP, CRP reenrollment, Cost-Share, EQIP, Flood Recovery, etc.).
- * Establish a strong foundation for the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

C. Time

In order to continue the apprenticeship program long enough to address anticipated retirements and bridge several university graduating classes, this program will need to run at least four years. We do not anticipate a need for LCCMR funding beyond eight years — at the very most.

D. Long-Term Strategy (if applicable)

State and Federal conservation agencies will consider successful interns for future employment opportunities and build the **Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy** into a base operation as a long-term strategy.

Project Budget

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (Two years)

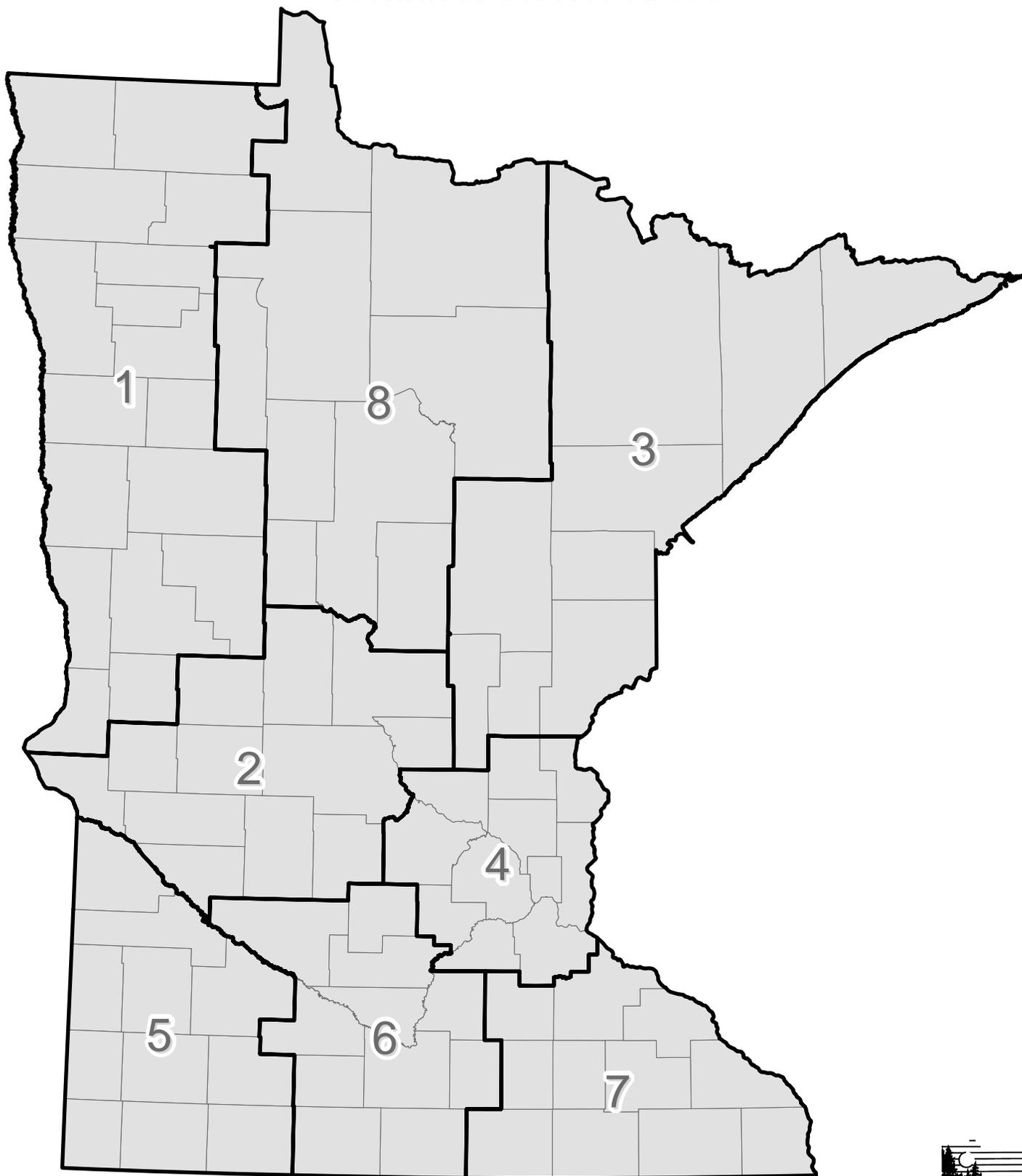
BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel: BWSR Program and Grants developer, trainer; 2 years; 5% FTE	\$ 10,000
	\$ -
Contracts:	\$ -
Minnesota Conservation Corps - business manager, recruiter, accountant, and 30 SWCD interns for approximately 600 hours per year; for two years	\$ 295,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Field manuals, muck (knee) boots; 2 year total	\$ 13,500
Acquisition	\$ -
Travel: In-state work-related travel for MCC supervisors and MCC trainees; 2 yrs	\$ 30,000
Additional Budget Items: lodging and meals for 30 trainees and 6 supervisors for initial training and exit assessment; 2 years	\$ 20,000
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$ 368,500

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:	\$ -	
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: RIM/WRP wetland restoration, project realty, project design dollars associated with cost-share programs managed by SWCDs. (State base grants to 30 SWCDs estimated in column at right.)	\$ 750,000	pending
In-kind Services During Project Period: SWCD & NRCS to provide office, computer/IT services, substantial vehicle access, and technical training	\$ 190,000	estimated
Remaining \$ from Current Trust Fund Appropriation (if applicable):		
Funding History:	\$ -	

Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Technical Service Areas



Project Manager Qualifications**Project Manager: Steve Woods, Assistant Director, BWSR**

Steve Woods has 24 years of management, planning, design, and construction experience obtained with private and public sector organizations spanning the Upper Midwest. Strong leadership, inter-governmental, and technical skills are all leveraged in current position as one of two Assistant Directors at the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Education: Bachelor Agricultural Engineering, University of Minnesota
Masters of Public Administration, Hamline University

Licensed Professional Civil Engineer
MN Supreme Court list of approved ADR neutrals

Experience:**Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Assistant Director 1999—Present**

As Assistant Director for Statewide Operations, directly supervise three regional supervisors and the agency's performance review coordinator. The 37 regional employees are located in seven field offices and provide financial, technical, and administrative support to a network of 91 soil and water conservation districts, 47 watershed districts, 87 counties, and over 300 wetland regulatory jurisdictions. Responsible for seeing that policies issued from St. Paul reflect the perspectives of the entire state and our stakeholders. This requires travel to field offices, meeting with local governments, and frequent interaction at regional and state association functions.

Montgomery Watson Harza, Inc., Supervising Professional 1987—1999

Served as Office Manager for two years and long-term Manager of the Water Resources Division of this international environmental consulting and design firm's Great Lakes Office. Responsible for managing a variety of hydrologic and environmental restoration projects across the Upper Midwest for on-time and on-schedule completion.

Clients represented a diverse array of hydrologic regimes, environmental goals, and financial structures. Project work included lake restoration, bioengineering, floodplain management, construction management, stream restoration, monitoring, watershed modeling, public outreach, invasive species control, and wetland restoration. Work with local watershed boards led to development of watershed management strategies for 30% of the 7-county Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan area.

Organization Description: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will serve as the lead state agency for this grant. The BWSR has a strong connection with SWCDs and their implementation role in soil and water conservation. We intend to use existing financial and administrative processes to provide oversight.

Minnesota Conservation Corps: Len Price, Executive Director, provides overall leadership and strategic direction. As a former teacher (34 years) and state legislator (20 years), Len's strengths are his public relations skills, knowledge of government agency operations and numerous contacts at all levels of government. He served on the Minnesota Conservation Corps board of directors during its transition from a state agency to nonprofit, and joined the organization as Executive Director in 2005. Len currently serves on the boards of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits and the Corps Network, a national association of conservation corps.