

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

LCCMR ID: 179-F

Project Title:

Get Outside! Urban Woodland for City Kids

LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:

F. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ \$218,500

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, 2010 - 2013

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$242,100

Summary:

The Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom is a 17¾ acre woodland which provides ecological education and historical interpretation for children and adults, habitat for native wildlife, and an urban woodland oasis.

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Sponsoring Organization: City of Saint Paul, Dept of Parks and Recreation

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Fax: (651) 292-7405

Web Address: www.stpaul.gov/parks

Location:

Region: Metro

County Name: Ramsey

City / Township: Saint Paul

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

PROJECT TITLE: Get Outside! – Urban Woodland for City Kids

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The City of Saint Paul, Department of Parks and Recreation wishes to restore fifteen acres of native habitat in Como Regional Park. Restoration of this land will begin the transformation of nearly eighteen acres of degraded parkland into the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom. The classroom, when complete, will provide environmental education and historical interpretation for school children and adults, habitat for native wildlife, and an urban woodland oasis to the surrounding inner-city community where local place-based, hands-on environmental learning opportunities are rare.

Natural resource restoration of this area will be the first step in the process to provide outdoor environmental education opportunities to over 75 public and private schools within a five-mile radius of the woodland. In addition, the woodland will provide an additional recreational and educational opportunity for more than 2.3 million visitors to Como Regional Park per year.

Restoration of native plant communities in the classroom will be directed by the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom Master Plan, developed by Saint Paul Parks and Recreation (2009) and by the natural resource management plan developed by Parks' environmental services staff. The Como Woodland Advisory Committee guided development of the master plan and the management plan. This, citizen-based, volunteer, advisory group is comprised of twelve professionals in the fields of natural resources management, secondary and higher education, and community organizing. In 2007 and 2008, the Advisory Committee developed and implemented twenty-one youth-based planting, removal, and birding events that introduced 829 community volunteers to the classroom.

Phase one of this proposal is to develop seven outdoor study areas within the outdoor classroom. The study areas will include: oak woodland, coniferous forest, oak savanna, tallgrass prairie, sedge meadow, transitional woodland, and propagation gardens. ADA-accessible, gravel, pedestrian trails will provide interior circulation throughout each classroom area and provide informal gathering areas for small groups of students. Informational signage and interpretative trail signs will direct the classroom experience.

Phase two of this proposal will allow Parks to develop and implement an outreach and marketing plan for the classroom. This plan will include the establishment of the site as a MN DNR School Forest, which will allow Parks to tap into the resources of the program and establish a long-range support network. Additionally, we will develop an 'Educate the Educator' program for local teachers in outdoor environmental education at all levels.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: *Develop outdoor classroom study areas,*

Budget: \$210,500

Deliverables at the end of three years

Completion Date

1. *Woodland restoration – 10.9 acres*

June 2013

Oak woodland, coniferous forest, & transitional woodland.

- Transitional woodland: a woodland consisting of Ramsey County native and naturalized zone 4 woodland community plants. This area will also provide an opportunity to study climate change by introducing less-hardy, zone 5, species.

2. *Prairie, savanna and meadow restoration – 3.6 acres*

June 2013

3. *Propagation gardens – 0.85 acres*

May 2013

- Propagation garden: a space to be utilized for local ecotype seed propagation. These garden beds will highlight useful native

species in the home landscape and provide a source for local ecotype plant material for future restoration activities within the classroom.

- | | |
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| 4. <i>Construction of 4,000 feet of ADA accessible trails</i> | <i>April 2011</i> |
| 5. <i>Entry signs (four) and interpretative trail signage (~fifty)</i>
A primary level of entry signage for casual site users will include orientation maps, information about site history, and describe the restoration activities occurring at this location. A secondary level of interpretative trail signage will include numbered posts that correspond to site guides and online lesson plans for educators and explorers of the classroom areas. | <i>April 2013</i> |
| 6. <i>Design and engineering</i> | <i>Ongoing to facilitate deliverables</i> |

Result 2: *Teacher training and student involvement*

Budget: \$8,000

Deliverables at the end of three years

Completion Date

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. <i>Receive DNR School Forest status</i> | <i>June 2012</i> |
| 2. <i>Host three educator training sessions</i>
Two each for elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Involve ten educators per session. Designed to help educators adapt to teaching in an outdoor classroom. | <i>June 2013</i> |
| 3. <i>Student participation in site restoration (500 youth/year)</i>
Educational programs to include: birding tours, long-range biological survey studies, and site restoration events. | <i>June 2013</i> |

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation: Don Ganje (project manager), Bryan Murphy (project design), Adam Robbins (natural resources), and Meghan Manhatton (classroom development). *Como Woodland Advisory Committee:* Project advice, website content development, curriculum and guide development. *Ramsey Conservation District:* Provide guidance for invasive species control through Ramsey County Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) program. *District 10 Community Council and Environment Committee:* Provide meeting space and community involvement.

B. Timeline Requirements

Deliverables that involve a restoration or invasive species control component will run for the entire 36 month period of the grant cycle to maximize our ability to control non-native invasive species to increase the success of our restoration efforts.

C. Long-Term Strategy

Given the history of volunteer involvement on site and the growth of Saint Paul Parks' volunteer program, we are confident that maintenance of this site will become a perennial community and youth-based volunteer effort. The Environmental Services program engages 4,000 community volunteers totaling approximately 13,000 hours of service per year. A larger portion of these hours will be shifted to cover the needs of the classroom as it develops. In 2009 and beyond, Parks will assign a dedicated, paid, summer youth crew to the classroom site to maintain the site and manage exotic species. The Como Woodland Advisory Committee has and will continue to seek support from local foundations and non-profit organizations.

Project Budget

Project Title: Get Outside! Urban Woodland for City Kids

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (3 years)

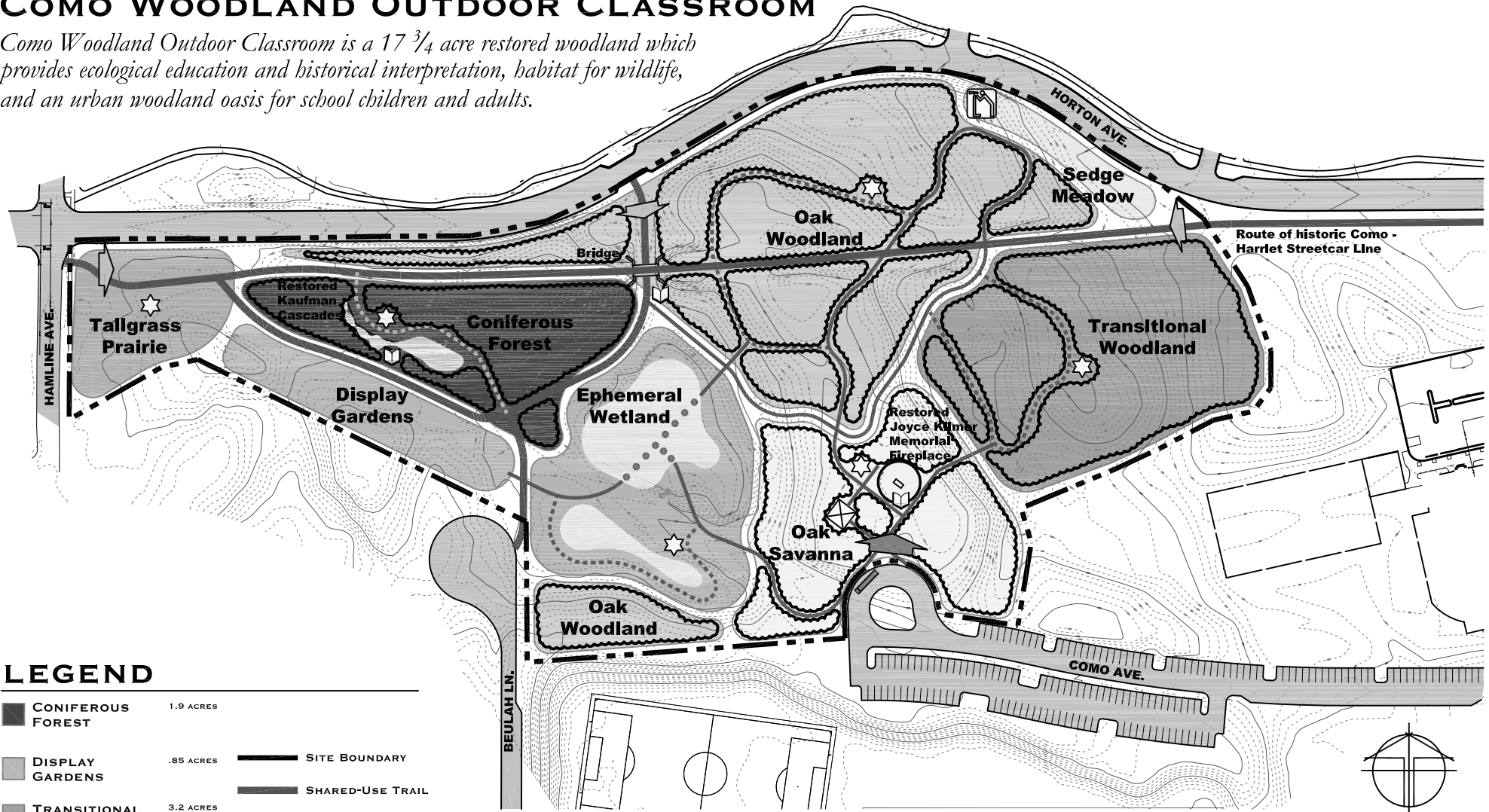
<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: Total \$30,500	
Don Ganje, City of Saint Paul, Landscape Architect IV (License No. 12291) <i>Project manager with project oversight. Position not funded by City's general fund.</i>	\$10,000 8% FTE (salary + benefits)
Bryan Murphy, City of Saint Paul, Landscape Architect II (License No. 42927) <i>Project designer and coordinator with field responsibilities. Position not funded by City's general fund.</i>	\$12,500 16% FTE (salary + benefits)
Meghan Manhattan, Natural Resource Technician <i>Coordinate and implement an outreach and marketing plan for the classroom. Position not fully funded by City general and special funds.</i>	\$8,000 17% FTE (salary + benefits)
Contracts: Total \$188,000	
Invasive species management contract. 17.75 acres annually for three years. As possible, the Minnesota Conservation Corps will play an active role in the management of invasive species through contract. Contractors with knowledge, skills, experience, or specialized equipment will be contracted through use of the City's Master Contracts or requested through an RFP.	\$ 28,000
Forest restoration contract. 10.9 acres. The removal and planting components of restoration may be contracted separately through existing Master Contracts to take advantage of contractors' expertise.	\$ 50,000
Prairie installation. 3.6 acres. Will be contracted through existing Master Contracts.	\$ 15,000
Trail installation contract. 4,000 feet of ADA accessible trail. Will be contracted through use of the City's Master Contracts or requested through an RFP.	\$ 25,000
Sign construction and installation contract. Includes 4 entry signs and 50+ educational posts. Will be contracted through an RFP process.	\$ 50,000
Propagation garden construction. 0.85 acres. Will be contracted through an RFP process.	\$ 20,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: City of Saint Paul CIB funds to develop the classroom entrance and meeting location.	\$ 242,100	<i>Pending</i>
Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Environmental Services (Operations & YJC) staff time.	\$ 50,000	<i>Secured</i>
In-kind Services During Project Period: Total \$79,250		
Website content development, curriculum and guide development	\$ 14,000	
Volunteer labor (\$10 per hour)	\$ 45,000	
Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom Advisory Committee (\$20.25 per hour)	\$ 20,250	
Funding History: Total \$124,709		
City of Saint Paul CIB funds to develop master plan for the Como Woodland	\$ 40,000	
2003 - 2009 Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Environmental Services, Forestry, YJC, Support Maintenance staff time and equipment in-kind. (<i>estimate</i>)	\$ 30,000	
In-kind volunteer labor, 2003 - 2009. Valued at \$10 per hour for field activities and \$20.25 hours for professional activities. (<i>estimate</i>)	\$ 50,000	
Anderson Foundation environmental education grant.	\$ 505	
Minnesota Native Plant Society environmental education grant.	\$ 279	
Audubon Minnesota environmental education grant.	\$ 500	
Saint Paul Audubon Society bird habitat research grant.	\$ 1,050	
City of Saint Paul COPP environmental education grant.	\$ 2,000	
Together Green (National Audubon Society) invasive species removal grant.	\$ 375	

COMO WOODLAND OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

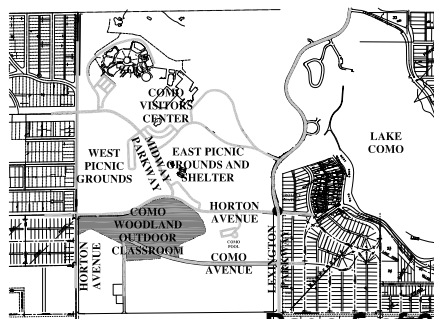
Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom is a 17 3/4 acre restored woodland which provides ecological education and historical interpretation, habitat for wildlife, and an urban woodland oasis for school children and adults.



LEGEND

	CONIFEROUS FOREST	1.9 ACRES		SITE BOUNDARY
	DISPLAY GARDENS	.85 ACRES		SHARED-USE TRAIL
	TRANSITIONAL WOODLAND	3.2 ACRES		PEDESTRIAN TRAIL
	OAK SAVANNA	2.3 ACRES		GRAVEL TRAIL
	OAK WOODLAND	5.8 ACRES		BOARDWALK
	SEDGE MEADOW	.35 ACRES		CLASSROOM STUDY AREA
	TALLGRASS PRAIRIE	.95 ACRES		INTERPRETIVE AREA
	EPHEMERAL WETLAND - not in this request	2.3 ACRES		SHELTER/RESTROOMS
				OVERLOOK AREA
				ENTRANCE - PRIMARY
				ENTRANCE - SECONDARY

LOCATOR MAP



COMO REGIONAL PARK
RAMSEY COUNTY, MINNESOTA

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

AUGUST 18, 2008
LCCMR ID: 179-F

Project Manager Qualifications:

Don Ganje – Landscape Architect IV

Don holds a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture and is a licensed Landscape Architect in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Don supervises a staff of landscape architects who provide research, planning, design, construction document preparation, administration and inspection for development of the City of Saint Paul Parks system. Don has over 30 years experience in the planning, design and development of residential, commercial, institutional and recreational development projects. He has been responsible for the ongoing restoration of Como Regional Park since 1985 and is the recipient of several National and State design awards; most recently for Raspberry Island from the MN chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Other notable projects in Saint Paul parks include: Mears Park, Wacouta Commons, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary, Trillium Nature Sanctuary, Como Park (golf course, picnic grounds, Streetcar Station) and is currently the project manager for the 15 million dollar Como Zoo Polar Bear Exhibit.

Adam Robbins – Environmental Coordinator

Adam Robbins holds a Bachelors degree in Organismal Biology and has over twelve years of experience working on natural resource restoration projects within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Adam has managed the Environmental Services program for Saint Paul parks for four years. His responsibilities include coordination of restoration projects, management of invasive species, wildlife management, and running the prescribed burn program. On an annual basis, the program receives approximately \$75,000 in grant money from various sources to support management of our natural areas. Recent projects of interest, which have received local and statewide recognition, include the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and the Lake Phalen ecological shoreland restoration program.

Organization Description:

City of Saint Paul Department of Paul Parks and Recreation mission and vision statement: Helping make Saint Paul the Most Livable City in America by facilitating the creation of active lifestyles, vibrant places, and a vital environment through Parks and Recreation that responds creatively to change, innovates with every decision, and connects the entire city.

In 2008, the Department created a Vision Plan to describe a positive future for parks and recreation in Saint Paul, and outlined specific activities that will lead to that future. One of the five primary sections in the Vision Plan is to create an Environmentally Aware department. Environmental Awareness is defined as an increased sensitivity to ecological issues and the benefits of a healthy ecosystem have people demanding more natural experiences from parks and recreation. By developing the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom, Parks and Recreation is addressing the community's desire for more educational and interpretive programs, a better balance of environment and recreation, and more passive open space.

The *Como Woodland Advisory Committee* was formed in July of 2006. The members have provided the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom project with community input, project guidance, and volunteer labor. Several of the founding members of the Advisory Committee were a part of the District 10 Community Council Environment Committee and have been hosting community buckthorn removal events and cleanup events onsite since 2003. Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom educational programs have been supported by seven small grants, written and applied for by the Advisory Committee, from local foundations and non-profit organizations. The Advisory Committee continues to seek this support.