

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 210-G

Project Title: Protecting, Restoring, and Managing Northeastern Minnesota's Invaluable Forests

Category: G. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ \$219,475

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 yrs, July 2011 - June 2014

Other Non-State Funds: \$ 0

Summary:

To instill a long-lasting and action-based forestry ethic, the project will fully develop an education model in Itasca County and support its expansion throughout the Laurentian Mixed Forest Complex.

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Sponsoring Organization: Itasca County

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Location

Region: NE

Ecological Section: Western Superior Uplands (212K), Northern Superior Uplands (212L), No. Minnesota and Ontario Peatlands (212M), No. Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains (212N)

County Name: Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Benton, Carlton, Cass, Chisago, Clearwater, Cook, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Isanti, Itasca, Kanabec, Koochiching, Lake, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Roseau, St. Louis, Wadena

City / Township:

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity	_____ Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ Employment
			_____ TOTAL _____%

2011-2014 MAIN PROPOSAL

TITLE: Protecting, Restoring, and Managing Northeastern Minnesota's Invaluable Forests

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The thought of Northeastern Minnesota's "northwoods" may bring an iconic landscape to mind, but the region's forests are a fragile and precious resource under pressure from multiple directions. From tourism, recreation, and residential development to logging, industry, and even global climate change, Minnesota's Laurentian Mixed Forest Complex is an ancient and intricate system in a modern state of perpetual change.

Central to the protection, restoration, and management of Northeastern Minnesota's forests is the enhancement of public education, awareness, and understanding. An urgent response to the need for forestry-based environmental education can help instill in the social consciousness an appreciation and respect of forests, thereby developing a long-lasting and action-based conservation ethic.

The Forestry Education and Awareness Program (the program) is based in Itasca County, which lies at the center of the state's Laurentian forest complex. An innovative, locally-led, and broad-based partnership, the program was initiated in 2004 to promote comprehensive forestry education and awareness to county residents and visitors. Uniting diverse community, non-profit, corporate, tribal, and governmental stakeholders, the program developed consensus on key forestry messages and now delivers them within K-12 curriculum and public communications campaigns. Since 2004, the program has partnered with an international paper company, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, and the United States Forest Service. Additionally, it has formed strategic partnerships with all school districts and nearly all schools in the county, leading to the forest-based environmental education of more than 2,000 students. The program estimates that the current strategic marketing campaign will communicate key forestry messages to more than 25,000 people.

Having demonstrated a capacity to build consensus and effectively deliver locally-validated forestry messages, the program is poised for growth. The goal of the proposed project is to protect, restore, and manage healthy, working, and bio-diverse forests throughout Northeastern Minnesota by developing a long-lasting and action-based conservation ethic within the region. Direct outcomes of the project will include an increased number of partners in Itasca County who are committed to forestry education, an increased number of teachers and students in Itasca County who have received key forestry messages, and an increased number of groups in Northeastern Minnesota's forested counties that are expanding the work of Itasca County by developing their own locally-validated forestry education programs. The proposed project will achieve these outcomes by: 1) Increasing and strengthening partnerships in Itasca County, 2) Enhancing program delivery to educators/students in Itasca County, and 3) Supporting regional growth of the program by presenting it to other groups in Minnesota's Laurentian Mixed Forest Complex.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Increase and strengthen partnerships in Itasca County. **Budget:** \$ 64,000

The continued development of local partnerships will enhance effectiveness and will provide a more robust model for presentation to other groups. Specific tasks will include: 1) Develop list of new partners and schools, 2) Contact potential partners and schools through phone, email, or on-site visits, 3) Hold regular partnership meetings, 4) Coordinate and support partner/educator/student outdoor experiences, and 5) Provide training for partners on strategies to help them interact with and engage teachers and students effectively. An Excel database will track all activities and outcomes. Reports will be filed as requested.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Recruit up to 15 new partners	June 30, 2014
2. Recruit up to 5 outlying schools	June 30, 2014

3. Coordinate and support up to 45 partner/educator/student outdoor experiences	June 30, 2014
4. Provide training to 45 forestry professionals	June 30, 2014

Activity 2: Enhance program delivery to educators/students in Itasca County. **Budget:** \$140,000

Enhancing delivery of the program will increase its effectiveness and will provide a more robust model for presentation to other groups. Specific tasks will include: 1) Develop list of new teachers, 2) Contact potential teachers through phone or e-mail, 3) Train new teachers through team-teaching experiences, 4) Provide a Project Learning Tree academy for teachers and offer graduate credit, 5) Develop resource teams at schools in conjunction with LCCMR-supported School Forests Committees, and 6) Provide increased coordination and access to resources/partners for teachers. An Excel database will track all activities and outcomes. Reports will be filed as requested.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Recruit and train up to 105 new teachers	June 30, 2014
2. Develop and maintain up to 12 resource teams	June 30, 2014
3. Deliver key forestry messages to approximately 3,000 students	June 30, 2014

Activity 3: Support regional growth of the program by presenting it to other groups in Minnesota's Laurentian Mixed Forest Complex **Budget:** \$15,000

The extent to which the program has been embraced in Itasca County indicates that it is a model that can help build a long-lasting and action-based conservation ethic throughout Northeastern Minnesota. Specific tasks will include: 1) Develop a PowerPoint presentation about the program, 2) Develop a list of land commissioners, forestry affairs committees, and tribes within the 22 counties contained in the Laurentian Mixed Forest Complex, 3) Make initial contacts through email, phone, and mail, 4) Seek presentation opportunities at statewide land commissioners convention, and 5) Provide resources, materials, and direction to interested parties. An Excel database will track all activities and outcomes. Reports will be filed as requested.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Mail up to 40 information packets	June 30, 2014
2. Deliver up to 10 presentations	June 30, 2014
3. Educate up to 240 individuals about the program	June 30, 2014

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners Itasca County will be the fiscal agent, will distribute all funds to contracted parties, and will make in-kind contributions. Garrett Ous, Land Commissioner, will serve as project manager. Paula Frings will serve as project coordinator. Frings will receive funds via a county contract to coordinate and deliver the project and to lead presentations. Karen Christenson is an environmental educator who will provide training to partners/educators. Christenson obtained adjunct faculty status at Hamline University and will offer graduate credit for training. She will be compensated for her time via a contract. Other government and corporate partners will provide in-kind donations. They will receive no trust fund dollars.

B. Timeline Requirements The proposed three-year project period will enable the program to achieve maximum growth in Itasca County and will allow for presentation to other groups in the region.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs In a time of waning government budgets and rising costs, Itasca County has initiated a positive, proactive, and broad-based initiative that is helping to secure the sustainability of vital local forests by developing a county-wide forestry ethic. This ethic will lead to increased protection, conservation, restoration, and enhancement of forests. The county believes that this ethic should be supported indefinitely and expanded regionally.

Protecting, Restoring, and Managing Northeastern Minnesota's Invaluable Forests

2011-2014 Detailed Project Budget

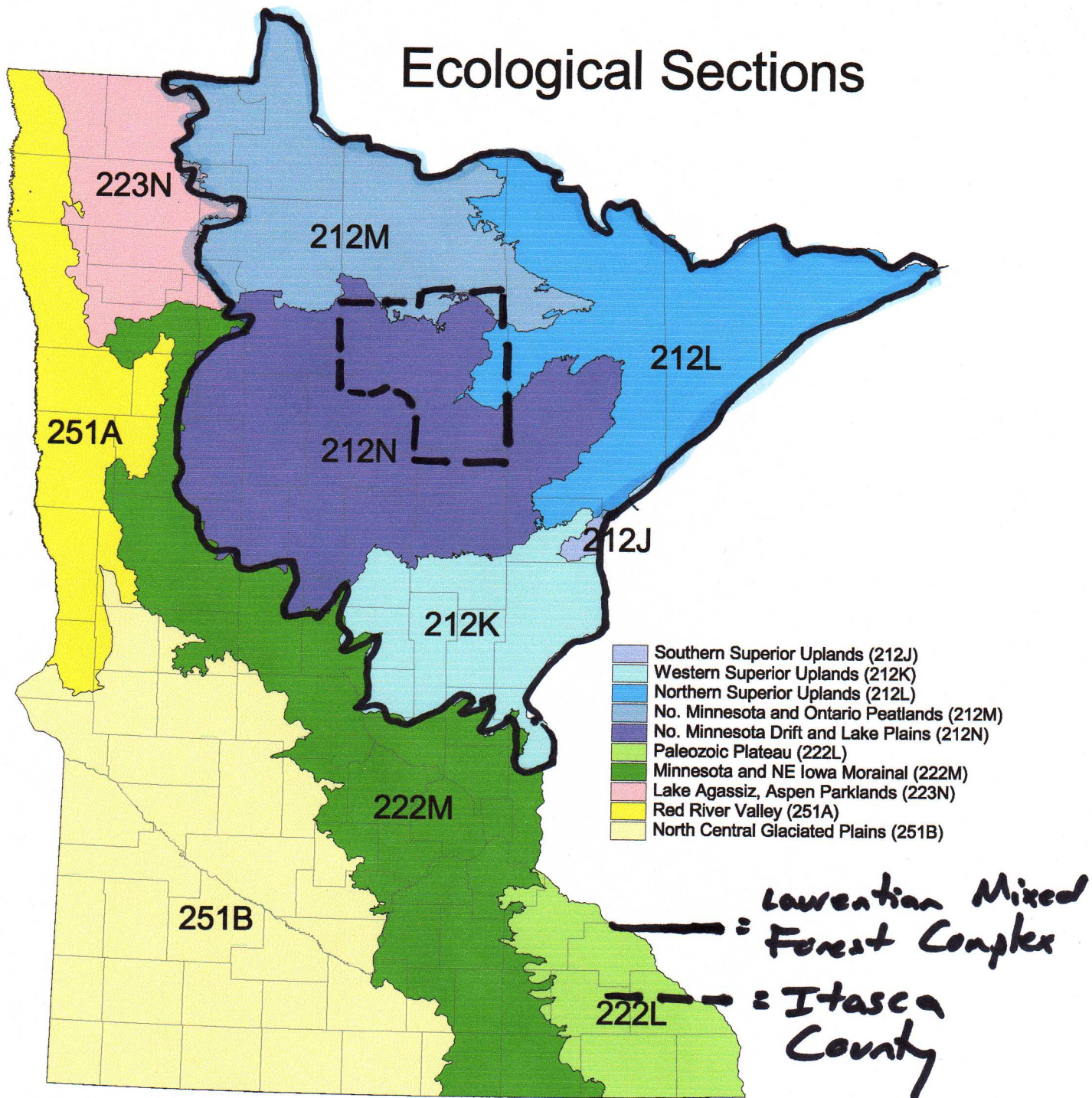
IV. Total Trust Fund Request Budget Three Years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
Contracts: Itasca County proposes to offer non-competitive contracts to Paula Frings for project coordination and Karen Christenson for project training because they are experienced and cost-effective providers due to their occupational backgrounds and established involvement with the program. Activities 1, 2, & 3: Project Coordination and Presentation: 450 hours x 3 years x \$60/hr = \$81,000 Activities 1 & 2: Project Training: 400 hours x 3 years x \$60/hr = \$72,000	\$ 153,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Activity 1: Binders for existing and new partners, 60 binders x \$20 = \$1,200 Activity 2: 170 binders for existing and new teachers x \$20 = \$3,400; Wood kits for 525 classrooms x \$8 each = \$4,200; Posters for 525 classrooms x \$5 each = \$2,625; Paper kits for 525 classrooms x \$5 each = \$2,625; Reference books for 525 classrooms x \$25 = \$13,125 Activity 3: Information packets for 240 individuals x \$15 each = \$3,600	\$ 30,775
Travel: Activity 1, 2, & 3: Travel to partners and schools in Minnesota's third largest county, presentation to groups outside of Itasca County, 6,000 miles x 3 years x .50/mile = \$9,000 Activity 2: Student and teacher travel to school forests, Forest History Center, forestry tours, and service learning projects, 1,800 individuals x 3 years x 2 trips per year x \$2 each = \$21,600	\$ 30,600
Additional Budget Items: Activity 2: Facility meeting expense for training of existing and new teachers, 170 teachers x \$20 each = \$3,400; forest history center admission for 170 teachers x	\$ 5,100
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST	\$ 219,475

V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period: Ongoing communications campaign to deliver key messages about the working forest to residents and visitors will be funded through a cash match from Itasca County, \$30,000 x 3 years = \$90,000.	\$ 90,000	Pending
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:	\$ -	
In-kind Services During Project Period: Project manager's time to provide project administration and participate in presentations outside of Itasca County, provided in-kind by Itasca County, \$45/hr x 180 hours/year x 3 years = \$24,300 Foresters, loggers, and other professionals in classrooms and forestry tours, in-kind match of \$45/hr x 200 hours/year x 3 years = \$27,000	\$ 51,300	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation:	\$ -	
Funding History: <i>Indicate funding secured prior to July 1, 2011 for activities directly relevant to this specific funding request. State specific source(s) of funds.</i>	\$ -	

Ecological Sections



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Beltrami County
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Grand Rapids, MN 55744
(218) 327-4449 ext 239

September, 2000



Division of Forestry
Ecological Land
Classification Program

VI: Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Project Manager Garrett Ous has been the Itasca County Land Commissioner since 1995. Prior to his work in Itasca County, Ous worked for the Clearwater County Land Department for 12 years, four as a forester and eight as the land commissioner. Ous attended Utah State University and graduated with a bachelor of science in forestry.

As manager of the proposed project, Ous will oversee administration of the project and will serve as the liaison between the Itasca County Board of Commissioners, contracted service providers, and program partners. In addition, he will monitor progress, seek out continued funding, support program content and public outreach efforts, conduct forestry tours, and contribute to presentations about the program to groups outside of Itasca County.

In 2004, when the Itasca County Board of Commissioners first directed Ous to develop a forestry education project, their reasons were three-fold. For one, local forests were facing increasing demands, and it was critical to increase education and awareness about the forests where people worked, lived, and recreated. For another, there was a need to increase public trust in the active management of forests. Finally, in order to effectively reach K-12 students, there was a need to bridge the gap between practicing professionals' knowledge of forests and teachers' knowledge of education and students.

As partners in the Forestry Education and Awareness Program began meeting, they worked to define the shared values and key messages of the organization. The values were described as the diverse use of forests that include a balanced system of social, economic, and environmental components for the joint benefit of all citizens locally and beyond. The key messages were defined in over-arching categories including forestry concepts; economics, business, and forest management; environment, wildlife, and conservation; society and recreation; and practical forestry applications.

Primarily, the program's role within K-12 education has been to develop a network of partners, to develop a network of educators, and then to connect professionals' knowledge of forests with teacher's knowledge of core subject areas including math, science, reading, communications, and social studies. Specialized training opportunities and team-teaching experiences bring the key messages to life for educators and demonstrate that they can be integrated into existing curriculums as opposed to becoming add-on components. As teachers work to integrate the messages into their teaching, they have a range of resources available to them, including books, websites, videos, school forests, presentations by foresters and industry professionals, and forestry tours.

Since its founding, the program has documented a number of significant achievements. One local elementary school adopted the key messages throughout their school, obtained a grant to provide related professional development, and obtained a school forest designation. Another school created a key-message-based "Intro to Forestry" course that meets high school science standards and is supported by network partners through grants, forest tours, guest speakers, and team teaching. This small school has a high population of Native American students, and more than more than 70 students registered for the class in its first year. In a large, neighboring school district, program posters hang in all 275 classrooms. Additionally, the key messages are embedded district-wide in the 4th-grade science curriculum. The high school in this district has also embedded the key messages in forestry courses, and because of a recent articulation agreement with a local community college, students taking these classes can receive college credit.

Outside of the K-12 environment, the program has continued to reach out to the general public through ongoing strategic marketing campaigns. These campaigns have used posters, brochures, rack cards, and advertising to teach residents and visitors about the importance of Itasca County's forests. It is estimated that the most recently developed campaign will reach 25,000 residents and visitors.