

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2014 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 066-C

Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 392,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 Years, July 2014 to December 2016

Summary:

This program builds upon previous success, placing 30 students as interns in SWCD offices state-wide each year for two years, facilitating knowledge sharing between experienced professionals and students.

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Sponsoring Organization: BWSR

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Location

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

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



PROJECT TITLE: MINNESOTA CONSERVATION APPRENTICESHIP ACADEMY

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy transfers knowledge from experienced professionals to the next generation of conservation managers. Future conservation leaders need to be familiar with Minnesota’s widely varying land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns if we hope to maintain the capacity of local organizations to deliver conservation on the ground. While college graduates with conservation-related degrees are knowledgeable in technology, theory, and research methods, they still need to develop their on-the-ground skills. Communicating with landowners and implementing quality projects are vital to the success of conservation efforts and best learned from seasoned professionals. Real-world experience gained with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) during their busy season is experience that textbooks cannot convey.

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa (CCMI) works under a contract from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to recruit interested SWCDs and university students, and then matches them by geography and interest. Apprentices gain skills and experience in areas such as water resource management, conservation inspections, surveying, and habitat restoration. In turn, apprentices will bring knowledge of emerging technologies and other innovations to improve the quality and productivity of current conservation efforts. During the first two seasons of the academy, apprentices showed significant knowledge gains in project planning and implementation. This was summarized by apprentice Mathias V. at the end of his term, “I was able to learn first-hand from a wide variety of natural resource professionals including engineers, technicians, specialists from the NRCS, DNR, MPCA, and more: A million times better than a textbook or a lecture hall. And, I got to tangibly help them all too! I learned more in my summer there than in a year or two of environmental engineering class.”

The ENRTF funded a cohort of 30 apprentices during the summer of 2011 and cohorts of 35 in 2012 and 2013. In total, 100 students have participated in this program to date. Of the 65 participants from 2011 and 2012, 34 are currently employed or completing a degree in natural resource management or a related field. Additionally, 38 students will participate in the 2014 program. This work plan would provide an opportunity for 60 new apprentices during the summers of 2015 and 2016. When initially proposed to LCCMR, the opportunity for this project was viewed as a 4 to 8 year project to ensure seamless transition for SWCDs around Minnesota. This proposal represents years 5 and 6.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: BWSR to provide contract, oversight, and technical assistance for CCMI.

Budget: \$6,000

Description: The intent is to build on the solid foundation of the apprentice program and further enhance program quality. This result is administratively focused, as the contract and employment arrangements details are critical for all parties. BWSR will provide guidance in interpreting evaluation data from previous years and implementing improvements based on the data. Similarly, BWSR will assist with final program evaluation.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. execute contract between BWSR and Conservation Corps	August 30, 2014
2. create employment agreement format and program documentation describing schedule and duties; employment agreements and management	October 15, 2014
3. close out year one and evaluate	December 31, 2015
4. close out year two and evaluate	November 30, 2016



Activity 2: Recruit participating SWCDs; Develop 30 employment agreements; Recruit, select, and train 30 academy participants; Repeat with 30 participants for year two.

Budget: \$386,000

Description: BWSR and the CCMI will approach University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and University environmental programs for assistance in recruiting candidates. The CCMI will match students and recent graduates with SWCDs and Technical Service Areas (TSA – a joint powers entity of SWCDs). Both the SWCD and the apprentices will receive training to clarify expectations and requirements for successful participation in the program. The CCMI will serve as the employer of record and handle all payroll and personnel issues (e.g. AmeriCorps credits) until conclusion of summer employment.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. design recruitment materials and conduct recruitment at educational institutions, online, and through other media	November 30, 2014
2. generate list of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor)	December 30, 2014
3. match candidates with interested SWCDs	April 31, 2015
4. employ 30 apprentices	October 15, 2015
5. design recruitment materials and conduct recruitment at educational institutions, online, and through other media	November 30, 2015
6. generate list of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor); year 2	December 30, 2015
7. match candidates with interested SWCDs; year 2	April 31, 2016
8. employ 30 apprentices; year 2	October 15, 2016

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

CCMI via contract, MN Association of SWCDs, individuals SWCDs, University and State College systems, field staff of NRCS, BWSR, and other agencies.

In-kind staff hours of the SWCDs and BWSR staff will be the largest direct money.

B. Timeline Requirements

The proposed project timeline is October 15, 2014 – November 30, 2016. This allows agreements to be in place between BWSR and CCMI prior to identifying SWCD locations for the 2015 summer season. The end date of November 30, 2016 allows for closeout of year two and evaluation.

The majority of the project planning and preparation will occur in the winter and spring. Apprentices will be placed at SWCDs in May and continue through August of each summer. Closeout, evaluation, and reporting will occur in the fall of each year.

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

This project proposal seeks to utilize the capacity that has been built and the momentum gained during the first years of the Apprenticeship Academy. The project will meet the needs of SWCDs with 30 apprentices in each of the 2015 and 2016 field seasons. In addition to the immediate impact at the local level, this project will prepare conservation leaders that will shape environmental strategy and implementation for the next 40 years.

BWSR and CCMI are developing long-term funding strategies for the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy that involves a mixture of federal, state, local, foundation, and private support.

2014 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

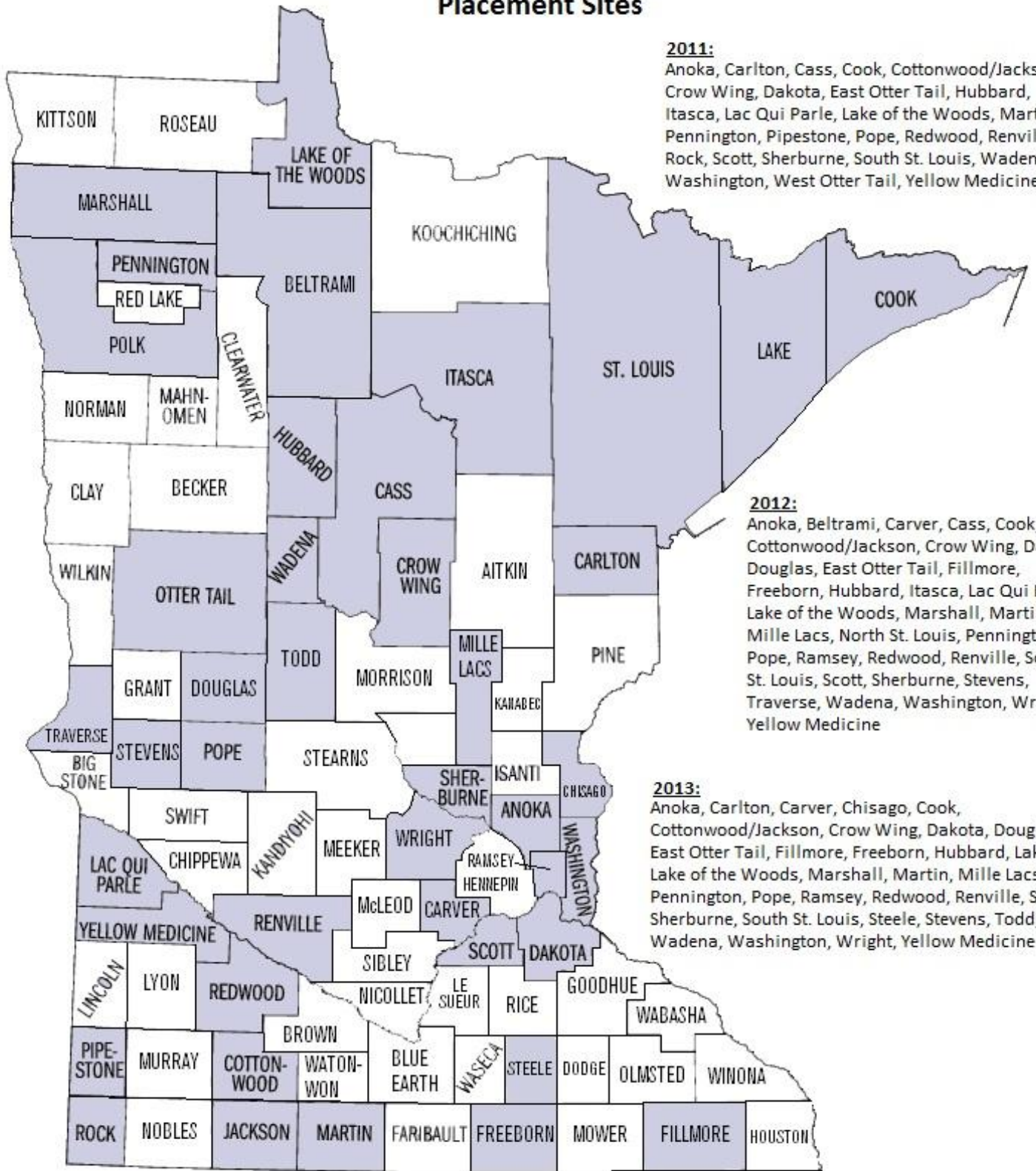
IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel: BWSR Training Coordinator @0.04 FTE (non-general fund employee).	\$ 6,000
Contracts: Conservation Corps Minnesota for manager time (\$80,000), apprentice stipends and benefits (\$262,000), training (\$20,000), and site visits (\$12,000). Included in contract are funds for recruitment, background checks, recruiting ads, and materials (\$12,000).	\$ 386,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 392,000

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
In-kind Services During Project Period: National Service Education Award for Apprentices upon successful completion of their term. The Education Award can be used to pay for tuition or pay back qualified student loans. Each award is valued at \$1468.	\$ 88,080	Pending
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable): M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec 2, Subd. 8a. Appropriation amount of \$368,000. Remaining balance of \$35,351 will be spent by 06/2013.	\$ 35,351	To be used in June 2013
M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art. 3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a. Appropriation amount of \$200,000. Remaining balance of \$200,000 will be spent by 12/2014.	\$ 200,000	To be used by December 2014
M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 7a. Appropriation amount of \$186,000. Remaining balance of \$186,000 will be spent by 12/2014.	\$ 186,000	To be used by December 2014
Funding History: M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec 2, Subd. 8a. Appropriation amount of \$368,000. Remaining unspent balance of \$35,351 will be spent by 06/2013.	\$ 368,000	To be used in June 2013
M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art. 3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a. Appropriation amount of \$200,000. Remaining unspent balance of \$200,000 will be spent by 12/2014.	\$ 200,000	To be used by December 2014
M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 7a. Appropriation amount of \$186,000. Remaining unspent balance of \$186,000 will be spent by 12/2014.	\$ 186,000	To be used by December 2014

Conservation Apprentice Academy Placement Sites



The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources consists of 20 members, including local government representatives that deliver BWSR programs, state agencies, and citizens. The board sets a policy agenda designed to enhance service delivery through the use of local government. Board members, including the board chair, are appointed by the governor to four-year terms.

The board is the state's administrative agency for 90 soil and water conservation districts, 46 watershed districts, 23 metropolitan watershed management organizations, and 80 county water managers.

The BWSR mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. Core functions include implementing the state's soil and water conservation policy, comprehensive local water management, and the Wetland Conservation Act as it relates to the 41.7 million acres of private land in Minnesota.

Jenny Gieseke, BWSR's Training Coordinator will be responsible for managing the project. Jenny's current duties focus on providing training for BWSR's local government partners such as SWCD and County staff. Prior to joining BWSR, Jenny worked for the Crow River Organization of Water (CROW) for 12 years, and has prior experience working on wetland issues and environmental consulting. While with the CROW, Jenny was responsible for the management and reporting of multiple grant projects focused on improving the water quality of the Crow River. Jenny has a BS degree in Environmental Science/Ecology and is currently working to complete a MS degree in Communications.