

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 074-C

Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 1,093,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 Years, July 2014 to August 2017

Summary:

A collaborative metro-wide system for environmental educational using existing, but underutilized, environmental resources serving 15,600 underserved middle and high school students in high quality, place-based environmental education programs.

Name: Gregory Lais

Sponsoring Organization: Wilderness Inquiry

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Location

Region: Metro

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 _____%



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2014 Main Proposal

Project Title: Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources#

PROJECT TITLE: Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources (UEE)

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources (UEE) will serve 15,600 low-income youth over three years in a range of high quality, place-based environmental education programs. UEE establishes an environmental educational system for disadvantaged middle and high school students in partnership with Wilderness Inquiry, the National Park Service, Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools, Minneapolis and St. Paul Parks and Recreation, Ft. Snelling State Park, the Minnesota Department of Education and others, using existing, but underutilized, environmental resources throughout the metro area, including, but not limited to:

- Kroening Center at North Mississippi Park
- Minnehaha Falls Park
- New Urban Wilderness Youth Camp at FSSP
- Lilydale Regional Park
- Grey Cloud Island
- St. Anthony Falls
- Quaking Bog at Theodore Wirth Park
- Thomas Savage Center and Ft. Snelling St. Park
- Crosby Farm Regional Park
- Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary
- Mississippi River Gorge
- Spring Lake Park Reserve near Hastings

With today's youth increasingly disconnected from the natural world, it is more important than ever to provide opportunities for environmental learning and engagement in the communities where they live. The Twin Cities are blessed with an abundance of quality environmental resources, many in connection with the Mississippi River. Unfortunately, most are largely unvisited by low income youth and youth of color—a growing percentage of our urban population. An inhibiting factor is that these resources are managed by multiple agencies that do not have a grand plan for connecting youth to environmental resources outside of their specific jurisdictions, resulting in often redundant, competitive and small scale outreach efforts, and underutilized resources.

Through a variety of experiential, place-based educational programs ranging from 6 to 60 hours in duration, at an average cost of \$70 per student, UEE provides the opportunity for enriching and engaging environmental science and social studies lessons and the development of core personal skills which lead to success in school and in life. UEE will do this on an unprecedented metro-wide scale reaching thousands of students, laying the groundwork for future replication and expansion. To extend its impact statewide, UEE will also serve youth from 6 greater Minnesota school districts on environmental learning exchange experiences. Outcomes include:

- 1) Establishing a metro-wide, integrated system for delivery of cost-effective environmental education
- 2) 12,000 students introduced to place-based environmental education using local resources
- 3) 2,500 8th and 9th grade students receive more in depth exposure via 3-day overnight experiences
- 4) 1,000 10th and 11th grade students participate in 5-day place based experiential education
- 5) 100 urban and outstate youth participate in environmental learning exchange experiences
- 6) Evaluation of program effectiveness in meeting MN State graduation standards

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: Introduce 15,500 students to place-based environmental education

Budget: \$1,003,000

Program staff will coordinate and engage with MPS and SPPS administrators and teachers to develop place-based activities at sites listed above that support the development of student academic, social and personal skills and meet MN State Graduation Standards through environmental education. Students from more than 20 middle and high schools will be recruited to participate. Program staff will coordinate school involvement, establish learning objectives, and leverage existing MN State evaluation processes to determine academic success of students with a focus on progress toward reducing or eliminating the achievement gap. We are allocating \$13,000 in staff time for activity planning and coordination and \$60,000 for data collection and evaluation (\$20,000/yr).

Over 3-years, 12,000 middle school students will participate in 1-day environmental education experiences by Voyageur canoe, hiking, and other means utilizing extraordinary natural sites such as the bog at Theodore Wirth Park, the Gorge on the Mississippi, Ft. Snelling State Park, etc. Cost \$30 X 12,000 students = \$360,000.



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2,500 students will participate in 3-day place-based environmental education, including overnight camping, at sites such as Ft. Snelling State Park, North Mississippi Regional Park, Three Rivers, Lake Elmo and other regional sites. Cost \$108 X 2,500 students = \$270,000.

1,000 students experience 5-days of place-based education while canoeing, camping, and exploring along the Mississippi River from Anoka to Hastings utilizing existing facilities, such as North Mississippi Regional Park, Ft. Snelling State Park, Lilydale Regional Park and Grey Cloud Island. Emphasis on exploring ecological features of three Mississippi River ecosystems--prairie, gorge, and flood plain. Cost \$300 X 1,000 students = \$300,000.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Select activity sites and learning objectives with MPS and SPPS. Engage school partners	10/16
2. 12,000 students receive 6 hours of place-based learning	8/17
3. 2,500 students receive total of 20 hours of place-based learning at metro area sites	8/17
4. 1,000 students receive 40 hours of place-based experiential learning throughout MNRRA	8/17
5. Evaluation process established and implemented	8/17

Activity 2: Provide environmental learning exchange experiences for 100 youth

Budget: \$90,000

100 underserved students, 50 from metro and 50 from greater MN, participate in a total of 10 exchanges consisting of two 5-day experiences (1 in Twin Cities and 1 in greater MN) to explore each other's local natural resources. UEE will collaborate with the MN Department of Education to secure participation of six greater MN school districts. Students will gain broader understanding of the connection between MN's urban and outstate environments, fostering a deep connection to the land and to each other among youth from different parts of the state. Cost \$900/student for 10-day intensive experiences consisting of 5-days in metro and 5-days in places like Voyageurs National Park. 10 days total x 100 students = \$90,000.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 100 students receive 5 days of place-based environmental learning in Twin Cities sites	8/17
2. 100 students receive 5 days of place-based environmental learning in greater MN sites	8/17

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

This project represents a truly collaborative effort building upon and strengthening existing relationships. Wilderness Inquiry (Greg Lais), Mississippi National River and Recreation unit of the National Park Service (Paul Labovitz), and the Mississippi River Fund will spearhead this effort, coordinating with multiple project partners, including MN Dept. of Education, Minneapolis Public Schools, St. Paul Public Schools, AchieveMpls, Ft. Snelling State Park and Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation, St. Paul Parks and Recreation, and many others such as the Friends of the Mississippi. Funding will be received by Wilderness Inquiry, with some payments to other partners.

B. Timeline Requirements

Three years

C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs

This project is intended to change the way the urban environment is perceived and environmental education is delivered by integrating environmental education into the culture of schools, forging new partnerships between school districts and the many environmental resources right in their backyard. It will create a cadre of youth from otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds who understand more about the environment, who will pursue further educational and career goals and diversify the outdoor industry. In demonstrating the academic outcomes and progress toward grad standards, and, we hope to reduce the academic achievement gap. We will seek continued funding from the school districts themselves, as well as state, federal, and private sources.

Project Budget (3-years)		
IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (3 years)		
BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT	
Personnel (all Wilderness Inquiry Staff - total wages for 3 years):		
Program Manager (1 FTE) (\$60,000 x 3 years)	\$	180,000
Program Coordinator (1 FTE) (\$37,500 x 3 years)	\$	112,500
Program Assistant (1 FTE) (\$33,333 x 3 years)	\$	100,000
Trail guides (to maintain 1 to 7 staff to student ratio 3,700 staff days X \$75)	\$	277,500
Contracts:		
Teacher stipend for MPS and SPPS liaisons (\$3,000 x 10 teachers x 3 yrs)	\$	90,000
Project evaluation and data collection (\$20,000 X 3 years)	\$	60,000
Equipment:		
Equipment maintenance and repair (\$3,000 x 3 years)	\$	9,000
Tents, paddles, and other outdoor gear for overnight trips	\$	9,000
Porta-potty rental for program sites	\$	3,000
Personal Flotation Devices (\$40 x 250)	\$	10,000
Transporation:		
Transportation for students to program sites (avg \$200 x 242 events)	\$	48,400
Additional Budget Items:		
Food (1,000 kids x 5 days)+(2,500 kids x 3 days) + (100 kids x 10 days) X average cost of \$7 for meals per student per day	\$	94,500
Liability Insurance (\$25,000 X 3 years)	\$	75,000
Camping Fees, entrance fees, permits and licenses (\$100 x 241 events)	\$	24,100
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$	1,093,000
V. OTHER FUNDS		
SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Non-State \$ Applied to Project		
Minneapolis Public Schools	\$300,000	Pending
St. Paul Public Schools	\$300,000	Pending
APPLIED	\$600,000	Pending
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project		
Minnesota Department of Education	\$100,000	Pending
APPLIED	\$ 100,000	
In Kind Services of		
Wilderness Inquiry In-kind Services During Project Period: All benefits, plus staff support eg Exec Director, Finance Director,equipment and facilities	\$305,000	Committed
National Park Service In-kind Services During Project Period:	\$270,000	Committed
Mississippi River Fund In-kind Services During Project Period:	\$135,000	Committed
TOTAL ALL IN-KIND	\$710,000	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation: For insurance. Approp. made in 2010. On track to use remaining \$ by project end 6/2013.	#####	Unspent; 2010 Approp. On track to use remaining \$
Funding History: This project builds on previous <i>Urban Wilderness Youth Outdoor</i> project funded by LCCMR which opened relationships with MPS and SPPS. Multiple funding sources from private, federal and state sources will be sought, as well as funding from the school districts themselves.	\$ -	Several pending; none confirmed

Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources (UEE)

This map represents proximity of Minneapolis Public Schools and Saint Paul Public Schools to Twin Cities environmental education sites along the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area corridor from Coon Rapids to Hastings.

Project Summary:

- Total Youth Served: 15,600
- Total \$ Requested: \$1,093,000
- Cost Per Youth Served: \$70



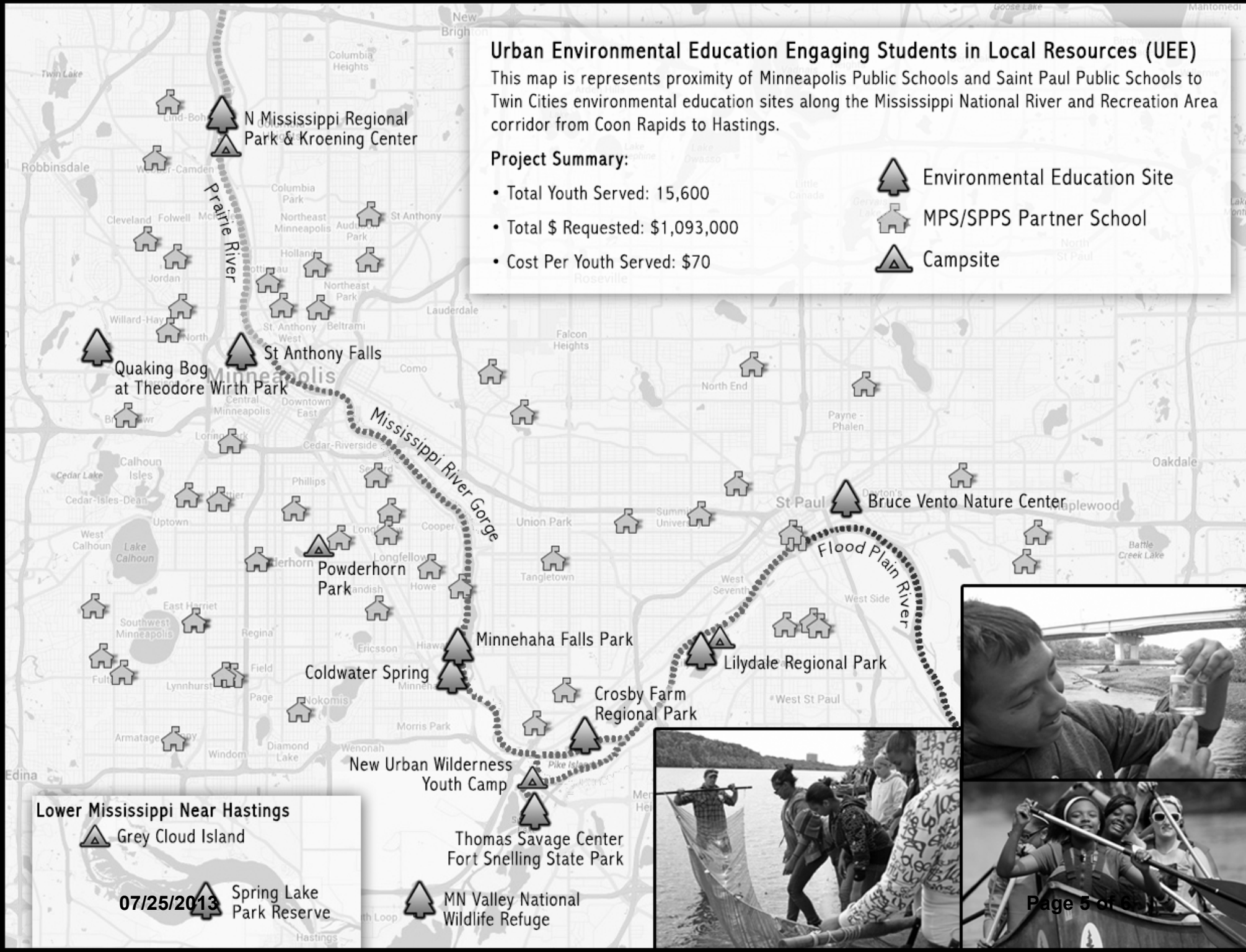
Environmental Education Site



MPS/SPPS Partner School



Campsite



Lower Mississippi Near Hastings



Grey Cloud Island

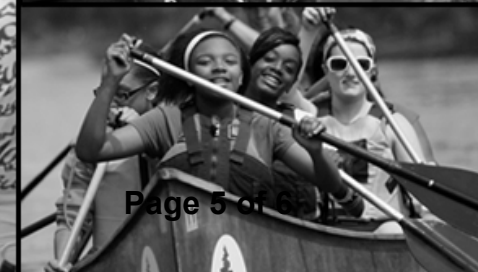
07/25/2013



Spring Lake Park Reserve



MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge



Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

Greg Lais, Project Manager

Greg Lais is the Founder and Executive Director of Wilderness Inquiry (WI), the oldest and most extensive outdoor education and travel program in the world for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Since 1978, WI has served more than 300,000 people on wilderness trips, including thousands of people with disabilities and people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

An expert in design and implementation of integrated outdoor programs, Mr. Lais has developed outdoor policies, written and delivered staff training curricula, developed safety standards, developed adaptive equipment and published several books and articles on integrated outdoor programming. Mr. Lais has personally led more than 300 wilderness adventures involving people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Under the direction of Mr. Lais, Wilderness Inquiry has received awards from the National Therapeutic Recreation Association, Minnesota State Council on Disability Distinguished Service Award (twice), ARC of Minnesota and many others. In March 2005, WI received the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR) Community Building Award recognizing Inquiry's WI's leadership in helping to initiate change in communities and organizations that result in persons with disabilities being increasingly valued and included as community members. WI is honored to receive the American Association on Mental Retardation Full Community Inclusion Award. Mr. Lais was the recipient of the 2012 Wilderness Education Association Paul K. Petzoldt Award in recognition of his "visionary leadership in creating a world where exploring, cherishing and protecting wilderness are a human birthright for everyone."

Mr. Lais was the project manager for an Environmental Trust Fund funded project in the 1995-96 biennium, and a current project which started in July of 2010 and runs through June of 2013.

Wilderness Inquiry

A non-profit organization based in the Twin Cities, WI has provided opportunities for outdoor recreation for some of our most underserved and at-risk populations since 1978. WI serves over 13,000 people annually on canoe, kayak, horsepack, dogsled and hiking trips throughout North America, including 17 different units of the National Park Service. WI has 12 full-time and 60 part-time staff.

WI maintains a fleet of twenty-five, 24-foot Voyageur canoes, 20 canoe trailers and seven, 15-passenger vans in a warehouse at its headquarters in Dinkytown near the University of Minnesota—10 minutes away from the landing at East River Flats. These canoes are an important component of the UWCA because